



Mapping Partnerships to Engage Families

A modified partnership mapping exercise can help organizations identify existing engagement groups, assess their level of activity, bolster collaboration, and address gaps in maximizing engagement from a variety of youth and families.

How Do I Engage Youth and Families?

- **To improve individual care:** Engagement of individuals and families with expertise in the care of a child or young person
- **To strengthen communities:** Engagement and leadership with organizations and groups that serve many children and families
- **To change systems of care:** Collaboration to create policies, practices, and systems that improve the lives of children and families



Types of Influence

What is a lever for engagement? A lever for engagement is a tool or mechanism that can influence or improve engagement efforts.



LEGISLATIVE

These platforms allow families to impact lawmaking and policy direction at the state or local level:

- Testimony opportunities
- Legislative policy cabinets



ADMINISTRATIVE

These mechanisms integrate family voices into the daily operations of public agencies:

- Public comment
- Advisory/oversight councils
- Administrative committees (e.g., Children's Cabinets)
- Family Liaison employees



COMMUNITY

Grassroots and local efforts help families build power collectively:

- Family to family (F2F) and family-led organizations
- Providers and community-based organizations
- Coalitions

Continuum of Engagement



Steps to Map Partnerships

1. Identify Existing Groups

Start by listing any existing groups where families are already actively engaged. Try and look beyond formal structures as some of the most involved families may participate through non-traditional channels. Examples of existing groups may include parent advocacy networks, youth development programs, faith-based organizations, school-based organizations, and literacy coalitions. Recognize that not every group will have the same level of engagement or partnership. Focus on each group's relevance to your organization's goals and their readiness to collaborate. It's neither realistic nor strategic to always maintain equal involvement with all groups so treat your list of partners as a dynamic, evolving resource that reflects changes in community needs, interests, and relationships over time.

2. Analyze Organizations

Once existing groups are identified, take the time to understand each organization's mission, vision, and desired outcomes. Determine how closely their goals align with your agency's objectives and assess their capacity to collaborate, considering factors like leadership structure, available time, and willingness to engage. If possible, connect directly with family members or representatives within these organizations to explore their interest in partnership and what roles they might be willing to play.

3. Map Relationships

Now it's time to start mapping relationships by visually or conceptually connecting the goals of your agency with the strengths and potential contributions of each partner. This process helps clarify how each organization may fill existing gaps in policy, programs, or outreach efforts. Consider the unique assets of each partner, such as specific insight, community trust, or communication networks, and how those assets can strengthen family engagement. Relationship mapping can also identify overlapping interests and opportunities for shared leadership.

4. Prioritize Level of Engagement

Finally, prioritize the level of engagement appropriate for each partner using your earlier analysis as a guide. While all partners play a role in supporting family engagement efforts, those with greater influence or reach may be prioritized earlier in the process allowing for a more effective use of resources and impact.

Partnership Planning Table

Name of Organization	Point of Contact (Name, Title, Email)	Type of Influence	Continuum of Engagement	Role/Type of Engagement

The Early Childhood Developmental Health Systems (ECDHS): Evidence to Impact Center was made possible through the support of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$4,740,000 with 0% financed from non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov).