Successful Family-Provider Relationships: Key Constructs, Related Outcomes, and Policy Implications

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Overview

- Introductions

- How did we get here?
  - Head Start, Family Support, Family-Centered Care
  - Recent Federal activities

- Why examine this topic?
Perspectives on Family-Provider Relationships

- Family support
- Family-centered care
- Parent involvement
- Family engagement
- Family-sensitive care
Providers aim to “support and strengthen family capacity to enhance child development” (Dunst, 2002) and strong family-provider relationships are viewed as a goal of programs.

- Multilateral relationships
- Social support
- Strengths-based practices
- Empowerment
- Respect
- Community-based

(Kagan, Powell, Weissbourd, & Zigler, 1987)

Provider sensitivity to needs of working families is component of quality. Sensitivity to families’ lives may enhance family-provider relationships, parent & child engagement, & well-being.

- Positive attitudes toward families
- Knowledge about families
- Responsive practices (Communication; Flexibility & logistical support; Resource & Referral)

(Bromer, Paulsell, Porter, Weber, Henly, & Ramsburg, in press)

Conceptual Models of Family-Provider Relationships in Early Care and Education

Providers view families as equal & reciprocal partners in supporting children’s learning; these relationships are seen as a vehicle for improving child outcomes.

- Defined roles
- Decision making
- Volunteering
- Two-way communication
- Shared responsibility

(Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009; HFRP, 2010)
Review of Multi-Disciplinary Literature on Family-Provider Relationships
Purpose & Methodology of Literature Review

Purposes:
- Identify common practices in successful family-provider relationships
- Explore associations between these relational practices and child, family, and provider outcomes
- Provide a framework and evidence to support future measures development

What Was Included?
- Types of Literature
- Fields
- Methodologies
- Samples
Successful Practices in Family-Provider Relationships

- **Provider Attitudes:**
  - Respect, commitment, empowerment, openness, systems orientation

- **Provider Knowledge:**
  - Theoretical knowledge: how families function
  - Substantive knowledge: child development, effective parenting practices
  - Specific knowledge about the child and family

- **Provider Behaviors:**
  - Relational skills: responsiveness, flexibility, supportiveness, building on family strengths, conscientious, persistent, communicative
  - Goal-oriented skills: joint goal setting and decision-making, collaborating, advocating, building social networks, connecting families to community supports, conveying information, creating a family-friendly atmosphere
### Child, Family, and Provider Outcomes Associated with Positive Relational Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Outcomes</th>
<th>Family Outcomes</th>
<th>Provider Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Health &amp; emotional well-being</td>
<td>• Greater satisfaction with services</td>
<td>• Altered perceptions about/interactions with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cognitive/academic skills</td>
<td>• Parental engagement in services/school-based settings</td>
<td>• More positive feelings towards role as a provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social skills</td>
<td>• Improved self-efficacy</td>
<td>• Improved relationships with families</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reduction in behavior problems</td>
<td>• Improved mental health</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Enhanced parent-child relationships</td>
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Relational Practices Associated with Child and Family Outcomes

- Empower families
  - emphasizing family strengths; inclusion of families in decisions
- Flexibility/individualizing of services
- Stable, trustworthy, collaborative relationships
- Positive communication
- Encouragement (validation, empathy, warmth)
- Family education (parenting skills & child development)
- Service coordination, integration, referrals, & advocacy
- Respect culture & language
- Involvement of fathers & extended family members
- Family-friendly facilities
- Build social support/social networks
Potential Frameworks for Identifying Domains and Common Elements of Family-Provider Relationships
### Domains and Characteristics of Family-Provider Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Behaviors (Practices)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect e.g. non-judgmental, acknowledging “range and validity of diverse perspectives” and opinions, avoiding intrusion</td>
<td>Theoretical knowledge e.g. how families function, importance of the culture of the family and sensitivity to their culture</td>
<td>Relational skills e.g. building on family strengths; responsiveness to child’s/family’s needs, preferences, culture; engage in regular two-way communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to the child/family e.g. flexible, accessible, sensitive</td>
<td>Substantive knowledge e.g. child development, parenting skills</td>
<td>Practical skills e.g. the ability to provide information, to families, to advocate for them, and to connect them to community resources, collaborate with families through joint goal-setting; create family-friendly events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment e.g. focusing on family strengths, believing in families’ competence and ability to solve problems, acknowledging parents as equal partners</td>
<td>Specific knowledge about the child/family e.g. understanding of child’s interests and abilities, family strengths, work schedules &amp; child care needs; cultural practices; home life</td>
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<td>Openness to change e.g. responsive practices, appreciation of broader context of families’ situations</td>
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## Initial Common Elements of Family-Provider Relationships Identified, June 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics from the Literature</th>
<th>Mutually Respectful and Reciprocal Communication</th>
<th>Gathering and Using Knowledge about Families</th>
<th>Responsiveness to Individual Family Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
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<td>Substantive Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific Knowledge</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relational Skills</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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Discussion Questions

- How do the core components of family-provider relationships relate to other conceptual models and/or areas in which you are conducting research?

- Are there any other components of family-provider relationships that you would add to the list presented here?

- What are the possibilities and/or challenges around measurement of family-provider relationships?

- What are the possibilities and/or challenges around professional development in the area of family-provider relationships?

- What are some possible directions for future research in the area of family-provider relationships?