



## Parent and Family Engagement

Child care programs that implement family engagement through parent and family education and involvement recognize the influence of families regarding their child’s education. Family engagement helps establish the home and school environments as a joint base of support for children’s outcomes. For more information, visit the Family Education and Involvement Resources [here](#).

### Parent and Family Education

Parent and family education provides parents and caregivers with knowledge, resources, and support to develop parenting skills to enhance child and family well-being. It can also help parents and caregivers learn the tools and strategies necessary to provide a positive and nurturing environment at home where their children may thrive physically, emotionally, and cognitively.

Texas Rising Star looks at the many different ways child care programs provide parent and family education to the families they serve. Some measures are required for certification, while others are points-based.

Measure	Scored by
Parent Handbook	Required for certification
Parent Orientation	Points awarded
Child Growth and Development Resources	Points awarded

### Parent Handbook

The parent handbook communicates a child care program’s expectations, policies, and procedures to participating families and children. Child Care Regulation Minimum Standards requires child care programs to provide specific policies. For Texas Rising Star, the following policies must be included in the program’s parent and family handbook:

- **Program Philosophy and Goal**—Informs families about the educational philosophy of the child care program
- **Curriculum Goals**—Informs families about the curriculum and why it is used to support children’s growth and development
- **Family Participation**—Outlines the program’s expectations for family participation and how families may participate in program activities
- **Drop-off and Pickup**—Provides expectations of how and when families drop off and pick up their children
- **Parent Conferences**—Provides expectations of how the program will communicate with the families about their child’s growth and development
- **Fee Structure**—Outlines all fees (such as tuition, registration, and supplies) applicable to the child care program, including when they are due and how fees and tuition may be paid (such as by check, cash, or online)



- **Late Payments and Refund Information**—Provides information regarding late payments of fees and tuition and how families can request a refund (which should include information about the amount and due dates)
- **Absences**—Provides procedures to families for when children will be absent (whether due to illness, vacation, or other reasons) and how those absences are communicated by the family to the program and if there are any fees tied to absences (such as whether tuition is still paid or tuition is prorated for advance vacation notifications)
- **Clothing Guidelines**—Provides guidance to families on weather- and play-appropriate clothing and footwear to ensure children’s safety indoors and outdoors
- **Inclement Weather**—Outlines the program’s actions when inclement weather occurs, which includes if or when the program may be closed due to inclement weather and how the information will be communicated to families
- **Withdrawal**—Outlines the unenrollment process for when a family has decided to leave the program or if the program is no longer able to provide care for the child
- **Physical Activity**—Informs families about how often children are provided the opportunity for physical activity while in the program’s care
- **Screen Time**—Informs families about what ages/classrooms screen time is allowed and for how long (A program can have a “no screen time” policy.)
- **Nutrition Education**—Informs families on safe meal practices, providing healthy options and home lunch practices
- **Breastfeeding and Resources** (only for programs who serve infants ages 0–17 months)—Outlines the program’s policy on breastfeeding, including where resources are located, how breast milk will be stored, and where a parent may choose to breastfeed their child
- **Contact Information**—Informs families on how they can update their contact information without program assistance
- **Annual Review and Updates**—Informs families that the handbook is reviewed annually and updated as necessary (The program must provide documentation that the review occurs.)

Note: Although policies are required to exist, Texas Rising Star does not dictate how they should be written.

For more information or sample handbooks, explore the Texas Rising Star Digital Resource Collection [here](#).

## Family Orientation

Upon enrollment, an orientation is conducted to support families in understanding more about the child care program and how it operates, ultimately confirming that the program is the best fit for the family. Signed and dated documentation of the completed orientation must be included in the child’s file for record and reference. Programs may offer any or all of the following practices and information during the orientation:

- A facility tour
- Teaching staff introduction
- Opportunity to visit with a classroom teacher



- Opportunity for an extended classroom visit by both parent and child
- Overview of the family handbook
- Overview of community resources and family supports
- Information regarding child development and developmental milestone resources
- Discussion of or information regarding:
  - arrival and late arrival policies
  - Texas Rising Star certification
  - Child Care Services (child care scholarships)
  - the importance of consistent arrival times and routines
  - limited use of technology while on-site (for example, refraining from cell phone use)
  - the role and influence of families

Information solely provided in the family handbook can be counted if the family handbook overview is one of the offerings during the orientation.

### **Child Growth and Development Resources**

Many families are unaware of how a child grows and develops; therefore, child care programs are typically the first to communicate developmental milestone information, child behavior concerns, and other child-rearing information to families.

The following are ways a child care program may provide these critical resources:

- Create a parent board, shelf, binder, or area near the child care program entrance to hold and/or post printed resources related to child growth and development, as well as local community resources. Boards can be bulletin boards, designated wall space, or tri-fold poster boards.
- Provide a digital library of resources related to child growth and development on the child care program's website.
- Provide annual educational and training opportunities to families on child development topics via in-person or virtual meetings, gatherings, or events.
- Create a quarterly or monthly newsletter for families that provides resources for or discusses child growth and development topics.
- Refer families, as needed, to other professionals that can support them in understanding their child's development.

#### **Where are Free Resources on Child Development?**

- [Developmental Milestone Checklists](#)
- [Infant Toddler Checklists](#)
- [Outreach materials from Early Childhood Intervention](#)

Other resources include books, pamphlets, articles, newsletters, and handouts from reputable agencies and local community programs.

### **Family Involvement**

Family involvement in the child care program is important to establishing home-school relationships. Providing families with opportunities to be an active participant in their child's learning builds a strong



foundation and helps ensure future school readiness and success. Families can collaborate with programs to problem-solve and make decisions regarding their child’s care.

Texas Rising Star looks at the different ways child care programs provide opportunities for parents and families to be involved in their child’s education. Some measures are required for certification, while others are points-based.

Measure	Scored by
Addressing Challenging Behaviors	Required for certification
Written Communication	Required for certification
Community Resources	Required for certification
Parent Input/Feedback	Points awarded
Parent/Teacher Conferences	Points awarded
Program Events	Points awarded

### Challenging Behaviors

A written policy outlining how a program addresses challenging behaviors assures families that they are a part of the discussion, process, and next steps regarding strategies to address these behaviors. This must be a policy included in the parent and family handbook and should include how families and program staff will communicate about strategies and supports to promote school readiness.

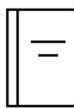
### Written Communication

Written communication about a child’s experiences at the child care program (through paper or digital means) is a formal record of the program working together with families.

Some examples are:



daily sheets/emails



communication log



apps

**Be ready to show off that communication!**

### Community Resources

Having community resources available for families without having to request them is important. These resources help families find local supports regarding their family’s or child’s needs and can be placed within the same space as the child growth and development resources.

#### Free Community Resources

- Provide contact information for local pediatricians, counselors, dentists, or other health professionals and agencies, such as Medicaid or the [Children’s Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\)](#)



- Connect families to social services, such as [Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#) and [Child Care Services](#)
- Connect families to workforce supports, such as [Local Workforce Development Boards](#)

### **Parent Input and Feedback**

Offering parents the opportunity to provide feedback about their child’s program is vital for families to feel connected and valued as members of the program’s community. There are numerous ways to solicit voluntary, anonymous feedback that can be used to inform potential changes to the child care program.

- Surveys (online or paper)       Suggestion Boxes       Parent Meetings

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Conferences are a way for families to connect with their child’s teacher regarding developmental progress. The opportunity should exist for families to, at minimum, request a formal conversation with their child’s teacher or the administrator at any time (upon request). Child care programs may choose to designate specific conference dates once or twice a year for families to attend. When doing so, there should be a documented system in place regarding how the program will share the child’s progress with the families, which includes signed acknowledgement of the conference and information shared.

### **Program Events**

Families should be specifically invited each year to participate in a variety of program activities and events, which are more than an open-door policy or birthday/holiday celebration. Announcements and invitations to these events can be documented through program calendars, email, printed invitations, sign-in/sign-up sheets, flyers, or social media posts.

**How will your program support involving and educating the families you serve?**