

# ENGAGING FAMILIES INFO SHEET

Connecting with parents results in better outcomes for children. In order to help the children, we must engage the adults in their lives, because no matter what they have been through, *all families can thrive*.



**Notice Change** ► Change is a process. It takes time, and occurs incrementally. Instead of waiting for big changes, pay attention to the small ones, and stay focused on strengths. Empower families by noticing, acknowledging, and celebrating all changes, big and small, on a regular basis.

**Acknowledge Biases** ► We all have biases. Each of us must strive to reduce the impact of our biases on our relationships with families. Avoid making judgements and decisions from a place of prejudice. Remember that no one can fully know or understand another's unique family culture.

**Reduce Shame** ► Parents may carry a lot of shame. Be aware of shame triggers, and take opportunities to reduce - rather than create - more shame. Continually ask yourself, "Am I making a value judgment, or is this a safety concern?" Be respectful with your body language, and develop positive messages for difficult situations that acknowledge feelings, and provide messages of hope.

**Build Positive Teams** ► Room always exists for creating larger teams of support for yourself and for families. Take time to build healthy relationships with providers, foster parents, and natural supports. Encourage shared decision making every step of the way. All families deserve a team of people who are consistently giving them their best.

**Practice Humility** ► We do not have to know everything, nor must we do this work alone. Make it your practice to ask questions and acknowledge your own mistakes. Learn to see families as a resource, seek out others who can help, and delegate tasks to other team members. Embrace an atmosphere of curiosity and continuous learning. Expect to be surprised by families in positive ways.

**Recognize Future Impact** ► Our work with families has generational impacts. How a family experiences an organization creates a family culture about it, for better or worse. What type of experience are you creating for families in your organization? Utilize your relationships to leave a lasting impression of support, compassion, and nonjudgement that will be passed down to future generations.

**Honor Families' Lives** ► Be mindful that while this is your job, these are families' lives. Practice respect in all you do, with and without families present. The small acts of service you provide as part of your role matter greatly to families: listen well, return phone calls, and remain transparent about what needs to be accomplished for families to stay healthy, engaged, and thriving.

we help children by building:

RESPECTFUL

HONEST

COMPASSIONATE

RELATIONSHIPS

WITH THE ADULTS  
IN THEIR LIVES

CPPC SOUTHERN MAINE

[www.cpppcmaine.org](http://www.cpppcmaine.org)

207.523.5046

[info@cpppcmaine.org](mailto:info@cpppcmaine.org)



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