

Handout 3: Family Support Principles

Overview

Family support is a set of relationships and principles that strengthens the developmental journey with families. Family support helps each family construct a solid foundation from which to foster the growth of its members. The Family Support Principles direct or guide our beliefs and instruct us on how to interact with families. Staff-family interaction is based on the following principles:

- **All Families Need Support.** Every family regardless of its level of income, education, or self-sufficiency requires support to deal with the profound challenges posed by today's society. Seeking and using support are critical family strengths, not deficits in family functioning.
- **Each Family Is Unique.** Families are diverse in composition, economic status, and cultural/ethnic background, and in the values, beliefs, and practices they follow. Families are supported best when appreciation and respect are shown for family differences.
- **The Goal of Working with Families Is to Strengthen, Not Substitute for, Family Responsibilities.** Families have core responsibilities for their members that society cannot replace, but can support through resources and services. Family responsibilities include economic support, health care and protection, education and socialization, and family maintenance.
- **Families Benefit Most from Family-Centered Support Services.** Family hopes, interests, strengths, and concerns need to be the primary focus of staff who work with families. The priorities and choices of families are the driving forces in decisions about ways to provide support and services.
- **Healthy Families Do Not Live in Isolation; They Are Part of Larger Systems.** Healthy families need, use, and foster relationships with extended family, friends, community groups, social organizations, schools, etc. One of the best ways to support families is to help them develop relationships with others in the various systems that surround them.