

Session 2 Handout: Individualizing Economic Mobility Services with Families

While all families have many strengths and the ability to reach their goals, some families can also face unique and significant barriers to accessing the services they need. This handout provides strategies and additional resources to help Head Start staff tailor economic mobility services for culturally diverse and historically underserved families.

Lessons from Research and Considerations for Practice

Connect with your families:

- Take time to know your families and understand their backgrounds and circumstances.
- Understand that communities have heterogenous cultures.
- Engage in active listening skills.
- Personalize your communications with families.
- Communicate with families in their preferred language. Or, if that's not possible, use an interpreter.

Know the families you are serving:

- Ensure that families are eligible for the services and resources to which you are referring them.
- Ensure that your reading materials are culturally appropriate, in families' preferred language, and at a reading level appropriate for the community you serve.
- Be alert to families' transportation, child care, and work schedule considerations, as well as their familiarity with technology.
- A warm handoff (personally telling families about resources, helping them make initial appointments, etc.) is generally more effective than handing families a resource list.
- Follow up with families regularly.

Be sensitive:

- Create a safe environment in which families are comfortable sharing personal information.
- Realize that for some families, immigration status may be a concern when sharing personal information for application purposes.
- Avoid collecting personal information that is not required for application purposes.

Capitalize on existing community resources:

- Partner with well-respected community leaders and use social media channels preferred by the community you serve to disseminate information more broadly.
- Encourage parent leadership and social support networks.
- Solicit and be responsive to suggestions from the community.

Summary and Conclusion

We have a responsibility to elevate every family's potential by addressing barriers that may limit their access to economic mobility services. Head Start staff should take time to learn about each family's circumstances in order to provide responsive support that is tailored to their unique needs and considerations. This effort includes engaging in active listening, focusing on family strengths, and leveraging community supports to build positive relationships based on trust and respect.

Resources

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (n.d.). *Building partnerships series for early childhood professionals: Guide to developing relationships with families*.
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (n.d.). *Building partnerships series for Head Start and Early Head Start professionals: Partnering with families of children who are dual language learners*.
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/partnering-families-dll.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2019). *Economic mobility toolkit: Resources for action*.
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-support-well-being/article/economic-mobility-toolkit-resources-action>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (n.d.). *The family partnership process: Engaging and goal-setting with families*. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/engaging-and-goal-setting-with-families.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2021). *Partnering with families to build economic security during*

emergencies. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-support-well-being/article/partnering-families-build-economic-security-during-emergencies>

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2020). *Strategies for supporting families experiencing homelessness and housing instability during COVID-19*. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-support-well-being/article/strategies-supporting-families-experiencing-homelessness-housing-instability-during-covid-19>

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