



Federation of Families of South Carolina

Family Involvement: Critical to Success for Special Needs Children

Families play an important part in their child's education and social development. Family involvement in schools and all other areas of their child's development is necessary for your child's success. Children in special education, especially those having social/emotional difficulties, are at great risk and need even more support and involvement from parents/caregivers.

If your child is at risk because of emotional, behavioral or learning difficulties, your involvement in every area of your child's life is critical. Partnering with the school for their success in education, making sure your child gets to important doctor and therapy appointments and taking an active part all makes a difference in your child's success.

The Federation of Families of SC provides information, support and training to help parents of children with social/emotional and mental health diagnoses learn how to better support their child and where to find assistance.

The information below is to help you understand your role in your child's social and emotional development, by providing definitions of family involvement and sharing proven benefits for children when their family is involved.

Family: This includes the child and parent or primary caregiver/guardian of the child or youth. This could be a single mother or father, foster parent, grandparent, older sibling or other relative.

Family Involvement: Any role or activity that enables families to have direct and meaningful input into and influence on systems, policies, programs, or practices affecting services or community life for children and families.

Benefits of Family Involvement:

- Higher test scores
- Better grades
- Better attendance
- Higher levels of homework completion
- More positive student motivation
- Improved attitudes about school work

Darsch, Miao, & Shippen. (2004) A Model for Involving Parents of Children with Learning and Behavior Problems in the Schools: Preventing School Failure 48(3), 24-35



Family Involvement has a positive effect on student behavior

- When families are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.
- When students report feeling support from both home and school, they have more self-confidence, feel school is more important, and they tend to do better in school.
- Student at-risk behaviors such as alcohol use, violence, and other anti-social behaviors decrease as parent involvement increases.

(National PTA, 10/28/2005)

Family-Driven Care

The Federation of Families supports and advocates for the concept of families, parents or other primary caregivers, at the center of decision-making, in caring for their child. They are the experts. As families navigate education and healthcare systems, they become knowledgeable participants and experts regarding what works or does not work for families. As a result, family members should be looked to in the development of programs and policies that determine care and education of our children.

The definition below was developed by families through the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

"Family driven" means families have a primary decision-making role in the care of their own children, as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, state, tribe, territory, and nation. This includes:

- ✓ Choosing culturally and linguistically competent supports, services, and providers;
- ✓ Setting goals;
- ✓ Designing, implementing, and evaluating programs;
- ✓ Monitoring outcomes; and
- ✓ Partnering in funding decisions.

For information, education or training to become more involved in your child's education, care and partnerships with schools and other professionals, contact:

Federation of Families of South Carolina

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