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Family Engagement Toolkit

2022 Edition

Prepared by the National Evaluation and
Technical Assistance Center for the
Education of Children and Youth Who
are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk

www.Neglected-Delinquent.ed.gov



THE
NATIONAL TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE CENTER
FOR
THE EDUCATION OF
NEGLECTED OR DELINQUENT
CHILDREN & YOUTH

About the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk (NDTAC)

This document was developed by the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk (NDTAC), which is funded by a contract awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to Longevity Consulting in Washington, D.C. The mission of NDTAC is to improve educational programming for youth who are considered to be neglected, delinquent or at-risk of academic failure.

NDTAC's mandates are to:

- provide information, resources, and direct technical assistance to States and those who support or provide education to youth who are considered to be neglected, delinquent or at-risk of academic failure;
- develop a model and tools to assist States and providers with reporting data and evaluating their services;
- serve as a facilitator to increase information-sharing and peer-to-peer learning at State and local levels.

For additional information on NDTAC, visit the Center's Web site at <https://neglected-delinquent.ed.gov>

What is the purpose of this Toolkit?

This NDTAC Family Engagement Toolkit provides useful templates for facilities to use to Engage families in their child's education. Tools 1–4 are intended for distribution to students' families, and tools 5-7 are intended for use by facility staff. All tool/templates are customizable to meet the unique needs of each facility and the families it serves.

“Family” Note

Federally funded school programs require the involvement of family members who have parental rights or an educational surrogate parent. For example, within the U.S. Department of Education's statutory requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended in 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act, parents are entitled to take part in planning their child's education services and overall program planning, which allows parents access to program plans, budgets, evaluations, and performance data. Throughout the toolkit, the word “family” is an inclusive term that includes parents, other family members providing care, legal guardians, and educational surrogate parents. Per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), an educational surrogate parent is a trained adult whose job is to protect the educational rights of the child and to advocate for and make education decisions in the best interest of the child when a parent or family member is not available or does not have parental rights.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Family Engagement Toolkit

Many schools, after-school programs and other community agencies are looking to build a strong community focused on engaging youth and families together. The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school. Families know their child best and can be powerful allies to any program serving their child. Programming aimed at involving families in their child's education and special efforts to engage parents in school activities do make a difference.

According to the National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)¹, family engagement is:

- A shared responsibility involving schools and other community agencies engaging families in meaningful ways to support the learning and development of children.
- Continuous, meaning it extends past childhood and throughout a parent-child relationship, even as children reach adulthood.
- Not locational, meaning it takes place in multiple settings including at home, in school or other learning environments, as well as other community programs.

Involving families in juvenile justice facility school programs is not always easy. How do administrators, teachers, and families overcome challenges to family involvement in these systems? To help families become active participants in their child's education within the juvenile justice system, the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk (NDTAC) has developed this resource. This Family Engagement Toolkit is designed for facility and school administrators. It provides tools that can be adapted to promote family involvement in a facility school. The tools are intended to be used by program staff to help encourage families—including those who are reluctant, have been affected by trauma, or are unsure of how to become more involved. Although the primary audience for this toolkit is facility and school administrators, other stakeholders including parent advocates, family organizations, and courts may also use these tools when working with facilities and families.

Overview of the Facility Toolkit

The Facility Toolkit provides two types of tools. Tools 1–4 are intended for distribution to your students' families. Tools 5–7 are intended for use by facility staff. All are customizable to meet the unique needs of each facility and the families it serves. After customizing the materials, you can duplicate and distribute them to the family members of students enrolled in your facility's school. It is important to note that while Tools 1–4 are designed for families, they also could be useful in improving your facility's family involvement policies and practices as well as the skills of your facility's staff. For example, you could:

1. Review the Family Engagement Toolkit to find content or suggested concepts that may be used to impact policies or practices that your school, program, or facility could adopt to improve relationships with the families of your students.
2. Provide all staff with a copy of the Family Engagement Toolkit and explain when and how copies will be given to students' families. In doing so, you can encourage all staff members to courteously encourage family members to engage and monitor practices for consistency. Staff may need some professional development and support to improve their ability to promote positive relationships with your students' families.

¹ Retrieved from : [National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement \(nafsce.org\)](https://nafsce.org)

How the Facility Toolkit Was Developed

Originally published in 2008, this Facility Toolkit was revised in 2022 to update the facility-specific tools and reflect current research. Topics covered in the Facility Toolkit were originally identified by holding focused discussions with two expert panels: (1) a group of State program administrators, education administrators, and leaders of programs for youth who are neglected or delinquent; and (2) a group of family members with a child in a juvenile justice facility. Panel members were selected to be culturally and geographically diverse. Their responses form the core of the suggestions in this guide. Additional materials were selected from the literature on family engagement. Feedback provided by both expert panels and the staff of NDTAC contributed to the final product.

Tools for Families

Tool 1: Sample Letter to Parents

The following sample letter welcomes parents and families of youth who have been placed in your facility school, encourages them to become engaged in their children's education, and asks them to support your school and facility's programs. It is recommended that this letter be printed on your facility's official letterhead.

The sample letter was written to be easily understood by family members of varying educational backgrounds and to cover conditions and practices at many kinds of facilities. You can use the sample letter as is or make changes to reflect your school, program, or facility. Your facility may have program features and opportunities for family engagement that are not mentioned in this letter. If so, you should add this information to the letter. The sample letter also may mention some things that are not available at your facility or facility school, so be sure to delete these things from the letter. You want the final letter to give families an accurate picture of what to expect at your facility.

The sample letter provides text in brackets at the places where you should enter information specific to your facility or program or to a particular student and his or her family. Family members will appreciate your personalizing the letter and likely will see it as a sincere effort to reach out to them and welcome them to partner with you and your staff. You should translate this letter into the first language of families who are not native English speakers to demonstrate that you are prepared to make it as easy as possible for them to get involved in their child's education.

Note: In addition to this letter, you should make sure that families get copies of other documents from your facility. One suggestion is a resource list tailored to your facility and the communities you serve. For example, families also will need:

- Copies of student and family rights and responsibilities
- School rules
- The academic calendar
- Brief descriptions of the curriculum
- Forms requiring completion
- Samples of completed forms
- Policies and procedures for family involvement, including grievance procedures

Some of these resources are mentioned in the sample letter. Because including many resources may overwhelm families, you might compile all the resources you plan to provide into a binder or packet. It could also include space for families to take notes and add copies of important documents while their child is enrolled in your facility school program.

Tool 1: Sample Letter to Parents

[Facility Letterhead, Including Street Address]

[Date]

Dear [Insert the name of the child's family member; avoid using generic greetings like "Dear Parent"]:

Welcome to our school. While [insert name of the child] is residing at [insert the name of the juvenile justice facility], we will make every effort to provide your child with a positive school experience.

Our goals are to keep your child on track toward completing their education and to assist them in reaching their individual plans for success. We believe that you share these goals with us, and we hope that you will partner with us to achieve them. Research has shown the following benefits when families are involved with their child's education:

- Students are more motivated to learn, and they feel better about themselves. They get higher grades and attend school more regularly. They also are more likely to graduate and continue their education.
- Students have fewer instances of violent behavior and suspensions.
- Teachers are more effective in the classroom and have higher job satisfaction.
- Youth feel supported, which leads to an increase in positive behaviors in the classroom. Also enclosed are a number of helpful resources that describe our program and how you can partner with us while [insert name of the child] is enrolled in our facility school, including:
 - A list of key staff and their contact information
 - A school calendar, including upcoming facility/school events
 - Program (or school) rules
 - Brief descriptions of the curriculum and school
 - Procedures for family visits
 - Copies of student and family rights and responsibilities
 - A questionnaire and return envelope
 - Forms that need to be completed and returned
 - Samples of completed forms

We know that having your child in a juvenile justice facility may be a difficult situation for you. We want you to feel comfortable and welcome. We invite you to attend school and facility events, and we encourage you to be involved. Let us know what kind of help you may need to be involved. We may be able to offer [modify this list to match what your facility can offer] a translator, transportation, meals, lodging, or care for your other children. If you are unable to come to meetings at our facility, we would be happy to set up a virtual conference call to participate.

Please stay in touch with us. The list of key staff and how to reach them follows this letter. I sincerely look forward to getting to know you and your child better. If you have any questions after reviewing the resources, please don't hesitate to contact me by phone (add number) or e-mail (add e-mail address).

Principal [insert name]

[add contact information]

Tool 2: Contact List Template

When communicating with families, it is important to share how they can reach facility staff who are working with their child. Making this information easily available sends a strong message that the facility wants to hear from them and that they can discuss different school matters with a variety of staff.

The following template provides a list that you can customize for your facility; it also can be tailored for each student. For example, you can adjust the titles of the positions to match staffing in your facility or remove a position if a student does not receive such services.

Tool 2: Contact List Template
List of Staff at [Name of Juvenile Justice Facility]

Student's Name _____

Title	Name	Phone	E-mail	Address [if different from the facility address above]
Principal				
School Counselor				
Teacher (Math)				
Teacher (English/ Language Arts)				
Teacher (Science)				
Teacher (Social Studies)				
Teacher (Fine Arts)				
Teacher (Career and Technical Education)				
Teacher (Physical Education)				
Family Liaison				
School Nurse				
Care Coordinator				
Speech Therapist				
Occupational Therapist				
Physical Therapist				
Social Worker				
School Psychologist				
Probation Officer/ Case Worker				

Tool 3: Sample Education Questionnaire with Cover Letter for Families

Because families know their children best, they can be powerful allies in any program serving their children. It is critical to get information from families about their children. Two helpful ways to obtain such information are to administer a questionnaire and to communicate with families directly.

The following cover letter and questionnaire can be provided to families or can be provided while meeting with the family during an in-person teacher-family conference. In either case, be sure to provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope to make it easy for parents and family members to return the survey to you or offer them other ways to easily send their responses (e.g., e-mail a scanned copy of the completed questionnaire, submit an online survey, etc.). Some families may not be able to access a written document due to disabilities or limited English proficiency. The program might consider offering translated versions and/or accessibility accommodations. The questionnaire may also be adapted as a script that facility staff can use when they speak directly with a family member shortly after a student enrolls in the facility school program.

Tool 3: Cover Letter Template

[Facility Letterhead, Including Street Address]

[Date]

Dear *[parent's or guardian's name]*:

We would like to get to know *[insert child's name]* better and learn from you about their education history.

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to us in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided as soon as possible. The information you provide will help us make sure your child feels supported and has a successful school experience.

If you have any questions or need assistance in completing this questionnaire, please contact me at *[phone number]* or *[e-mail]*.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title, Contact Information]

Tool 3: Parent and Family Questionnaire

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth _____

1. My child participates in the following school activities. (Check YES or NO for each item.)

- a. Sports _____ YES NO
- b. Music _____ YES NO
- c. Clubs _____ YES NO
- d. Other Activities- Please List:

2. Please list the leisure-time activities your child enjoys after school and on weekends.

Please describe any religious, spiritual, and cultural events your child observes.

3. My child's favorite subject is _____

4. My child's least favorite subject is _____

5. My child usually makes an effort to do his or her best in school. _____ YES NO

6. My child is performing to his or her potential in school. _____ YES NO

7. My child has been suspended or expelled from school. _____ YES NO

If you checked YES, briefly tell us when and why he or she was suspended or expelled.

8. My child has a disability (e.g., physical, emotional, learning). _____ YES NO

If YES, what is it and how does it affect his or her learning? _____

9. My child has a Section 504 plan. _____ YES NO

If YES, do you have a copy of the current plan? _____ YES NO

10. My child receives special education services. _____ YES NO

If YES, do you have a copy of the current individualized education program (IEP)? _____ YES NO

11. My child has received the following special services. (Check all that apply.)

- a. Speech Therapy _____ YES NO
- b. Physical Therapy _____ YES NO
- c. Occupational Therapy _____ YES NO
- d. School-based Counseling _____ YES NO
- e. Other Activities- Please List:

12. I have a recent copy of my child's educational evaluation. _____ YES NO

Please list any allergies your child has.

Please list any medications your child is currently taking, whether you think they are working, and any side effects that she or he has when taking them.

Tool 4: Family Tip Sheet

Your facility may wish to share a shorter document for families with brief tips on how to engage with their children and the facility. Distributing this tip sheet (or similar information that is appropriate for your facility) at admission, during family visits, and/or as part of school-family communication can be helpful for families because it provides them with useful advice and reminders.

Tool 4: Family Tip Sheet

[Facility Name]

Tips for Getting Involved in Your Child's Education

Because you know your child best, you can be a powerful ally to any program serving your child. However, when a child is in a juvenile justice facility, it is not always easy for family members to get involved with the facility's school program. The tips listed below provide some practical things you can do to build a relationship with staff at your child's new school. Following these suggestions will help keep your child on track to (graduate/complete our program). You do not have to do this alone. Ask the school or facility staff for the contact information for the staff member (family liaison, social worker, or parent advocate, etc.) who can help you navigate through the process.

Visit Your Child When Possible

- Attend school functions, including orientation, parent visitation days, award ceremonies, and back-to-school nights.
- Let the staff know if you need transportation or any other assistance to visit the school.
- Involve community members, such as faith-based and family support organizations, who can help you connect with the facility, staff, and teachers.

Organize and Share Useful Information with the School

- Organize all important records and papers in one place for safekeeping. Some things you will need to keep handy are your child's Social Security card, school records, government-issued IDs (e.g., driver's license, school ID, work permit), individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan, individual special education evaluation, treatment plan, transition plan, and a record of upcoming appointments.
- Ask the school to provide you with its student record-sharing and confidentiality policies related to both education and health information. Identify the appropriate people in the facility with whom to share this information.
- Share what you know about your child's prior education and give the school copies of the education records you have (e.g., IEP, report cards, high school transcript, disciplinary reports, educational evaluations, or test results).
- Tell the school staff about any medication your child has been taking, including any recent changes in medication. Let them know how you think the medication is working.
- Tell the school staff about your child's eating habits, especially food allergies or special diets.

Get Information About the School and Your Child's Progress

- Request and ask questions about the school curriculum, calendar, rules, and policies and procedures.
- Ask to see some of the schoolwork your child has been doing.
- Request to see and receive copies of progress reports and portfolios of your child's work.
- Attend your child's IEP meetings if they have an IEP.

Communicate With School Staff

- Communicate often with school staff. Let them know you want to be helpful and part of the team that is making decisions about your child's education.
- Get to know the staff member (family liaison, family liaison, social worker, parent advocate, etc.) who will assist you and your family. Contact this person early during your child's stay at the facility.
- During all conversations, write down the name of the person at the school with whom you are speaking, along with the person's title and contact information. Keep short notes as a permanent record of your conversation.

- Provide the school staff with your contact information and preferred method of communication (phone, email, virtual meeting, etc.). Notify the school staff if the information changes. Let them know the best times to call you—and when NOT to call.
- Get a copy of the school rules. Read them carefully and ask any questions you have about them.
- Ask for an interpreter for family members who would be more comfortable communicating in a language other than English. Other accommodations may also be available for family members with disabilities.
- Request that written materials be translated as needed.

Help Your Child Be Successful in and Out of the Facility

- Talk with your child about school over the phone or while visiting. Let your child know that you feel school is important and encourage him or her to do well.
- Be a major decision maker in your child's transition planning. Start planning for their return immediately, including identifying the school your child will be attending upon release.
- Have your child's school records sent to you and the school your child will be attending upon release in time for your child's arrival—the first day.
- Ask if there is a transition specialist who has the responsibility to address your child's transition from the facility school to the community school. Get to know this person early during your child's placement in the facility.
- Request several visits at home and in the community before your child is discharged. When necessary, use the time between visits to adjust the transition plan.
- Work with your child's receiving school on a plan for social, emotional, and academic learning and support that will keep them safe, in school, and on track to graduate and prepare for college/career.
- Attend parent training/workshops that are offered.

Make Sure the School is Meeting Your Needs and the Needs of Your Child

- If religious or spiritual practices are important to your family, share this information with facility staff. Opportunities to participate in religious services should be provided by the facility.
- Respond openly and honestly to parent surveys.
- Participate in parent and family focus groups.
- Request regular communication with your child if possible (e.g., phone, video communications, e-mail).
- Work with the school principal or superintendent if you or your child needs additional assistance.
- Refer to the facility's policy and procedures manual on how to resolve issues if they arise.

Tools for Facilities

Tool 5: Faculty and Staff Tip Sheet on Engaging Families

To support your facility's family engagement efforts, it is helpful for facility staff to receive professional development and be aware of the efforts taking place within the facility and the school to support families and students. It may also be useful to provide staff with a summary list of tips that can be used as a reference when planning family engagement efforts. The following tip sheet can be customized to meet the needs of your facility or school. Staff can post the tip sheet in their office and refer to it often.

Tool 5: Faculty and Staff Tip Sheet on Engaging Families

[Facility Name]

Tips for Engaging Families

Ensure That Teachers and Staff Communicate Effectively with Families

- Encourage respectful, accurate, and truthful communication with families.
- Provide a list of key personnel and their contact information.
- Identify in what language families are most comfortable communicating.
- Make translators and interpreters available if the family is not comfortable communicating in English or needs assistance.
- Confirm that written communication is at an appropriate reading level for families and is translated as needed.
- Maintain updated contact information for families. Ask the family when the best times to call are—and when NOT to call.
- Provide or pair up parent “buddies” among the parent/family community to build relationships with the family groups, the school, and the facility.

Share Information About the School and Student Progress

- Provide school policies and procedures, curriculum, and calendar.
- Have teachers attend family visitation days.
- Send progress reports (report cards) home.
- Develop and share portfolios of student work with the family.
- Use multiple methods of sharing classroom news and student progress with families (e.g., newsletters, e-mail, or related software, etc.).
- Arrange for families to attend individualized education program (IEP) meetings.
- Link student work to established academic standards and transition indicators. Host back-to-school nights. Use families as a partner and resource. Reach out to families for information concerning the student’s previous experiences as well as medical and educational records.
- Provide monthly celebration meetings at the facility for student successes in and out of school (e.g., for students who completed their schoolwork).
- Post flowcharts regarding educational goals in classes, demonstrating student movement into postsecondary pathways for students and parents to see. Establish regular contact between the community school principal, facility school principal (or director or transition coordinator), and the family to address student-specific concerns and successes.

Provide Opportunities for Families to Visit Their Children and Become Familiar with the Staff and Facility

- Establish and make families aware of visiting hours, visiting days, and other opportunities to come to the school to visit their child.
- Enlist community mentors to visit students when family members are not available.
- Train all facility staff, teachers, and support staff on welcoming and relationship-building techniques to strengthen collaboration with parents and family members.
- Ensure family-accessible activities and programs and information sharing.
- Prepare a virtual module/video that includes a tour of the facility space and/or walks families through a typical school day.

Ensure That the School and Teachers Are Meeting the Needs of Families and Students

- Conduct surveys or focus groups of the families to see what they need to help their child be successful in the school and upon release.
- Encourage regular communication between the family and their child to include virtual and in-person visits and events.

- Ask if there are any religious or spiritual practices, events, or holidays that are especially important to the student.
- Encourage family members to volunteer in the school, facility library, or welcoming areas if the facility allows such opportunities.
- Provide regular informational opportunities for community schools and community members to share their support materials and contacts with families.
- Enlist support regularly from mental health service providers, the local school system, community partners, and related service providers to make information, needed services, and supports available to families whose children are involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Engage community partners, such as family organizations and the faith community, which can help connect and serve families and facility teachers and staff.

Empower Families to Help Their Students Be Successful in and Out of the Facility

- Offer families training and workshops on their parental rights and how they may advocate for their child to promote positive educational outcomes. Extend invitations to the community public school counselors or liaisons to assist in building relationships for transition. Encourage families to begin preparing for the student's return home as soon as the child enters the facility. Enlist the aid of the home/school transition specialist or liaison or establish this position if it does not yet exist.
- Establish or reestablish contact between families and the community school to which the students will be returning. Continue to share that school's newsletters, happenings, PTO meeting schedule, and principal contact hours.
- Recruit families who have knowledge of and experience with the juvenile justice system that may be willing to engage with facility schools to provide mentorship and support to families of newly placed students.
- Create family roles on committees, such as school improvement and facility improvement committees.
- Hold meetings and develop plans with families regarding opportunities in the community school to which the youth will transition and in the community for afterschool and extracurricular activities.
- Provide resources to families and ensure partnership with the McKinney-Vento homeless education liaison when appropriate as many families of students in facilities are struggling with poverty and homelessness. Links to state and district level contacts are located on [the National Center for Homeless Education's Contact Information page](#).
- If applicable, partner and collaborate with the foster care point of contact in the event that the student transitions to a group home and enters the foster care system.
- Partner with 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool programs. State contacts are listed online at [Contacts - Office of Elementary and Secondary Education](#).

Tool 6: Facility Self-Assessment Tool

Although family engagement is critical to the academic success of students, facilities often face the following challenges in engaging families:

- Families are often overwhelmed with their child's juvenile justice situation and are dealing with other issues at the same time.
- Students' relationships with their families may be stressed.
- If families have had bad experiences with schools and facilities, they may have a hard time trusting "good faith" efforts.
- Facilities do not always consider evidence-based models of trauma-informed practice which include collaboration of educators, family and other professionals collaborating to support children and youth who have experienced trauma to increase consistency and routines across settings.
- Students may not have family members with whom they can engage.
- Facilities often implement one strategy that does not work for all families.
- Facilities often do not encourage teachers to use family outreach.

To overcome these challenges, it is important for facility staff to persist and work to find effective strategies for engaging the families of the students they serve. Assessing your facility's current efforts is critical.

Tool 6 provides a self-assessment of the five indicators related to the key areas of family engagement (highlighted in Tool 5). This tool can be customized and used, in consultation with your students' families, to determine the extent to which your facility's family engagement efforts have been implemented and the outcomes of those efforts. This tool also allows you to identify what aspects of your efforts were particularly successful and the challenges you faced. Your assessment of efforts can then be used to plan improvements using a tiered approach (Tool 7).

Tool 6: Self-Assessment Tool: Indicators of Evidence

[Facility Name]

Focus Area 1: Ensuring teachers and staff know how to communicate effectively with families

- Does the school have policies or procedures in place that require teachers and staff to regularly communicate with families?
- Does the school provide professional development for teachers and staff in effective communication with families?
- Does the school provide forms in languages spoken by families of students attending the school?

Activity or Strategy Include what you planned to do	Extent of Implementation Indicate to a great extent, to some extent, or not at all	Outcomes Provide information on how youth and families benefitted	Successes Describe what worked well	Challenges Describe challenges faced

Overall Self-Assessment for Focus Area 1

- Well implemented
 Somewhat implemented
 Not implemented

If not implemented or somewhat implemented:

- Are there ways to improve the current approaches?

- Are these the appropriate policies, goals, or strategies, or should any new approaches be taken?

- Is more information needed (through a needs assessment, focus groups, etc.)?

Tool 6: Self-Assessment Tool: Indicators of Evidence

Focus Area 2: Sharing information about the school and individual student progress

Does the school provide families with a handbook or other information on school policies and procedures? Does the school regularly communicate with families about student progress? Does the school communicate with families in their preferred language? Does the school communicate with families in multiple formats (email, website, text, phone call, print mail)? Are families invited to participate in graduation or other recognition of academic achievement?

Activity or Strategy Include what you planned to do	Extent of Implementation Indicate to a great extent, to some extent, or not at all	Outcomes Provide information on how youth and families benefitted	Successes Describe what worked well	Challenges Describe challenges faced

Overall Self-Assessment for Focus Area 2

- Well implemented
 Somewhat implemented
 Not implemented

If not implemented or somewhat implemented:

- Are there ways to improve the current approaches?

- Are these the appropriate policies, goals, or strategies, or should any new approaches be taken?

- Is more information needed (through a needs assessment, focus groups, etc.)?

Tool 6: Self-Assessment Tool: Indicators of Evidence

Focus Area 3: Providing opportunities for families to visit their children and become familiar with staff and the facility

Does the school offer families an opportunity to visit with the school staff when their children first enter the facility? Does the school offer an “open house” or family visitation day on a regular basis? Are families invited to participate in school celebrations or events? Are families who are unable to visit in person offered opportunities to participate virtually? Does the school website provide staff profiles or information to help families learn about their child’s teachers?

Activity or Strategy Include what you planned to do	Extent of Implementation Indicate to a great extent, to some extent, or not at all	Outcomes Provide information on how youth and families benefitted	Successes Describe what worked well	Challenges Describe challenges faced

Overall Self-Assessment for Focus Area 3

- Well implemented
 Somewhat implemented
 Not implemented

If not implemented or somewhat implemented:

- Are there ways to improve the current approaches?

- Are these the appropriate policies, goals, or strategies, or should any new approaches be taken?

- Is more information needed (through a needs assessment, focus groups, etc.)?

Tool 6: Self-Assessment Tool: Indicators of Evidence

Focus Area 4: Ensuring that facilities and teachers are meeting the individualized needs of families and students

Are families able to locate information needed to answer their questions about the school or facility? In a language that they are comfortable communicating in?

- How does the school provide differentiated instruction for students at all levels of learning?
- Does the school provide opportunities for students to participate in career and technical education?
- Does the school provide opportunities for students to participate in athletics?
- Does the school provide students with the opportunity to earn credits toward a regular high school diploma? To prepare for and take the GED/HiSet?
- Does the school provide students with assistance in completing the FAFSA and college applications?
- How does the school assist students in transitioning back to their community school (providing transcripts, documentation of credits earned, etc.)?

Activity or Strategy Include what you planned to do	Extent of Implementation Indicate to a great extent, to some extent, or not at all	Outcomes Provide information on how youth and families benefitted	Successes Describe what worked well	Challenges Describe challenges faced

Overall Self-Assessment for Focus Area 4

- Well implemented
 Somewhat implemented
 Not implemented

If not implemented or somewhat implemented:

- Are there ways to improve the current approaches?

- Are these the appropriate policies, goals, or strategies, or should any new approaches be taken?

- Is more information needed (through a needs assessment, focus groups, etc.)?

Tool 6: Self-Assessment Tool: Indicators of Evidence

Focus Area 5: Empowering families to help their children be successful in and out of the facility

- Does the facility offer classes or information to assist families in building the skills necessary to support their child’s academic success?
- Does the facility offer families information on trauma, social-emotional development, or other mental health issues that their child may face?
- Does the facility offer information on drug and alcohol addiction focused on children and youth?
- Does the facility/school offer family reunification counseling?

Activity or Strategy Include what you planned to do	Extent of Implementation Indicate to a great extent, to some extent, or not at all	Outcomes Provide information on how youth and families benefitted	Successes Describe what worked well	Challenges Describe challenges faced

Overall Self-Assessment for Focus Area 5

- Well implemented
 Somewhat implemented
 Not implemented

If not implemented or somewhat implemented:

- Are there ways to improve the current approaches?

- Are these the appropriate policies, goals, or strategies, or should any new approaches be taken?

- Is more information needed (through a needs assessment, focus groups, etc.)?

Tool 7: Family Engagement Planner

After assessing your family engagement efforts (Tool 6), the next step is to develop a plan for implementation of new efforts or continuation of effective efforts. It is suggested that you develop a tiered approach to family engagement efforts, if they are not occurring already, in collaboration with family members (Please see *Using a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for Family Engagement* located in the resources section within this toolkit). In a tiered approach, Tier 1 practices are for everyone and will typically engage most families. When Tier 1 practices are not enough, Tier 2 provides children and families with Tier 1 services as well as additional supports to increase the likelihood of family engagement. Similarly, children and families in Tier 3 would receive services across all three areas. The Tier 3 approach is designed to individualize services for a few children and families that require this level of support.

The following planning tool can help staff decide what they can do for *all* families (Tier 1), for *some* families (Tier 2), and for the *few* hard-to-reach families (Tier 3) across each of the key areas identified in Tools 6 and 7.

[Facility Name] Family Engagement Planner

Tier 1: Strategies That Your Facility Can Provide to All Families

Sample activities: Create a welcoming environment and address families in a respectful manner; solicit family input through surveys, interviews, and focus groups; provide an orientation for family members of the facility and school; establish ongoing communication and reporting of student progress; sponsor social activities that encourage family participation; maintain updated contact information on all parents and key family members.

Focus Areas of Support	Activities	Staff	Resources	Timeline	Notes
Ensure that teachers and staff are able to communicate with families					
Share information about school and student progress					
Provide opportunities for families to visit their children and become familiar with the staff and faculty					
Ensure that facilities and teachers are meeting the needs of families and students					
Empower families to help their children be successful in and out of the facility					

[Facility Name] Family Engagement Planner

Tier 2: Selective Strategies That Can Be Provided to Some Families

Sample activities: Provide family members with skill development opportunities; enlist regular support from community partners to provide information, services, and supports to families; connect families with each other; take advantage of family visits to the facility to conduct specialized work that is better done face-to-face; provide childcare and transportation assistance.

Focus Areas of Support	Activities	Staff	Resources	Timeline	Notes
Ensure that teachers and staff communicate with families					
Share information about school and student progress					
Provide opportunities for families to visit their children and become familiar with the staff and faculty					
Ensure that facilities and teachers are meeting the needs of families and students					
Empower families to help their children be successful in and out of the facility					

[Facility Name] Family Engagement Planner

Tier 3: Intensive Strategies for Hard-to-Reach Families

Sample activities: Tailor approaches to each family and child, engage in extensive work that may repair relationships between the student and their family when they no longer communicate, establish regular contact with the community school principal and facility school principal or transition coordinator to address specific student concerns, make translator available if needed.

Key Areas of Support	Activities	Staff	Resources	Timeline	Notes
Ensure that teachers and staff communicate with families					
Share information about school and student progress					
Provide opportunities for families to visit their children and become familiar with the staff and faculty					
Ensure that facilities and teachers are meeting the needs of families and students					
Empower families to help their children be successful in and out of the facility					

Resources

- Epstein, J.L. et al. (2019). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*, fourth edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
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- McIntyre, L.L., Cameron L. Neece, Catherine M. Sanner, Geovanna Rodriguez, Jonathan Safer-Lichtenstein. (2022) Telehealth Delivery of a Behavioral Parent Training Program to Spanish-Speaking Latinx Parents of Young Children With Developmental Delay: Applying an Implementation Framework Approach. *School Psychology Review* 51:2, pages 206-220.

Related Resources/Helpful Links:

Mississippi Department of Education: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for Family Engagement [Multi-Tiered-Systems-of-Support-for-Family-Engagement-.pdf \(northmsec.com\)](#)

- Goal: To apply the MTSS model to strengthen home, school, and community program partnerships to support academic achievement and healthy development. The Mississippi Department of Education Office of Early Childhood recognizes educators serve many families whose needs differ and require varying layers of support. MTSS is a data-driven system that can be used to strategically organize

family engagement interventions and support to maximize outcomes for students and families.

National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (nafsce.org)

- Our mission: To advance high-impact policies and practices for family, school, and community engagement, to promote child development, and improve student achievement.

National Alliance for Family Engagement (famengage.org)

- Two-minute Toolkit Tutorial: Watch this short video and learn how changing the way we talk about family engagement can change the way everyone thinks about it.

Articles | Global Family Research Project (globalfrp.org)

- Global Family Research Project is a leader in the field of family, school, and community engagement.

NCFL | Resources (familieslearning.org)

- Free Resources: NCFL is proud to offer a range of free resources to meet different literacy and education challenges.