



FACTSHEET

The 4Es Framework for Culturally Relevant Family Support & Engagement

Working effectively with equity-deserving families requires a critical lens that focuses on engagement, and a strength-based approach that acknowledges how the complex histories of families influence parenting. When facilitated in culturally relevant and community-based ways, family support and engagement can serve as a protective factor for youth wellbeing.

This factsheet outlines a shift in practice to approaches that are reflective of social and economic contexts, and that centre empathy and cultural humility, supporting inclusive, equitable, intentional, and meaningful engagement with families.

This framework has been adapted to engage equity-deserving families of various cultures, experiences, and intersecting identities.

01. Exploration

- » Acknowledge the cultural wealth of parents/caregivers.
- » Expand your definitions of ‘family’ or ‘parent’ to include other formal and informal caregivers who may be central in the lives of the young people with whom you work.
- » Ask families about their experiences with racism, ableism, heterosexism, sexism/genderism, and other forms of oppression.
- » Ask about parenting practices and values (e.g., education; respect; responsibility; the influence of spirituality and/or the church; the importance of the ‘village’, including family members, elders, friends, community members, and supportive institutions).
- » Build on families’ **Funds of Knowledge** – their culturally-based practices and resources (p. 21) – and engage families in ways that are responsive to their needs.
- » Recognize the ways that families use different forms of capital (e.g., cultural, social, racial, familial) to navigate, manage, and resist marginalization, and prepare young people to do the same.
- » Support how families can use *navigational capital*: the ability to maneuver through and manipulate institutions and practices designed to exclude equity-deserving families.
- » Be willing to listen and do not make assumptions.
- » Remember that families are the experts on their own lives.

02. Expectations

- » Be intentional and proactive in engaging families and young people.
- » Recognize and mitigate barriers to parent/caregiver engagement (e.g., lack of time, stress, transportation, childcare).
- » Learn how best to engage families; understand how families want to support their children, and support parents and caregivers in meeting these expectations.
- » Include and recognize parents and caregivers as valued partners and contributors.

03. Education

- » Recognize that a history of disenfranchisement has barred families from participating in high-quality educational systems.
- » Educate parents/caregivers and young people on how to navigate complex institutions and systems to ensure that they can advocate for their rights.
- » Engage in community partnerships to build networks and facilitate relationship-building across caregivers and communities.
- » Ensure that families are connected to services and resources – and to each other – to build social capital and networks.

04. Empowerment

- » Build on families’ assets and capacities.
- » Equip families with the tools to address the challenges of parenting and life obstacles.
- » Provide opportunities that meet parents and caregivers ‘where they are at’.
- » Create “a sense of self-agency” (p. 22) and avoid intervening for a family.
- » Hold high expectations about their role as parents/caregivers.

ADAPTED FROM The Black Family: Re-imagining Family Support and Engagement (2013) by Iheoma U. Iruka, in *Being Black is Not a Risk Factor: A Strengths-Based Look at the State of the Black Child* (pp. 18–23), National Black Child Development Institute, and in consultation with Carol Wade, MSW, PhD.

