

THE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:

We understand that family engagement is complex and can mean different things to different families, organizations, and at the planning table level.

We understand that family engagement is both:

- *A philosophy* - Family engagement speaks to our *beliefs* and our *values*. We value a family-centred service system that puts the best interests of the child, youth, and family first. We value the contributions that families can make at all levels of service delivery.
- *A practice* - Family engagement is a set of *behaviors* or *how we act*. We put our values into action by providing meaningful and appropriate opportunities for families to contribute at all levels of service delivery.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IS DEFINED IN HASTINGS-PRINCE EDWARD AS:	
Respectful	Our interactions with families are respectful. Families feel safe from judgment and bias.
Strength-based	We recognize that each family has unique strengths. Family engagement builds on a family's passions, gifts, and talents.
Mindful of the expertise of families	We value the knowledge and lived experiences of each family. Family engagement helps families shape the services they receive in ways that are meaningful to them.
Inclusive	We recognize and support diversity of practice. There is no one way to engage all families.
Broad-based	We understand that one family cannot represent all families and each family must speak with its own voice.
Accessible	We remove barriers that prevent families from accessing services or engaging with organizations or planning tables, including barriers arising from organizational policies and practice.
Collaborative	We build trusting relationships and meaningful partnerships with families. Steps are taken to acknowledge and address real or perceived power imbalances.
Based on clear communication	We use plain language when communicating with families and each other.
An opportunity to learn	We learn from families and each other through the process of family engagement.
On a continuum	We recognize that family engagement will differ from family to family.
Constantly changing	We understand the degree or level of a family's engagement or involvement with service planning and delivery changes over time, as their life circumstances change, and throughout a child's life cycle.
Cross-sectorial	Family engagement, as a philosophy and practice, is not limited to any one sector.
Different than Youth Engagement	We recognize that family engagement and youth engagement are not the same, though they may share some components, practices and values.