

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Intangible Strategies

- Use a broad definition of “family” (and allow the youth to identify)
- Affirm the child’s connection to their kinship network and other positive adults in their life
- Ask family members what your program can do to be more family friendly
- Ask family members what motivates their child, what their strengths are, and what information the team needs to help their child be successful
- Work to build trust and positive relationships with family members
 - Treat them with dignity and respect
 - View family members as a partner, and an expert in their child’s needs and preferences
 - Ask their opinion about treatment options, service plans, and how to improve their child’s outcomes
 - Allow them opportunities to be heard, especially in court
 - Demonstrate understanding of the family’s challenges (and provide help where you can)
 - Provide peer support
 - Provide help understanding the system
 - Consider their background, values, norms, and concerns
 - Invite and answer their questions
- Allow families to contribute to decision-making regarding their child
- Invite family members to review and provide feedback about program policies and practices

Program Practice Strategies

- Identify family or meaningful adults early (during screening/intake)
- Work with families to establish agreements (roles, responsibilities, expectations, responses)
- Provide clear, consistent, and thorough information about the system, available services, program activities, the program’s expectations of their child, and their child’s progress
- Ask family members what they need or want, and connect them to services or resources

- Invite and expect family members to attend planning meetings, court, and family treatment
- Develop individualized service plans
- Provide written and verbal reminders of appointments, important dates, program expectations, etc.
- Set goals or expectations for the youth to spend time with family/meaningful adult
- Conduct surveys of families to gather feedback and input
- Identify and address barriers to participation (such as transportation, childcare, work schedules)
 - Offer transportation options
 - Hold court at times that are convenient for parents/guardians
 - Allow parents/guardians to participate virtually
- Conduct home visits
- Provide strength-based and trauma-informed treatment and other services
- Involve the family in developing and delivering incentives and sanctions
- Provide incentives or rewards that encourage family time (e.g., tickets, passes, or gift cards for family activities)

Structural Strategies

- Hire a parent engagement specialist
- Hire a system navigator
- Provide transportation
- Provide connections to community resources
- Provide classes, counseling, and coaching for parents/family members
 - Parenting education
 - Skills groups
 - Family counseling
 - Parent support groups
 - Training in adolescent development
- Offer family social events