



# Engagement with Family

The Purpose: Engaging with family is vital to supporting our kids. The problem is some family members are not familiar with the child welfare system. It is our job to assist them through this process, but we have to build trust first. The tips below can help in starting this process.

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## Strategies for Engaging Family

- Treat family members with respect.
- Build a rapport by being genuine, transparent, empathetic, accepting and curious.
- Remember everyone has something to contribute; don't dismiss the input of any family member.
- Be respectful of time. Call or text when you are going to be delayed.
- Explain why you are there. Everyone is more comfortable when they know what to expect.
- Use google maps as a visual engagement tool to explore other family connections.
- Cultural identity and practices should be woven into our work. Cultural awareness includes cultural knowledge, cultural skills and culture encounter.
- Clearly explain the roles of each team member.
- Discuss the system and the reasons for various professionals.
- Provide your ability or lack of decision making abilities within the team.
- Remember there can be a perceived imbalanced power dynamic by a family member, try to eliminate this perception.
- Provide a disclaimer of difficult situations that need to be discussed.
- Explain confidentiality so relatives are aware of what can and cannot be shared with others.
- When working with translators, remember to ask the most important information first and to keep your focus on the person you are engaging with, not the translator.

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### What to do when encountering a resistant relative...

- Focus on the need to support the child.
- If someone is intense, remain calm.
- Multiple contacts are often necessary.
- Don't take it personally, everyone has their own story.
- Empower the relative, let them know you need their help and their voice matters.

### Why Involve Family?

- Children deserve to be with family.
  - Family members have a right to know that a child they're related to is in foster care.
  - Children have a right to stay connected to their history and culture.
  - Family participation is essential for good outcomes.
  - Increased placement stability, reunified faster.
  - It's the law.
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