



## RELATIONSHIP-FOCUSED FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FOR HELPERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Family engagement is created from relationships between caregivers, helpers, and communities in support of a child. Research shows that when families and helpers build strong partnerships, children learn and grow. The Pennsylvania Family Engagement Birth through College, Career, Community Ready Framework offers a resource for promoting effective family engagement. Here, the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College builds on this tool and shares relationship-focused considerations for helpers as they build relationships with families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Trust Yourself

Although our everyday lives may look and feel different than before the COVID-19 pandemic, the important parts of creating strong partnerships with families remain similar. What matters most is that families know helpers care about their child. Listening to family’s perspectives and adapting, when possible, to shifting family needs may help to build partnerships.

### You Don’t Have To Be Perfect

When everything may seem uncertain and

“It’s a whole new environment to get used to. But we’re working together and doing the best we can with lots of patience.”

- Helper

constantly changing, it may feel like every interaction with families must be “perfect” or “normal.” In fact, sharing your own imperfections and new learnings can help build connection with families who are also navigating tremendous challenges. Opportunities for positive, everyday interactions exist in new ways and asking families what works best for them can be a start. If something doesn’t work, it is always ok to try a new idea.

### You Are Not Alone

Building a community of helpers may provide support as helpers encounter challenges and adapt to new ways of serving children and families. Helpers can appreciate and affirm colleagues, share with one another what is working well, and simply ask how they are doing.