

Connecting with Families

Early childhood researchers have long recognized that the two most important influences in children's development are their home and their early childhood education setting. When families and teachers create respectful, meaningful relationships that acknowledge their shared love and responsibility for children, they are better able to sustain and support the child's growth, learning and positive interactions. Consistency between home and school for feeding practices is an important aspect of the home/child care connection.

Families may not be aware of responsive feeding practices or may have different beliefs about how to feed their child. **Here are some tips for creating a home/child care connection that supports responsive feeding.**

- Be respectful and interested in how the family practices feeding at home.
- Recognize that families from different cultures may have dramatically different beliefs about feeding children.
- Provide information about responsive feeding and how it supports healthy growth and development.
- Create a mutual plan about feeding practices including introducing solid foods so home and child care are coordinated.
- Communicate frequently with families about their child's **eating experience** in your program. You might share with the family:
 - what hunger and fullness cues their child exhibited and how you responded.
 - the program policies on ensuring children get as much food as they want.
 - how their child signals which foods he/she wants to eat.
 - their child's successes with self-feeding.
 - the methods used to introduce new foods, such as vegetables.
 - when their child has learned to like a new food.
 - the fun you and their child have during mealtime.
 - how much and when their child ate.
- Communicate frequently with families about their child's **bottle-feeding experience** in your program. You might share with the family:
 - reassurance that their infant has had continued opportunities for feeding if hungry (i.e. if their baby didn't finish a bottle, the bottle was offered again within one hour if baby showed signs of hunger.)
 - what hunger and fullness cues their child exhibited and how you responded.
 - the pleasant experience you have while bottle feeding their infant.
 - the fun you and their child have during mealtime
 - how much and when their infant ate.