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Coach's Corner



Family Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Much like most of this year, this summer has been unlike any other. Many field trips, barbeques, performances, and other events are canceled in most early care and education programs across Delaware. While this is disappointing, it does not mean that we cannot make what is left of the summer and the upcoming school year enjoyable. We just have to get creative!

One of the things many have been struggling with during this time is feeling isolated. Thankfully, we live in a time when we have many ways to stay connected even if we are not together in person. Many families may be feeling a bit disconnected since they cannot enter early child care and education facilities at the moment. While we must limit the amount of people coming in and out of our buildings and homes, we can still include families in our programs.

Many current options for connection require technology and internet access. It may be helpful to send a survey to the families in your program to see what technology is available to them and if they are able to access the internet. Many of the options discussed in this article can be accessed with just a Smartphone!



Communication with Families

This is a great time to start using an app for daily communication with families. There are several apps that family members and teachers can download to share information. Switching from paper to electronic communication also means less items to transfer between home and child care. This is just one more way to keep our children healthy and safe! Below are a few user-friendly apps that are available for family communication:

[Brightwheel- https://mybrightwheel.com/](https://mybrightwheel.com/)

[HiMama- https://www.himama.com/](https://www.himama.com/)

[ProCare Connect-https://explore.procareconnect.com/capterra](https://explore.procareconnect.com/capterra)

Please keep in mind that Delaware Stars does not specifically endorse any of these programs

Conferences with Families

During this time, families are unable to attend conferences in person, but that doesn't mean they can't happen! Conferences between early childhood educators and children's families are even more important during this time since daily, casual conversations are less likely to happen with drop-off/pick-up happening outside or at the entrance to the building rather than within the program. Consider doing phone conferences or video conferences using Zoom, Facetime, or Skype. Zoom may seem a little intimidating at first but it is very user-friendly and there are many tutorials available! Directors, consider making a Zoom tutorial part of a staff meeting!

[Zoom Tutorial- https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-video-tutorials](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-video-tutorials)

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Family Events and Participation

Family events are such an important aspect of early childhood education. It helps to build community within the program. More than ever, there is a need for a sense of community in our lives. Just because we cannot conduct events or invite families to participate in the typical manner, does not mean we should abandon them completely. Below are some simple, yet meaningful, ways to include families during COVID-19.

Birthday celebrations- Since families cannot come in to celebrate their child's birthday, consider including them via Zoom, Facetime, or Skype. Families can join in singing happy birthday to their child!

Zoom guest readers- Invite special family members to read a story to the children via Zoom! Children can choose their favorite book from home and then have their special person read the story to their class!

Displays and performances- Consider inviting families to a virtual "art show"! Decorate the classroom with children's creative artwork and show it off to families via Zoom! This could potentially be done during the day with each child talking about his/her own piece of artwork. Another idea is to have the children learn some songs to sing in a virtual concert for families!

Parent/Guardian meeting- Consider doing a "Family Check-in" via Zoom. Invite families to talk about how they are handling our "new normal". Talk about ways families and teachers can support each other during this time. This would be a great time to share some wellness resources with families. Here are some examples:

- o Mindfulness Practices for Families- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3406-mindfulness-practices-for-families>
- o NAEYC Blog Series: Supporting Families and Teachers Through Change- <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/supporting-families-and-teachers-through-change-blog-series>

These past few months have not been easy on anyone. We've all heard the quote that "it takes a village to raise a child". This village is more important now than ever. When families and educators work together, they can cultivate amazing opportunities for our children. Continue to find ways to connect with the families in your program. I have faith that Delaware's early childhood community will emerge from this pandemic stronger than ever!