# A Family’s Guide to Family Engagement

## Welcome and Introduction

This "Family and Professional Resource Guide for Family Engagement” provides information for families and professionals that can help support family engagement in all teams working to help children with delays and disabilities reach their full developmental and educational potential. Family engagement means that families are truly valued as an essential part of their child’s education and development.

Parents who take an active role in creating their child’s plan for services and supports will feel included and be better prepared to advocate for their child’s needs. This resource guide will give parents the tools they need to understand how to engage with teams to be an effective advocate for their child. Professionals who treat parents as respected partners and experts on their child will facilitate better planning, decision-making, and support for families and better educational and developmental outcomes for children.

Each chapter of this resource guide contains information for families and information for professionals, although both families and professionals will benefit from all of the information. In addition to information about family engagement, perspectives from families, perspectives from professionals, and checklists to gauge how well family engagement is working, there are resources on many topics to support family engagement work. We hope this resource guide is used to strengthen family engagement, support confident parents, build strong relationships, and engage in effective team decision-making.

The information in this resource guide was assembled by the Ohio Early Childhood Inclusion Indicators Cohort Team and was made possible through a grant from National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center.  The members of the Cohort Team include parents of children with delays, disabilities, and complex medical issues, and representatives from the following organizations:

* Burbank Early Childhood School
* Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
* Groundwork Ohio
* Disability Rights Ohio
* Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)
* Ohio Head Start Association, Inc.
* Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD)
* Ohio Department of Education
* Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities
* Ohio Department of Job & Family Services
* Ohio Department of Medicaid
* Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
* Ohio Department of Health
* State Support Team Region 4
* University of Toledo

*Thank you,*

*Ohio Early Childhood Inclusion Indicators Cohort Team*

## Table of Contents:

1. Lived Experience
2. Fostering Family Engagement: What is Engagement and What are the Benefits of Being Engaged
3. What to do When You Suspect a Delay
4. Understanding the Differences Between Medical Diagnoses and Educational Eligibility
5. Understanding the Evaluation Process
6. A. You Have Rights: IDEA Law 0-3 (Early Intervention)

B. You have Rights: IDEA Law ages 3-21

1. Partnering With Your Child’s Team
2. Child Assessment Eligibility Determination- Ways to Participate
3. Successful IFSP/Medical/504/IEP Teams
4. Empowering Your Child
5. Finding Supports for Your Family
6. What to do When You Experience Discrimination

General Resources

Glossary and Acronym List (with hyperlinks)

Helpful Organizations

Template Forms for Families

Template Forms for Professionals

Additional Print Resources

## General Definitions:

**Family:** Families provide support, love, and care, and a sense of belonging by providing social, emotional, physical, and other support to each other.  Family includes parents, brothers, sisters, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents and others who share responsibility and support for each other.

**Family Engagement:** Family Engagement is a shared accountability where schools and other community agencies and organizations reach out to work with families in meaningful ways and where families actively support their children's learning and development from birth to adulthood.

**Professional:** A professional is a member of a profession who has special experience and expertise in their area of practice. A professional is someone whose job requires special education, training, and skill and who is subject to standards and ethics in their field.

**Team:** A team is a group of diverse individuals, all working together for a common purpose. The individuals on a team should have common goals and objectives and work together toward achieving those goals.