

QUALITY TIPS FOR QUALITY PROGRAMS

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Quality Tips for Quality Programs (QTQP) is a series of short tips created by the Youth Development Advisory Committee (YDAC) for Youth Enrichment (YEN) programs to consider. This QTQP focuses on family engagement. For more information, check out the links to additional resources as well.

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A LOOK AT



YEN PROVIDER STRATEGIES

How do YEN providers engage parents?

YEN providers often plan special events to help families navigate the middle-to-high-school and high-school-to-college transitions. Many also offer dinner, childcare, or bus passes to make participation more likely. Some YEN staff also plan family engagement events around out-of-town trips like college visits. Parents are often required to attend orientation to complete applications so that their teens can participate on the trip. Since all of their friends are going on the trip, youth are sure to remind their parents to attend the orientation!

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FOR YEN PROGRAMS

Research shows that the parent-program relationship that develops through effective family engagement can be important for a youth's continued success in school and other activities, yet programs serving teens find that it can be challenging. Parents are less likely to pick up teens at the program, limiting the possibility of weekly face-to-face contacts. Some providers may be reluctant to contact parents or invite them to the program as they may fear it might turn youth off from participating in their programs. Nevertheless, programs with high rates of participation tend to engage parents and use [multiple strategies](#) to do so. There is also a building body of literature on [evidence-based strategies](#), promising practices, and even a [toolkit](#).

Effective family engagement calls for [planning practical and creative strategies](#) to encourage a culture of shared responsibility, that is, parents and programs working together. Refresh your strategies and techniques by trying something new. Here are some ideas:

- **Find out what is important to your participants and their families.** Have youth help create a survey or plan a night where parents can share their interests and concerns.
- **Be responsive.** Programs can support community needs and interest. For example, if families are concerned about youth violence in their community, connect parents to collaboratives such as ["Together for Children"](#) to inspire them to be part of the solution.
- **Involve youth in the conversation.** If youth have similar concerns, incorporate a project in your program to help them express themselves and develop solutions. Help youth develop community service projects, create songs, produce films, or write poetry around the theme and then hold a family night to showcase their work.
- **Send texts or emails to share resources with families that address what they care about and what youth care about.** For example, parents may be worried about paying for college and youth may be interested in fun technology. Connect them with the Miami-Dade County Public Library's ["The Library for Teens"](#) where they can access college resources, homework help, free museum passes for the family, and free programs like "YouMedia" where teens, ages 14-19 can design video games, create podcasts, mix music, produce films and more.
- **Make all events fun.** Using icebreakers can help, but be creative. For example, as an opening activity, create a game show such as "How well do you know your teenager?"

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