



# DEAF-BLIND NETWORK FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT DEFINITION

Families are the guiding force behind all life decisions for a family member who is deaf-blind. Their unique lived experiences drive our shared responsibility to the goals that they choose for themselves and their loved one.

Family engagement is helping families find and elevate their voice while feeling a sense of belonging in their community. Family engagement is the genuine relationships in and outside the family, “the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children’s development, learning,

and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 1).

Family engagement promotes the sharing of resources with and among families, promotes equity and inclusiveness while remaining responsive to families’ cultures and languages, and honors each family’s dynamics, beliefs, values, and priorities. Connecting all family members within the deaf-blind community and their communities of choice increases belonging and empowers each of them to plan and enjoy their life.

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES

### Direct Service Priorities

1. Meet families where they are.
2. Grow family connections with other families and with the deaf-blind community.
3. Deepen professional sensitivity and understanding of the unique experiences and needs of individuals who are deaf-blind and their families.
4. Empower and honor the family as the child’s primary teacher and champion.
5. Strengthen family and self-advocate voices, stories, and confidence.
6. Deliver meaningful information in multiple modalities and transformative ways to reach families in all of their diversity, preferences, and needs at key moments in their personal journeys.
7. Enable equity of family engagement through universally accessible, culturally affirmative, and unbiased services and supports.
8. Amplify diverse family voices, inclusion, and leadership at all levels (i.e., classroom; local, state, and national levels; services, agencies, policy, and legislation; technical assistance systems; and national organizations). “Nothing about us without us.”

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES (continued)

## State/National Priorities for Systems Change

1. Ensure continuity and equitable resourcing for family engagement across states and territories.
2. Deepen the reach and impact of national organizations to the local family level.
3. Network nationally to expand each organization's individual capacity to support family engagement. "We are better together!"
4. Establish written collaborative agreements for family engagement across national partner organizations.

## REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Policy statement on family engagement from the early years to the early grades*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/policy-statement-on-family-engagement.pdf>

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