

Principles of Family Support Practice

1. Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
2. Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members – adults, youth, and children.
3. Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
4. Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
5. Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
6. Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
7. Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
8. Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
9. Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.

Premises of Family Support

1. Primary responsibility for the development and well-being of children lies within the family, and all segments of society must support families as they rear their children.
2. Assuring the well-being of all families is the cornerstone of a healthy society, and requires universal access to support programs and services.
3. Children and families exist as part of an ecological system.
4. Child-rearing patterns are influenced by parents' understanding of child development and of their children's unique characteristics, personal sense of competence, and cultural and community traditions and mores.
5. Enabling families to build on their own strengths and capacities promotes the healthy development of children.
6. The development processes that make up parenthood and family life create needs that are unique at each stage in the life span.
7. Families are empowered when they have access to information and other resources and take action to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.

Family Support Is...

A set of beliefs and an approach to strengthening and empowering families and communities so that they can foster the optimal development of children, youth, and adult family members.

A type of grassroots, community-based program designed to prevent family problems by strengthening parent-child relationships and providing whatever parents need in order to be good nurturers and providers. These programs have been proliferating across the country since the 1970s.

A shift in human services delivery that encourages public and private agencies to work together and to become more preventive, responsive, flexible, family-focused, strengths-based, and holistic – and thus more effective.

A movement for social change that urges all of us – policymakers, programs providers, parents, employers- to take responsibility for improving the lives of children and families. The family support movement strives to transform our society into caring communities of citizens that put children and families first and that ensure that all children and families get what they need to succeed.