CHAPTER 8

Family Involvement

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

This Chapter covers the following Core Competencies:

16: Adequately informs, shares information, and collaborates with important adults

20: Communicates effectively with other staff, stakeholders, and parents

Parents and Caregivers Are Powerful.

Decades of research show that when parents and caregivers are involved in their child's education, students have higher grades and test scores, better school attendance, increased motivation, decreased use of drugs and alcohol, and fewer instances of violent behavior (Parent Teacher Association). In addition, family participation in a child's education is twice as predictive of the child's academic success as family socioeconomic status (Walberg, 1984).

But as you know, most parents and caregivers face barriers to getting involved in the school. Some parents and caregivers work more than one job, work long hours, or are raising a family alone. Others simply don't feel comfortable in a school environment—either because English is not their primary language or they experienced their own school days as challenging.

I Know Family Involvement Is Important, But...

How can you encourage parents and caregivers to be more of a presence on campus? Remember that just as children need to feel safe and supported at the school, so do their parents and caregivers. Parents and caregivers need to feel:

• respected,

• listened to, and

• appreciated.

The following pages offer some tips and guidelines to getting—and keeping—parents and caregivers involved in your program. Please also see Chapter 3: *Community Partnerships and Collaboration* for specific information about recruiting parent, caregiver, and family volunteers.

QSA SECTION 8

In our program families and caregivers have opportunities to participate in the program and staff adequately inform and collaborate with families and caregivers

In our Program...	Low Quality Indicators	Approaching Quality Indicators	Quality Indicators
Families and caregivers have opportunities to participate in the program	❑ Families & Caregivers' interaction with the program is limited to drop- offs and pick-ups (if that)	❑ Regular orientations are hosted for families to learn about the program, meet staff and see what their youth have been working on. ❑ Parents are invited to give input into the program through formal surveys, and informal conversations	❑ Families and caregivers have opportunities to play leadership roles (serve on planning or evaluation committees, participate in program assessment, run book clubs, fundraise, etc.). ❑ Families are invited to participate in special events in the program
Staff adequately inform and collaborate with families and caregivers	❑ Only some staff know the parents ❑ Parent-involvement only occurs when there is a problem between the youth and the program ❑ Staff do not have the skills to communicate with parents (due to language barriers, etc.)	❑ When youth are picked up staff wave hello and good- bye. Staff know parents' names ❑ During pick-up times staff check in with caregivers about youth ❑ Staff respect confidentiality regarding knowledge of participant ❑ Staff inform youth before sharing sensitive information with parents	❑ Staff communicate constructive feedback (concerns, accomplishments, etc.) about youth with caregivers in a respectful, confidential way. ❑ Staff know families well enough to refer them to other agencies with resources (family camps, food pantries, adult education, etc.) ❑ At least 1 staff member exists who can speak multiple languages ❑ Staff communication with families uses a variety of communication systems (phone calls, emails, 1:1 meetings, sign language, etc.)
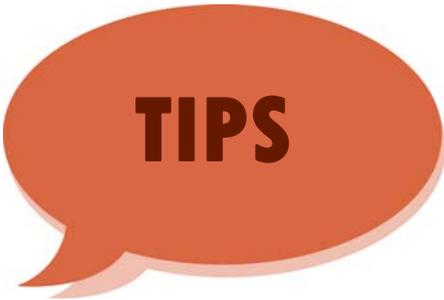
TIPS

Demonstrate that the afterschool program values parents and caregivers.

❑ **Let them know that they are welcomed and appreciated**. For example, offer regular family dinners, potlucks, coffees, field trips, Bingo Nights. Host a "Bring Your Parent or Caregiver to Program Day." Develop incentive programs, such as "Parent or Caregiver of the Year" awards. Create a Family & Caregiver Bulletin Board with pictures of events, announcements, etc.

❑ **Make information easily accessible to parents and caregivers** by translating all materials into their native languages, hiring multilingual program staff, and providing staff contact information. Provide food and childcare at meetings.

❑ **Coordinate events with your participants' school**. Show respect for families' busy schedules by timing your events to coincide with those held by school day staff. For example, hold afterschool conferences that coincide with the school's parent and caregiver conferences, and collaborate with school day staff to co-plan shared events (e.g. piggy back on Literacy Nights or Family Health Nights). Or, organize neighborhood-wide events for parents and caregivers with children at multiple school sites.

Invite parents and caregivers to contribute.

❑ **Ask for input from parents and caregivers**. Use surveys (translated when needed) to assess families' interests, talents, and resources. Connect with your school or organization's preexisting parent and caregiver groups (e.g. PTA, School Site Council).

❑ **Let the parents and caregivers take a lead** in integrating their ideas and resources into the afterschool program. Encourage them to volunteer, to conduct garage sales and bake sales, and to share their talents with your program. (Also see "Recruiting Parent, Caregiver, and Family Volunteers" in Chapter 3.)

Make parents and caregivers partners in your program.

❑ **Be a resource for parents and caregivers**. Provide resources such as workshops, computer training, or informational panels at times that are convenient for working parents and caregivers (e.g. Friday evenings). Then, expand parents' and caregivers' awareness of the different services available to them at the afterschool program.

❑ **Support positive relationships between youth and their parents or caregivers**. Afterschool staff should regularly phone parents and caregivers about positive behaviors (not just when youth are in trouble). Program coordinators should build time into staff schedules for them to make this outreach.

❑ **Foster the formation of a Parent and Caregiver Advisory Committee** that can plan orientations for new parents and caregivers, meet with the leadership team to develop goals for the afterschool program, or assist with coordinating the program's schedule. (Also see Chapter 1, "How to Create an Afterschool Program Leadership Team.")

HOW TO

Effectively Communicate with Parents and Caregivers

1. Start off the year by orienting parents and caregivers – this will open lines of communication right from the start.

- Schedule the orientation at a time that is convenient for parents and caregivers (e.g. after 5pm), provide childcare, and provide translators (see "How To Hold a Family Night").

- Have afterschool program applications available at the orientation.

- Distribute program rules (so parents/caregivers can reinforce them at home), policies and procedures (late pick-up policy, early pick-up policy, absence policy, etc.), and calendars for the year (including any dates the program will be closed).

- Allow time for Q & A.

- Include time to complete parent and caregiver surveys (see "How To Conduct Parent and Caregiver Surveys").

2. Collect family contact information, and give out your contact information.

- Provide forms to collect home numbers, cell numbers, work numbers, and alternate relatives or guardians who can be contacted.

3. Piggy-back on school day or organization communication structures.

- Tap into the PTA, Parent Liaison, newsletter, weekly mailers, etc. (see Chapter 4: *Alignment and Linkage to School Day*).

4. Put it all in writing.

- Create a program newsletter with upcoming events and youth-written articles (see Chapter 4: *Alignment and Linkage to School Day*).

- Create hard copies of program rules, policies, calendars, etc.

- Keep extra copies on hand to distribute whenever needed.

- Translate all materials.

5. Provide regular phone calls home.

- Set up a schedule with staff for calling parents and caregivers to check in at least once a month.

6. Send written progress reports home as well.

- Weekly or monthly progress reports keep parents and caregivers in the loop about their child's progress. (See Tool: Daily Program Log for Parents)

7. Personally invite parents and caregivers to tour the program and attend Family Nights.

- Hold a "Bring Your Parent or Caregiver to the Program" day.

- Call parents and caregivers to personally invite them to events.

What Should I Have in My Toolbox?

- ❑ Written materials about the program in multiple languages.
- ❑ Forms to collect contact information for all parents and caregivers.
- ❑ Multilingual staff.

I have a tight budget, what is this going to cost me?

- ❑ Add preference for bilingual candidates to your job descriptions: free.
- ❑ Use Google translation or school district translation if you are a school-based program: free.
- ❑ Reproduction costs for newsletter, program materials, etc.: free or low-cost.

TOOL

Sample Afterschool Program Information Letter

Dear Families,

The Afterschool Program would like to invite your child to participate in our program. Through state, federal, and local funding, the Afterschool Program provides **an hour of enrichment activities, an hour of homework assistance, as well as time for snack and recess**. The Program is designed not only to provide general homework assistance, but also to offer enrichment activities to reinforce what the children learn during the regular school day. Participants will have the opportunity to take part in activities pertaining to health, arts, sports, youth leadership and community service. The Afterschool Program opens at 2:40 PM, Monday through Friday, when school is in session; the program does NOT operate on school holidays.

Attendance:

Because program funding is based on attendance, DAILY attendance is required for the full time period. If your child will not be attending program for a day, **you MUST write a note explaining the absence**. If your child has 3 or more unexcused absences, your child's placement in the Afterschool Program will be forfeited to a youth on the waitlist.

Dismissal:

Dismissal is from **5:20 PM – 5:40 PM**. If you are late in picking up your child 3 times, your child's placement in the Afterschool Program will be forfeited to a youth on the waitlist. If your child is not picked up by 6:00 PM, s/he will be picked up at the police station located on 766 Vallejo Street.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Afterschool Program, please feel free to contact the Afterschool Program Site Coordinator.

We hope to work with your child and you in creating a wonderful learning experience.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Program Site Coordinator
Afterschool Program Site Coordinator

RETURN the bottom portion of this page AND the application packet to the Main Office.
Program **BEGINS** on Monday, September 13.

- CUT OR TEAR HERE ✂ -

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM PERMISSION SLIP
❑ YES, MY CHILD, _____   IN GRADE _____ **WILL** PARTICIPATE IN THE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM.
❑ NO, MY CHILD, _____   IN GRADE _____ **WILL NOT** PARTICIPATE IN THE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM.

Modified from the Chinatown Beacon Center Program at Spring Valley Elementary School, San Francisco Unified School District.

TOOL

Daily Program Log for Parents

Use the grid below to share information with family members or caregivers about participants' daily activities. Each day an afterschool staff writes in the 'Program Note' area to describe activities, challenges or accomplishments (including homework or school work). The afterschool staff then sign it, hand it to the parent/guardian at pick up, and then they sign it to indicate they have received the information.

Participant's Name:		Week of (Monday's Date):			
Day (Circle)	M/T/W/TH/F	M/T/W/TH/F	M/T/W/TH/F	M/T/W/TH/F	M/T/W/TH/F
Write Date	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Program Note:					
Staff Signature:					
Parent Signature:					

HOW TO

Conduct Parent and Caregiver Surveys

How do you know that your afterschool program is meeting the needs of families? There's one way to find out: Ask!

When should parent and caregiver surveys be administered?

If you would like to know which services are most likely to be accessed by parents, caregivers, and participants (for program planning), put out surveys in the beginning of the year.

If you would like to know whether the afterschool program was effective in meeting its goals, survey parents and caregivers at the end of the year.

What is the best way to solicit feedback?

Simply sending a survey home or via email will often yield a low return rate. Here are some ideas to increase the number of surveys you receive back:

- Distribute the survey during a Family Night and allow time for it to be completed then and there.

- Translate the survey into the home languages of your parents and caregivers.

- Offer incentives for completing the surveys. For example, provide food at the survey table, or offer a chance in a raffle.

What can you do with the feedback?

Use parent and caregiver feedback to plan activities, select topics for parent and caregiver workshops, report successes to and funders, and learn how to better address the needs of the families you are serving.

What Should I Have in My Toolbox?

- ❑ Sample parent and caregiver survey (See Tools).
- ❑ Incentives (gift cards, raffle prizes, food).

$ I have a tight budget, what is this going to cost me?

- ❑ Reproduction cost for surveys.
- ❑ Incentives to increase return rates: free (donations) or low-cost.

TOOL

Sample Parent and Caregiver Survey

Thank you for having your child participate in the Afterschool Program (ASP) at Super Cool Middle School. We hope your children have enjoyed their afterschool experience. Each year we survey our parents and caregivers to help us evaluate and improve our staff and programming. We encourage you to fill out this survey with your child. Responses are confidential if you wish. As a thank you for returning the survey to school by March 24th's Afterschool Academy Awards you will be entered into a raffle to receive a $50 supermarket gift card.

NAME: (THIS IS ONLY NEEDED IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE ENTERED INTO THE RAFFLE.)

1. **Grade your child is in:** ❑ 6th ❑ 7th ❑ 8th

2. **My child attended the ASP _____ days a week** ❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4 ❑ 5

3. **My child was enrolled in the following clubs: (circle all that apply)**

Homework Help: ❑ P2S ❑ SFTEAM ❑ Computer Literacy

Enrichment:

❑ Gardening	❑ Martial Arts / Lion Dance	❑ Your Face Productions	❑ Sailing	❑ Ping Pong
❑ Astronomy	❑ Healthy Girls! Healthy Lives!	❑ Jr. Ecologist	❑ Drama	❑ Tech Team
❑ Yearbook	❑ Lights! Camera! Action!	❑ Bike Shop	❑ Tennis	❑ Bike Club
❑ Pets Unlimited	❑ Outdoor Leadership	❑ Community Service	❑ Iron Chef Marina	❑ Hip Hop

Peer Resources: ❑ Speaking Up ❑ Urban Peacemakers ❑ Marina Mentors

Are there any other clubs that you or your child would like to see offered next year? (please list)

OVERALL EXPERIENCE (Please check one answer to each question)

4. **My child:**
   ❑ Didn't like the ASP at all ❑ Kind of liked the ASP ❑ Liked the ASP ❑ Absolutely LOVED the ASP!

5. **My overall expectations were:**
   ❑ Not met at all ❑ Partially Met ❑ Completely Met ❑ Exceeded

6. **What is the primary reason your child signed up for program?** (Check all that apply)
   ❑ Homework help ❑ To learn a new skill ❑ Safe place to be while parents and caregivers were at work
   ❑ To be with their friends ❑ For fun ❑ Other: _____

TOOL

Sample Parent and Caregiver Survey
...continued

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7. I felt informed of my child's progress/actions in the ASP.
    ❑ Disagree   ❑ Partially Agree   ❑ Agree   ❑ Strongly Agree   ❑ Not sure

8. I believe the ASP has helped my child do better in school.
    ❑ Disagree   ❑ Partially Agree   ❑ Agree   ❑ Strongly Agree   ❑ Not sure

9. I would like my child to participate in the ASP next year.
    ❑ No way   ❑ Maybe   ❑ Yes   ❑ Wouldn't miss it for the world!

PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

10. Program Staff was enthusiastic and friendly.
    ❑ Disagree   ❑ Partially Agree   ❑ Agree   ❑ Strongly Agree   ❑ Not sure

11. The instructors delivered the curriculum and other programming in an engaging manner.
    ❑ Disagree   ❑ Partially Agree   ❑ Agree   ❑ Strongly Agree   ❑ Not sure

12. I feel that the Expanded Learning Program created a safe environment for my child.
    ❑ Disagree   ❑ Partially Agree   ❑ Agree   ❑ Strongly Agree   ❑ Not sure

13. I feel the ASP gave my child an opportunity to try new things.
    ❑ Disagree   ❑ Partially Agree   ❑ Agree   ❑ Strongly Agree   ❑ Not sure

14. Would you like to provide feedback regarding any specific staff members?

15. Any other comments about things you specifically like about the ASP or things we could do a better job on? Feel free to tell us a story about a moment or quote you remember about your youth.

Some parent and caregiver comments may be used in future program literature. We rarely post names with quotes, but in the event we do or someone asks, can we print or say your name or use you as a reference?
❑ **Yes**   ❑ **No**   *If YES, print name:* _____

SCHOOL YEAR SERVICES

16. I am part of the PTA   ❑ Yes   ❑ No

17. I would be interested in attending parent/caregiver workshops if they were offered.   ❑ Yes   ❑ No
If Yes, please list some topics you would like us to hold workshops on.

TOOL

Sample Parent and Caregiver Survey
...continued

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18. I would be interested in volunteering with the Afterschool Program   ❑ **Yes** ❑ **No**

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19. Would you be willing to participate in a parent and caregiver focus group regarding the Afterschool Program? (Dinner and child care would be provided and this would be a great opportunity to have an impact on the program.   If interested, please write your name, youth's grade level, and email address.)

Your Name: _____ Participant Grade Level: _____

Email Address: _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY! Please return this completed survey to school
on or before Wednesday May 24th's Afterschool Academy Awards.

All family and friends are invited to join us between 3:30 – 5:30 on May 24th for the Afterschool Academy Awards. The
drawing for the $50 supermarket gift card will be held at the Afterschool Academy Awards – while you do not have to be
present to win, you are encouraged to attend and applaud all of our youth!

HOW TO

Hold a Family Night

❑ *Do you want more parent and caregiver involvement in your program?*

❑ *Do you find it hard to reach out and talk with parents and caregivers?*

❑ *Do you find that the only time you talk with parents and caregivers is when a child is having difficulties?*

If so, add monthly Family Nights to your program. These nights are all about having fun, supporting parents and caregivers, and meeting other families and friends. It's a great way to get parents and caregivers involved in your program. They are easy to do and inexpensive as well.

Some examples of successful family nights are:

• Movie Night

• Bingo Night

• Game Night

• Family Dinner Night

• Karaoke Night

• Family Health Nights

Workshops for parents and caregivers can also be incorporated into some Family Nights (See Tools), while some Family Nights can be just for fun.

Family Nights generally last two hours, and clean-up can last up to a half hour after the event is finished.

Keep it Positive! Remind staff not to talk to about participants' behavior—unless it's good news.

The trick to keeping costs low is to ask for volunteers (friends, families, etc.). If your staff are not able to volunteer, don't despair. Believe it or not, you can run the event by yourself and ask for participant and family volunteers once the event is underway.

Each fall, schedule Family Nights for the entire year (e.g. on the first Friday of every month). That way you can plan speakers and solicit necessary donations well ahead of time. Raffle prizes, food, and drinks can be donated from local businesses.

In addition to sharing an annual calendar, advertise your family night about a week ahead of time. Mention it to participants —a lot. Create an eye-catching flyer to hand out to all families.

Family Nights can seem daunting, but the payoff is priceless. Families will trust you and your staff more, participants will feel even more of a connection to your program, and everybody will have a great time.

What Should I Have in My Toolbox?

❑ Materials for family activities (e.g. bingo, board games, karaoke machine), or a list of parents and caregivers who can loan them

❑ List of potential topics for parent and caregiver workshops (See Tools)

❑ Family night planning checklist (See Tools)

❑ Mailing list or email list to get the word out (ask the PTA or your executive director for help)

$

I have a tight budget, what is this going to cost me?

❑ Food: free or low-cost (through potlucks or local restaurant donations).

❑ Paper plates, napkins, cutlery.

❑ Reproduction costs for flyers and signage.

❑ Family activities: free (through loans from families).

TOOL

Family Night Planning Checklist

✓	Task	Who's Responsible	Due Date
	Week 1 (three weeks before)		
❑	Confirm topic with presenter(s)		
❑	Confirm time & place of presentation		
❑	Request translators for the Family Night		
❑	Prepare handouts and flyers		
❑	Print out liability forms for parents and caregivers		
	Week 2 (two weeks before)		
❑	Submit handouts and liability forms to be translated		
❑	Submit flyer for distribution to parents and caregivers		
	Week 3 (week before)		
❑	Set-up Auto-Dial calls - for school based programs (announcements)		
❑	Arrange for food & drinks		
❑	Check for supplies (paper plates, forks, cups, etc.)		
❑	Make copies of translated handouts and liability forms		
	Week 4 (week of event)		
❑	Email confirmation to presenter (date/time)		
❑	Remind principal, counselors, executive director, other key staff		
❑	Set-up Auto-Dial calls (reminders)		
	Day of the Event		
❑	Put up signs (Meeting Room, Youth Room)		
❑	Set-up meeting room		
❑	Put out note-taking supplies (paper, pens) and handouts		

TOOL

Tips for Holding a Successful Parent and Caregiver Workshop

Invite all parents and caregivers in your community

Consider inviting all parents and caregivers from your school or agency, not just those whose children attend the afterschool program. By inviting a larger number of parents and caregivers, you have better odds of a good turn-out and you also create relationships to foster more afterschool enrollment. If you are based on a school site, if possible, engage school day staff to co-plan the event.

Provide separate activities for children

Include participants and their siblings in your invitations, so that all parents/caregivers can attend (without having to pay for a babysitter). Have a supervised area where the youth can play games or hang out. Hold the workshop in a separate room so that parents and caregivers can ask candid questions.

Entice parents and caregivers to attend

One easy incentive (for kids and adults alike) is food. If you are holding the workshop in the evening – when the greatest number of parents and caregivers can attend – provide a dinner for everyone who attends.

Another nice incentive is to have door prizes or raffle prizes. These can be small items like notebooks and school supplies, or large items like gift certificates to the grocery store or the movies.

Engage parents and caregivers in selecting the topic

Each year, conduct a survey of parents and caregivers to find out what they would be interested in learning more about. Are they interested in learning more about parenting? Or do they want to gain adult life skills, from computers to career development? See Tools: Sample Topics for Parent and Caregiver Workshops, and "How To Conduct Parent and Caregiver Surveys."

Sample Topics for Parent and Caregiver Workshops

Parenting skills and issues

- Basic parenting and caregiving skills

- Supporting student transitions (to middle school, high school, or college)

- How to read a report card

- How to help your child with homework

- How to help your child prepare for college entrance exams

- Educational games to play at home

- Child development information (e.g. adolescent issues, emotional changes, behavior)

Life skills

- Computer skills

- English language classes

- Healthy eating and physical activity

- Cultural differences

TOOL

Resources for Parent and Caregiver Workshops

NEA Parent Resources Index

www.nea.org

Synopsis: This National Education Association website provides valuable information regarding parent and caregiver involvement in their child's education including research that links parental involvement with student achievement, transitions, academic support, workshop ideas and access to other quality web-based resources.

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

www.ncpie.org/DevelopingPartnerships

Synopsis: A comprehensive and meaningful partnership meets the needs of the families, schools, and communities involved. This website includes discussions on communication, community collaboration, ways parents and caregivers and educators can better support youth at school, home, advocacy and shared governance.

PTA "National Standard for Parent/ Family Involvement Programs"

www.pta.org

Synopsis: Effective parent and caregiver involvement programs include activities that are addressed by the following six standards: communication, parenting, student learning, volunteering, school decision making, and community collaboration.

Free On-line Translator

translate.google.com

Synopsis: This website provides programs that translate documents at no charge. (Always have someone proof read before sending out.)

San Francisco School Volunteers

415-749-3700

www.sfedfund.org/programs/volunteers_individuals.php

Synopsis: Trains volunteers to increase family involvement and to help develop skills. Also provides trainings and workshops for parents and caregivers in the areas of transitions, communication and academic support.

Parents for Public Schools – San Francisco

415-468-7077

www.parents4publicschools.com

Synopsis: Local chapter of national organization of parents, which supports, promotes and works to improve public schools through parent and caregiver involvement.

Parent Partners: Workshops to Foster School/Home/Family Partnerships

University of California, Berkeley

510-641-7771

Synopsis: Parent Partners is especially designed for educators and activist parents seeking to increase parental involvement in their children's education.

Grandparents as Parents: A Primer for Schools

www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/
grandparents.3.html

Synopsis: A growing number of American grandparents are taking on the role of surrogate parents to their grandchildren. This website provides strategies that you can utilize to help support grandparents that are raising and educating their grandchildren. Also provides additional resources on this important subject.

Increase Family and Caregiver Leadership

Alright, so you have parents involved in your program. They come to your parent workshops, bring food for your potlucks, and complete your surveys.

But how can you encourage families to step up and take on more leadership in your program, as in, leading the workshops, organizing the potlucks, and creating, distributing, and collecting the surveys?

Why Increase Caregiver Leadership?

More than anyone involved with the youth you serve, parents have a vested interest in making sure your program is successfully meeting the needs of those youth – because those youth are their children. The perspectives that caregivers can bring to your program's activities are uniquely based on their knowledge of their own children and will contribute immensely to the richness and relevance of what you offer participants. In addition to being an extra set of hands and minds, most of them have valuable skills to offer that they are happy to put to good use if asked to do so.

Where Should I Start?

Many people hear the word "leadership" and immediately think it's not for them. Rather than approaching it that way...

1. Assess

Start by finding out what skills and interests caregivers possess that they would be willing to lend to your program. You can do this by handing out a survey, but it is better to speak with parents individually, either via a phone call, or when they come to pick up their child, attend an event, etc. Make sure to reach out even to those parents who may not speak English with great confidence, or who seem quiet or reserved.

You may also consider putting sign up sheets in a prominent program area with the areas listed below at the top of each page. Then, as you see parents in your program, explain the sheets and encourage them to put their names down on the pages that hold interest for them.

Some areas that may be of interest:

- Leading a club or class for a day (e.g. a cooking club, sing-along time, art project, sports, etc.)
- Organizing a fundraising event (e.g. bakesale, carwash, raffle, etc.)
- Contributing professional services (e.g. bookkeeping, legal services, website development, etc.)
- Representing the program on a board, advisory committee, or other community group
- Leading a parent meeting or workshop

2. Organize

Once you know what caregivers are individually interested in contributing, organize them into groups. These groups can meet together or with staff to work out the details of the project they will be working on. For example, a parent who is going to come in and lead soccer drills should meet with the staff person who is responsible for physical activity to talk through the lesson plan.

A group of parents who are interested in designing and leading a fundraising event can be invited to come together for a meeting (conference call works too!) to share ideas and brainstorm. Ask one parent to be the facilitator for the meeting, one parent to take notes, and one to keep track of time. Provide them with an Action Plan template (see Chapter 1) and any other tools or resources they may need to help them keep the project moving forward. Make sure they schedule their next meeting before the end of each meeting.

Note: *Holding parents' hands the first time around may help them gain confidence, but make sure that you are not stepping too far in and discouraging folks from truly stepping up.*

3. Recognize

It is important to recognize parents for the time and effort they put into helping your program. In addition, giving them public recognition will help encourage other parents to get involved.

Some ways to recognize parent leaders include:

- A newsletter article or shout-out
- Certificates handed out at an event
- Official "thank you" letters from your agency director or school administrator
- A parent-leader recognition board

What Should I Have in My Toolbox?

- ❑ A notebook or file to keep track of parent and caregiver interests and skills
- ❑ Tools to help parents organize projects, lessons, and activities
- ❑ Awards

I have a tight budget, what is this going to cost me?