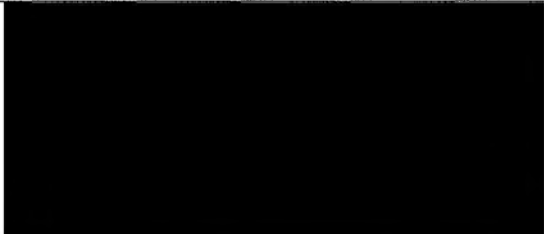


**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

ATTACHMENT GC-8 TO STATEMENT OF GILLIAN ANNE CALLISTER

Date of document: 4 August 2015
Filed on behalf of: The State of Victoria
Prepared by:
Victorian Government Solicitor's Office
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Melbourne VIC 3000



This is the attachment marked '**GC-8**' produced and shown to **GILLIAN ANNE CALLISTER** at the time of signing her Statement on 4 August 2015.

Before me



An Australian legal practitioner
within the meaning of the
Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria)

Attachment GC-8



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Guide: Practice principles for planning supported playgroups

Supported Playgroups and Parent
Groups Initiative (SPPI)



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This document is also available on the internet at www.education.vic.gov.au

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1. Introduction

Purpose of the guide

This is a resource for services to use to enhance engagement of families in supported playgroups. It is a planning and communication tool, with ideas and resources to help you identify your local issues regarding engagement of families and to plan solutions that will be effective locally.

It is intended to be used by managers and coordinators in conjunction with facilitators who are involved in planning and recruitment of families as well as service delivery. This resource could also be useful in informing broader planning processes for Best Start, Supported Playgroups and Parent Groups Initiative, and in Municipal Early Years Planning.

Information about facilitating supported playgroups is available in PlayGroup Victoria's Playgroup Manual (www.playgroup.org.au/).

Policy and service context

The Victorian Government's *2011 Families Statement* has a commitment to ensuring that all families have access to quality early childhood services. Furthermore, it recognises that parents have the most significant influence on a child's life and commits to providing better support for parents.

The specific policy and service context for the *Supported Playgroups and Parent Groups Initiative* (SPPI) is described in the *SPPI Program Guidelines* (Office for Children and Early Childhood Development 2008). These guidelines outline the service context for the early years, family and parenting services, Best Start partnerships, Innovation projects and local government roles and plans. The SPPI fits with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF 2009), which is about advancing children's development from birth to eight years. The Framework promotes a common understanding between families and professionals about how to best support children's learning and development, while allowing for programs to be responsive to individual and local needs.

The SPPI aims, first, to engage families who are in vulnerable circumstances and to improve outcomes for children and parents, particularly parenting capacity and social inclusion. Second, the initiative aims to support children's play experiences and parenting practices. Third, it intends to connect families with community supports and services, particularly those related to their children's health and development.

Principles

The underlying principles of the guide are consistent with policy directions, for example, the *Practice Principles for Learning and Development* from the VEYLDF, as well as what research tells us promotes effective practice and what practitioners in the field are saying.

- It is important to acknowledge that there are many instances of effective practice currently in the field.
- Strategies described in the guide are intended to encourage users to build on current effective practice.
- The guide promotes the application of local knowledge and local solutions.
- The tools in the guide are designed to encourage collaborative practice and reflective practice.
- The guide aims to facilitate communication with stakeholders.

- Evaluation of progress is seen as an important activity.

How to use the guide

The guide has four sections: the first is an **Introduction**, Section 2 has a **Strategy Planner**, Section 3 has **Ideas and Resources** and Section 4 contains **What Literature Says** (short summaries of research articles and reports).

The Strategy Planner captures the ideas and tasks that you select to achieve certain goals. You could use it to guide and record discussions and decisions at a team meeting, between a manager and coordinator, and between your service and your partners.

The completed Strategy Planner becomes a document to share within an organisation or between partner organisations. It could be appended to a service or partnership agreement. In this way, it is a communication tool, as well as a plan for action and documentation of decisions that can be reviewed periodically, and revised if necessary.

Sections 3 and 4 have ideas to help with planning and decisions. When using ideas from the field or from research or reports, it is important first to evaluate how applicable they are to your local context. This guide does not give guidance on how to set up a playgroup and conduct playgroup activities. Section 3 has links to sites and organisations that can provide this information. For example, the substantial resources and training available from PlayGroup Victoria are specifically designed for these purposes. As well as providing ideas for planning and implementation, Section 4 could be helpful when preparing funding submissions.

Parent engagement: A model to inform practice

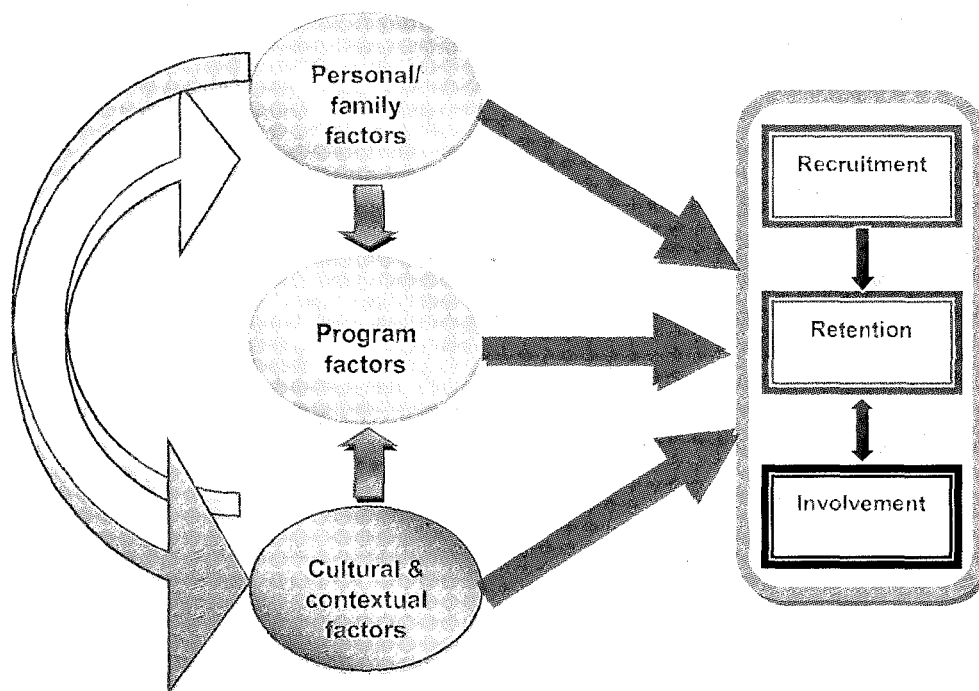


Figure 1: Conceptual model of family engagement

Reviews of evidence for what works in parenting support have identified factors that influence engagement of parents and affect the way programs are run (e.g. Forehand & Kotchick 2002; Moran et al. 2004). The large number of factors referred to in the research literature can be grouped into three categories: family/personal, program/services and cultural/contextual. As the model illustrates, these groups of factors have an impact on each other and together have an influence on recruitment, retention and involvement of

families. What follows are findings from research on parenting and family intervention services that have informed the development of the model.

Definitions

Engagement of families can have more than one meaning. For the purposes of this guide we define engagement in three ways:

- **Recruitment:** Attracting families to your group, and getting them to come in the first place.
- **Retention:** Keeping families coming along once they have started. Attendance is another term that is used for this aspect of engagement.
- **Involvement:** Actively taking part in the program. It is unlikely that simply going to a group will have the same benefits as being interested and participating fully in the group's activities.

Each of these aspects needs consideration and planning. The above model follows shows the ways in which these aspects interact to influence engagement of families.

Family/personal factors

Families' or parents' personal circumstances that can adversely affect uptake, engagement, and effectiveness of the service include:

- Single parenthood
- Marital/relationship discord
- Mental health issues
- Poverty, homelessness and poor housing
- Distance from venue/inadequate transport
- Unemployment
- Gender, with mothers more likely to take part in services than fathers
- Culture and ethnicity, with low uptake from culturally diverse groups.

This category is about what affects people in an individual way, rather than solely due to their membership of a particular social or cultural group. Events such as a death or illness in the family, moving house, change in work times and arrangements, and change in access to childcare are other examples. Moran et al. (2004) refer to this as 'life circumstances and stress'.

Research has shown that reasons for not taking part in, or dropping out, of family intervention programs can be specific to individual families with no particular patterns emerging. Often there are a number of factors involved. What the research does not yet explain is why some families with the above risk factors take part and continue in programs. The implication is that we need to know about, and accommodate, families' individual circumstances when planning and running a supported playgroup.

Program/services factors

This category refers to the characteristics of the program or service that is provided for the family and includes: what is offered (content); how the program is offered (e.g. group or individual format); and when the program is offered. It also refers to the amount and suitability of program resources and the type and use of strategies for engaging families. Program and services factors shown to be associated with positive results are as follows.

Content and style of delivery

- Delivery style – interactive and 'fun' rather than didactic and serious

- Doing 'with' families (collaborating), rather than 'doing to' (directing)
- Recognition of parents' expertise
- Incorporating parents' feedback
- Consideration of alternative and innovative methods where face-to-face delivery is difficult for practical or resource reasons.

How and when delivered

- Run at a convenient time
- Convenient location
- Venue, comfortable, non-stigmatising, provides refreshments
- Low or no cost
- Provision of transport
- Careful selection of group versus one-to-one delivery according to the user's needs.

Staffing

- Characteristics – trust, empathy, non-judgmental, good interpersonal skills
- Not vital to match parent and facilitator sex, ethnicity, age – ability to form constructive relationships is more important. However, same culture facilitator can be an advantage when working with culturally distinct groups
- Training in child development and working with parents and families.

Resources

- Supporting materials (e.g. leaflets, books, videos, etc.) that reflect users' own lives and situations and do not seem over-simplified or patronising
- Tailoring written materials to the literacy levels of users.

Strategies for engagement

- Knowing the 'market' and publicising the program to families and referral sources
- Investing persistent effort in the early stages of referral and attendance, including telephone 'recruitment' calls and reminders by phone or letter
- Contacting non-attendees
- Working on situational factors that may impede parents' attendance
- Providing one-to-one contact before, during and after services to support parents to keep coming
- 'Taster' sessions before the intervention starts to allow parents to understand what to the service is about and adjust expectations
- Rewarding regular attendance, e.g. with certificates and qualifications
- Incentives, e.g. access to useful or fun activities not necessarily related to parenting.

Cultural and contextual factors

This category refers to broader societal, policy and structural elements. Different models of parenting occur within different cultures, and therefore there is a need to tailor programs accordingly, while at the same time recognising the commonalities of parenting within different cultures (Kolar & Soriano 2000). Examples of major contextual factors are services' availability, accessibility and suitability and the degree to which services coordinate their activities. When families experience a range of difficulties, strong

interagency working practices allow fitting and timely responses.

2. Strategy Planner

There are two parts to the Strategy Planner.

Part 1: Planning

This first part helps with analysing the issues and making decisions. It has prompts and specific questions to guide reflection on current practice and ideas to try out.

Steps

- Think about the families, the need and the goals
- Reflect on what you tried before and what worked and didn't work
- Think about local issues, who should be involved in the planning, and who should be kept informed
- Consider solutions, costs and timelines
- Identify what the success indicators would be.

Part 2: Implementing

The second part is filled in as a record of decisions and actions and a guide to reviewing actions and decisions.

Steps

- List the actions you have chosen to take, with decisions about 'What', 'When' and 'Who'. The 'Who' includes those who will be taking action and those who need to be kept informed
- Record sub-tasks – breaking actions into smaller sequenced activities
- Indicate when each of these activities will be done (i.e. devise a timeline)
- Review progress, document outcomes and reflect on unexpected as well as expected effects.

Next are the templates for *Part 1: Planning* and *Part 2: Implementing*, and two examples of the kind of information that could be recorded in the templates for both parts of the planner. The first example is establishing a new playgroup in a school setting. The second example is about changing practices in an existing playgroup.

Strategy Planner – Part 1: Planning	
<i>Questions</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Who are the families we want to engage?	
What is the identified need?	
What is the goal?	
Who would we need to involve in planning for this goal?	
What have we tried before /are trying now?	
What aspects are working?	
What aspects are not working/ have not worked? Could this work now (in changed circumstances)?	

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Responses</i>
What other ideas could we try?	
What local knowledge needs to be taken into account?	
How would we try out the planned ideas?	
Cost – time and budget?	
Source of funding?	
What might impact on success (help or be a barrier to success)?	
What would be an indicator of success in the short term?	

What would be an indicator of longer-term success?	
Example 1	Strategy Planner – Part 1: Planning
Who are the families we want to engage?	Young families access to local supported playgroup.
What is the identified need?	Build families' connection with school through playgroup. The need for another playgroup in this area.
What is the goal?	To start a playgroup in a school environment.
Who do we need to involve in planning?	School principal, DEECD regional advisor, Early Years Team Leader/SPPI Coordinator, School Wellbeing Officer (SWO)/Chaplain, local agencies.
What have we tried/are we trying?	We have tried this before.
What aspects are working?	Families – still needing to engage in a playgroup.
What aspects are not working/have not worked? Could this work now? (changed circumstances)?	Schools merging and lack of physical space prevented progress previously.
What other ideas could we try?	Try again, meanwhile maintaining relationship and communication with principal. Develop interest in and enthusiasm for plan – identify a 'champion'.
Who would we need to involve in achieving goal? Who will be leading the activities?	Early Years Team Leader/SPPI Coordinator, school principal. DEECD regional advisor, School Wellbeing Officer/Chaplain., and local agencies.
What local knowledge needs to be taken into account?	What space is available in the changed school circumstances, and when it is available? Distance from school for families who could attend.
How would we try out the planned ideas?	Networking. Documentation. Information flow. Keep principal informed of all stages of planning. Meet with principal and DEECD regional advisor.
Cost – time and budget	Coordinator and other stakeholder time.
Source of funding	Literacy fund. SPPI funding. Best Start funding. Where would we get the money now? For example, Communities for Children, Philanthropic Trust, Community Agency, Health Agency, Sing and Grow. Look at LGA partners.
What might impact on success (facilitate success, be a barrier to success)?	Principal's agreement. Venue availability.
What would be an indicator of	Regular attendance and support from principal, staff. Dialogue

short-term success?	open. Integrate with LSC project.
What would be an indicator of longer-term success?	Commencement of playgroup in the school.
Example 2 Strategy Planner – Part 1: Planning	
Who are the families we want to engage?	Families already attending playgroup
What is the identified need?	The potential for parents to become more involved in their children's play at playgroup
What is the goal?	Building parents' capacity to play with their children. Parents interacting with their children during play activities.
Who do we need to involve in planning	Facilitator, parents, coordinator
What have we tried/are trying?	Encouragement. General request. Asking. Brochure for playgroup that outlines expectations.
What aspects are working?	Not sure
What aspects are not working/have not worked? Could this work now? (changed circumstances)	Encouragement
What other ideas could we try?	Structure session so there is some parent-to-parent chat time and some parent-child interaction time. Facilitator modelling. Set up 'projects' for parents to work on with their children (e.g. make a book). Parent-to-parent 'mentors'. Community volunteers to free up facilitator time to model with individual parents and children. Invited speaker to talk about play and importance of parent involvement.
Who would we need to involve in achieving the goal? Who would be leading the activities?	Facilitator (leading). Parents. Coordinator (advising)
What local knowledge needs to be taken into account?	What parents expect of playgroup. What they feel they are getting out of it. What changes they would like to see. How they feel about spending some of the time playing with their children during the session. What activities they would prefer to do with their children. Would they like a speaker on play?
How would we try out the planned ideas?	Talk to parents individually about the above. Incorporate parents' ideas into playgroup structure. Represent structure with poster. Check out possibility of student placement volunteer (nearest University /TAFE). Observe parent-child interactions to identify parent who could be approached for mentor idea. Ask local community service group (e.g. Probus) about potential volunteer.
Cost – time and budget	Coordinator and facilitator extra time (one hour per month each for three months) for planning and reviewing strategies. Possibly cost of Police Check for volunteer (if not student). Possible speaker fee.
Source of funding	Existing funding sources.
What might impact on success (facilitate success / be a barrier to it)	Willingness and availability of volunteer, and parents for mentoring. Time for preparation and support of parent mentor(s) and volunteer. Availability of speaker.
What would be an indicator of	Parents participating in generating ideas. Parents involved in decision-making about playgroup activities. Parent(s) volunteering

short-term success?	to be mentor(s).
What would be an indicator of longer-term success?	Parents spending at least a third of their time at playgroup interacting with their children during play.

Strategy Planner – Part 2: Implementing		
<i>Questions</i>	<i>Responses/Decisions</i>	
ACTIONS		
What are we going to try?		
When are we going to do this?		
Who is involved? e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partners • 'allies'/supporters • staff . • coordinator • management 		
Who needs to be informed?		
What are the subtasks?	Subtasks	Date completed
REVIEW		
When will we review how it's going?		

<p>What are the outcomes we're looking for?</p> <p>Expected outcomes?</p> <p>Unexpected outcomes?</p>	
--	--

Example 1 Strategy Planner – Part 2: Implementing																	
Questions	Responses/Decisions																
ACTIONS																	
What are we going to try?	Start a playgroup in (name of) Primary School																
When are we going to do this?	Establishment of playgroup Term 1, 2011 Playgroup starts Term 2, 2011																
Who is involved? e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partners • 'allies'/supporters • staff • coordinator • management 	Early Years Team Leader SPPI Coordinator (leading) Principal (name of) Primary School School Wellbeing Officer (Ms X)																
Who needs to be informed?	Manager (i.e. responsible manager LGA) DEECD regional advisor Local paper (before launch)																
What are the subtasks?	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 60%;">Subtasks</th> <th>Date completed</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>• Identify 'champion'</td> <td>Beginning of Sept, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Meeting with principal /SWO</td> <td>End September, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Approval to start</td> <td>End of Term 4, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Source equipment/materials</td> <td>End January, 2011</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Promote playgroup to parents and services</td> <td>Start of Term 1, 2011</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Enrol families</td> <td>End Term 1, 2011</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Community launch</td> <td>Start of Term 2, 2011</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Subtasks	Date completed	• Identify 'champion'	Beginning of Sept, 2010	• Meeting with principal /SWO	End September, 2010	• Approval to start	End of Term 4, 2010	• Source equipment/materials	End January, 2011	• Promote playgroup to parents and services	Start of Term 1, 2011	• Enrol families	End Term 1, 2011	• Community launch	Start of Term 2, 2011
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REVIEW																	
When will we review how it's going?	End of Term 4, 2010 End of Term 1, 2011																
What are the outcomes we're looking for? Expected outcomes?	Expected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval from school • Appropriate venue (rooms and facilities) available for use • A minimum of eight families enrolled • Start Term 2, 2011 																
Unexpected outcomes?	Unexpected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number (i.e. more than 20) families interested 																

Example 2 Strategy Planner – Part 2: Implementing																	
Question	Responses/Decisions																
ACTIONS																	
What are we going to try?	Strategies to involve parents in activities with their children in sessions.																
When are we going to do this	Start of Term 1, 2011																
Who is involved? e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partners? • allies/supporters? • staff? • coordinator? • management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinator • Facilitator • Guest speaker (name) • Playgroup parents • Student on placement • Community volunteer 																
Who needs to be informed?	All of above																
What are the subtasks?	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Subtasks</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Date completed</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>• Approach (name of) TAFE for student placement</td> <td>Beginning Term 4, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Arrange speaker – talk to TAFE</td> <td>Beginning Term 4, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Talk to (name) at local service club regarding volunteering</td> <td>End December, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Talk to parents about proposed ideas and what they would like</td> <td>Mid- Term 4, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Approach parent(s) to be mentor</td> <td>End Term 4, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Produce poster for session structure</td> <td>End Term 4, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Source ideas on child–parent projects from PGV and websites</td> <td>End Term 4, 2010</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Subtasks	Date completed	• Approach (name of) TAFE for student placement	Beginning Term 4, 2010	• Arrange speaker – talk to TAFE	Beginning Term 4, 2010	• Talk to (name) at local service club regarding volunteering	End December, 2010	• Talk to parents about proposed ideas and what they would like	Mid- Term 4, 2010	• Approach parent(s) to be mentor	End Term 4, 2010	• Produce poster for session structure	End Term 4, 2010	• Source ideas on child–parent projects from PGV and websites	End Term 4, 2010
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When will we review how it's going?	<table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Week 5, Term 4,2010</td> <td>End of Term 4, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 5, Term 1, 2011</td> <td>End of Term 1, 2011</td> </tr> </table>	Week 5, Term 4,2010	End of Term 4, 2010	Week 5, Term 1, 2011	End of Term 1, 2011												
Week 5, Term 4,2010	End of Term 4, 2010																
Week 5, Term 1, 2011	End of Term 1, 2011																
What are the outcomes we're looking for? Expected outcomes	Expected outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student on placement for term • Community volunteer recruited and attending regularly • Guest speaker lined up for week 2, Term 1, 2011 • Parents in agreement with strategies and session structure • At least one parent acting as mentor • Minimum 80 per cent of parents spending one-third of playgroup session interacting with their child • Parents' survey showing high level of satisfaction with playgroup experience • Maintain attendance levels 																

Unexpected outcomes	Unexpected outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and/or volunteer not working out
----------------------------	--

3. Ideas and resources

Anecdotal reports from the field

The ideas in this section are taken from an analysis of reports provided by SPPI coordinators and facilitators in the first phase of the Victorian Government Supported Playgroup and Parent Group Initiative. They are examples of ways to facilitate recruitment, retention and involvement of families, and to promote positive parent and child outcomes.

Ideas are grouped into:

1. Recruitment and retention of families

- Program and services factors
- Personal/family factors
- Cultural/contextual factors

2. Parent and child outcomes (involvement)

- Program and services factors
- Cultural/contextual factors

3. Recruitment and retention of families: program and service factors

Staffing

Characteristics of staff (i.e. personal qualities and attributes), good communication skills, training, skills in teaching, and the use of supplementary staff (e.g. volunteers, other professionals).

*Making the time to **get to know** families, learning names and welcoming families each week ... Families come back when you take interest in their children and remember their names (making it personal) – they feel valued and important.*

***Don't give up** even if a family doesn't come the first few times you ask; keep in contact. I did this with one family and now they attend. I kept the phone conversations casual and tried to make it friendly rather than making them feel obliged to come along.*

*Provided **Family Centred Practice training** to several of Council's supported playgroup facilitators ... Facilitators have more knowledge of topics, including attachment, engaging vulnerable families, building positive relationships and communicating with families.*

***Communicate** the style of presentation that the group is comfortable with. This includes being careful not to use language that appears to 'blame' individuals, such as say things like 'you should'; including plenty of practical demonstration (showing how) and group participation; and a conversational approach, where it is clear that questions are welcome.*

*A **trained volunteer** offers peer support and assists the two paid staff members ... The positive relationship [with parents] is the result of the warm and welcoming manner of the paid staff and volunteers.*

Content of the program

Supported playgroups work well when they:

- demonstrate play activities and behaviour management strategies
- support parent–child interaction and bonding

- encourage development of social relationships within the group
- support the setting up of social networks external to the group
- include core elements of healthy relationships
- promote general health and wellbeing
- provide the opportunity for families to transition into community groups and get involved with community activities.

Comments on content included reference to activities, the purpose of the group, the importance of session structure, a welcoming environment and parent involvement.

*The content of the supported parent group was **strategically planned** to build trust with the parents. This included **group rules**, discussion about the issues impacting on the parents, **non-threatening activities** to encourage group discussion and personal reflection, and content to address issues raised by parents.*

Partnerships and promotion

Partnerships with early childhood services, health providers, volunteer organisations and community agencies were considered to play a very important role in referral of families targeted for the program.

*Strong **links with MCH service** – promoting playgroups to families – and running an open session the same time as a playgroup session ... **Early Childhood Services** (kinder, MCH and childcare) promote playgroups as well and we often run playgroups from these centres ... Gets families in the early childhood service 'loop' – once they are engaged with playgroup the facilitator can promote MCH, childcare services and kinder and link these families in.*

How the program was marketed to families and the importance and complexity of promotion was highlighted. The use of broad and inclusive terms to describe the playgroup was crucial to attracting families. Some promotional strategies mentioned were:

*Have families attend a **free fun day in the park** to promote playgroups.*

*Use of **local schools** to meet and engage families that may not attend other venues.*

*Colour photographs of playgroup members and playgroup events in **local newspapers** proved successful in stimulating interest in the group.*

Recruitment and retention of families: Personal/family factors

Access to playgroups can be a problem, in particular lack of transport, financial hardship and transient residence were barriers for some families. Strategies to handle transport and financial difficulties were offered.

*Participants were provided with **transport** to and from the playgroup to facilitate access ... Significant strategy in facilitating engagement in the group particularly for more isolated families.*

*Offering a **free service** is also important as many of our families experience financial hardship.*

Recruitment and retention of families: Cultural/contextual factors

Language barriers and cultural relevance of the program emerged as common issues.

Staffing

Staff who were bilingual or came from the same cultural background had greater success in attracting culturally diverse families. Knowledge of the community was also considered necessary. Furthermore, forming partnerships with community agencies or cultural groups

provided an effective way to access families from specific groups who may be missed or were reluctant to come if they were approached through the usual avenues of recruitment.

Employment of 'Indigenous Playgroup Leader' ... Creates trust and provides a familiar link, support and role model for families.

*Employment of adequately **skilled facilitator** who is 'accepted' by the multicultural community and has extensive experience in working with the CALD community.*

***Bilingual worker** (Arabic speaking) was able to develop connections with Arabic-speaking women to promote the playgroup, particularly through individual settlement casework.*

Access

The location of the venue was a contextual factor thought to impact upon recruitment and attendance of families into the playgroup.

*Provided a play experience in an easily accessible location for families and children by **partnering** with a local school or community house ... Remote families have a quality, accessible playgroup that ensured the children have an early childhood learning option.*

***Location** of the program – community centre, walking distance from Neighbourhood Renewal area ... Non-threatening venue and known to participants – been there before.*

Parent and child outcomes: Program and service factors

Content of the program

Session planning by experienced staff was vital to achieving a well-resourced program that focused on developmentally and culturally appropriate activities involving both the child and parent. Staff also encouraged parent involvement in session planning because it promoted a sense of ownership, confidence and provided them with the relevant skills needed to run a community playgroup.

*In conjunction with the members of the group we have established **guidelines** to ensure that playgroup is as much about the mums having opportunity to engage and converse with other mums as it is to engage with their own children.*

*I **observe the children** attending and make notes of what they like to do, interests or recent experiences (such as our farm visit) developmental weaknesses and strengths. I then plan play experiences around these.*

*Create an environment that facilitates opportunities for fun interactions between parents and their children to build positive relationships – **setting up activities** that parents can participate in and verbally encouraging parents to take part, setting up an environment that encourages participation i.e. no adult size chairs at the edges of the room.*

*'**Play stations**' are set up around the room; e.g. cars, trucks, train sets, puzzles, books, tents, play pens, etc. ... Children had freedom to move about to any selected activity.*

***Age-appropriate activities** and extensions of activities allow parents to see changes in their children and provide parents with an understanding of development.*

Staffing

The focus was on staff behaviour. Staff used various strategies to promote parent-child interaction and learning from play, including role-modelling and positive feedback. The need for strong parent-facilitator relationships to maintain attendance and encourage open and honest communication with families was emphasised. This requires regular informal conversations on a one-to-one basis, with staff showing a genuine interest in parents and

their children by acknowledging and listening to their concerns. A role for volunteers was also highlighted.

*Provide parents and caregivers with **information** about the importance of play and its role in learning and development – written and verbal, brochures, tip sheets, role modelling.*

*Facilitator provides sessions to **discuss issues** and introduce new and informative ideas for the mothers.*

*Provide **educational sessions** (information) relating to literacy and age-appropriate play activities ... Greater parental understanding of developmental play experiences (literacy and age-appropriate play activities).*

*Keep a supply of **child development brochures** and NAPCAN (National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) brochures and the opportunity to discuss issues with the facilitator.*

*Inclusion of **trained volunteers** to assist with facilitation of playgroup ... Volunteers provide peer support by role modelling appropriate ways to play and communicate with children.*

Volunteers from the community have been involved in assisting the function of the playgroup. Their involvement has helped attend to practical tasks, generate friendly conversations and engaging children in play.

Partnerships

Partnerships with government, community, early childhood and health services were thought to be beneficial providing information and support to the playgroup and offering extra resources (e.g. funding or venue), referral into the program and links to external services.

*Inviting **guest speakers** from organisations builds parental confidence in making referrals for themselves and their children. For example, after having the financial counsellor attend playgroup I asked the women who would like to make an appointment now and some did. Also after we had the Allied Health Team visit we then got referrals to their services.*

Parent and child outcomes: Cultural/contextual factors

Content of the program

Culturally-specific homogeneous groups increased the quality of participation of CALD families.

*At times it has been a challenge to ensure families from a CALD background feel welcome. Staff have **encouraged interaction between different cultural groups** by facilitating discussion on the commonalities of parenting as well as the differences across cultures. They have role-modelled acceptance and interest in all families.*

*The **culturally-specific environment** invited parents to feel more comfortable to share their experiences, difficulties and concerns and be supported with this.*

Resources

Children's play and learning activities

Name of resource	Activity
Play-based science activities for early learners	
Suitable for	Children aged 0–4 years
Content	Thirty pages of ideas for science play, using everyday objects.
Available from	Australian Government Department of Innovation, Science and Research
Contact	http://scienceplay.questacon.edu.au/assets/scienceplay_booklet.pdf
Other information	Free – available from website
Raising Children Network	
Suitable for	Babies (3–12 months), toddlers (1–3 years) and preschoolers (3–5 years)
Content	For each of the ages listed, there are resources available, e.g. play and learning activities to promote development.
Available from	Raising Children Network website. Select relevant tab for information: 'babies', 'toddlers', or 'preschoolers'
Contact	http://raisingchildren.net.au/
Other information	Free – available from website
Playgroup activities	
Suitable for	Playgroup leaders and parents of children 1–4 years of age
Content	Contains a list of typical activities found at playgroups, and how these benefit the child.
Available from	Families website
Contact	http://www.familiesonline.co.uk/Topics/Articles/Playgroup-Activities
Other information	Free – available from website
Nursery activity ideas	
Suitable for	Children 0–5 years
Content	This is a website that has activity ideas for babies, toddlers and children up to the ages of 5 years. A range of topics are offered.
Available from	Nursery Activity Ideas website
Contact	http://www.nurseryactivityideas.co.uk/
Other information	Free – available from website
Early years experience	
Suitable for	Children 0–7 years; playgroup leaders and coordinators
Content	Site provides ideas, resources and information for parents, teachers and carers of preschool, nursery and other children (aged 5–7 years). Has useful information on activities. Also has useful multicultural resources and information on the various festivals around the world.
Available from	Early Years Experience website
Contact	http://www.bigeyedowl.co.uk/index.htm
Other information	Information available on website is free. Some links do direct viewer to

Name of resource	Activity
	online suppliers, which requires purchase for information.

Name of resource	Activity
Join a playgroup	
Suitable for	Playgroup leaders and coordinators
Content	Content is a list of activities and play ideas that can be sorted/searched for by age (baby, preschool or toddler). Information given is quite detailed in terms of how to perform the activity.
Available from	Join a playgroup website
Contact	http://www.joinaplaygroup.com.au/PlayIdeas/SearchforaPlayIdea.aspx
Other information	Free – available from website
Make and do	
Suitable for	Children 0–5 years
Content	Recipes and craft (print and colour)
Available from	ABC TV website
Contact	http://www.abc.net.au/abcforkids/makeanddo/
Other information	Information available on website is free. Some links to online suppliers, which requires purchase for information.
Behaviour and development: play	
Suitable for	Children 0–3 years
Content	Ideas and slideshows on play. Downloadable booklet <i>The Power of Play</i> .
Available from	Zero to three website
Contact	http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/play/most-popular.html
Other information	Free – available from website

Running a playgroup

Play at playgroup	
Suitable for	Playgroup leaders, coordinators and parents
Content	Discussion starters, practical ideas and information to help playgroups plan play program together.
Available from	Playgroup Victoria
Contact	http://www.playgroup.org.au/Playgroup/Shop/
Other information	Available for purchase
Playgroup manual	
Suitable for	Playgroup leaders, coordinators
Content	<p>A comprehensive guide to creating best practice at playgroup. It explains the importance of play to babies, toddlers and preschool-aged children; has pages of play ideas to appeal to all children's different preferences, outlines ways to make playgroup welcoming to new families and to tackle challenging behaviour.</p> <p>Simple examples of how to create safe playgroup, promote playgroup and respect the many different parenting practices likely to be at playgroup.</p>
Available from	Playgroup Victoria
Contact	http://www.playgroup.org.au/Resources/Playgroup-Manual.aspx

Other information	Need to be a member of Playgroup Victoria to access website.
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Promotion

Name of resource	Activity
Playgroup resources	
Suitable for	Playgroup leaders, coordinators,
Content	Content that can be used by the playgroup leaders and facilitators, such as information brochures and flyers on starting a group, multicultural flyers, and promotional materials.
Available from	Playgroup Victoria
Contact	http://www.playgroup.org.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/PVBrochures/Free per cent20playgroup per cent20resources.pdf
Other information	Free resources. To order brochures or posters, contact Playgroup Victoria.
What happens at playgroup picture series	
Suitable for	Playgroup leaders, coordinators
Content	Useful for non-English-speaking families and parents and caregivers unfamiliar with the concept of playgroup.
Available from	Playgroup Victoria
Contact	http://www.playgroup.org.au
Other information	Free if member of Playgroup Victoria

Parenting

Raising children network	
Suitable for	Parents, playgroup leaders, coordinators
Content	Searchable website on a range of parenting and child development topics from newborn to teenagers. Sections on disability.
Available from	website
Contact	http://raisingchildren.net.au/
Other information	Australian government sponsored website with quality assured parenting information. Free downloadable materials.

4. What the literature says

This section has summaries of research articles, reviews and reports, including unpublished research/evaluation reports if publicly available. This literature includes accounts of parenting and family interventions and family support services that are relevant to engagement of families in playgroups. As well as providing ideas for planning and implementation, Section 4 could be helpful when preparing submissions for funding. All summaries contain a link to gain access to the original report or article, and each follows the same format and has three headings:

- What is the purpose of this report or article?
- What were the major findings?
- What are the implications for practice?

	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>
Engaging families	Participation in parenting education Best practice Preventive interventions Promoting parental engagement Aboriginal families	Wellington et al. 2006 Dawson et al. 2002 Spoth & Redmond 2000 Morawska & Sanders 2006 Shepherd & Walker 2008
Retention	Parenting intervention Parental involvement in family support programs Retention and recruitment (A & B) Child and family interventions	Katz et al. 2001 McCurdy & Daro 2001) Heinrichs 2006; Lee et al. 2006 Miller & Prinz 2003
Content	Early learning project Parent education and playgroups Playgroups – caravan parks pilot	Warrilow et al. 2004 Turner & Bredhauer 2005 Eddy 2003
Program effectiveness	Community-based parenting support Universal family intervention Parenting intervention Parenting programs Setting up and maintaining playgroups Supported playgroups – NSW	Trivette & Dunst 2005 Zubrick et al. 2005) Akai et al. 2008 UnitingCare Burnside 2002 Sneddon et al. 2003 ARTD consultants 2008
Father involvement	Participation in parenting education Parent education/play group program Engagement in family services	Bauman & Wasserman 2010 McBride 1990 Berlyn et al. 2008
Barriers to engagement	Evidence-based solutions	Snell-Johns 2004
Promoting engagement	Participation in Head Start	Mendez 2010
Cultural diversity	Playgroups for refugee families Playgroups	Jackson 2006 Oke 2007

Engaging families: Participation in parenting education

Author	Wellington, L., White, K. M. & Liossis, P.
Year	2006
Title	'Beliefs underlying intentions to participate in group parenting education'
Type	Journal article
Title	<i>Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (AeJAMH)</i>
Volume	5 (issue 3)
Pages	1–9
Online	http://www.atypon-link.com/EMP/doi/pdf/10.5555/jamh.5.3.275

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The purpose of this Australian study was to investigate participation in group parenting education services, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The TPB aims to predict and explain behaviour based on an individual's intentions to behave, attitudes, subjective norms and their perception of how much behavioural control they have. Using this as a framework, the authors explored the underlying beliefs of parents who intended to come ('intenders'), compared with those who did not intend to come to parenting education ('non-intenders').

What were the major findings/conclusions?

'Intenders' and 'non-intenders' differed in the beliefs measured by the study:

- *Behavioural beliefs*: about benefits and costs of participation. Intenders believed that by coming to parenting education they could improve their relationship with their child (or children) and they would be in a supportive environment. Non-intenders focused more on costs of participating, either financial or emotional (i.e. feeling embarrassed)
- *Normative beliefs*: Intenders were more likely than non-intenders to believe that friends and family think they should take part in the parenting education
- *Control beliefs*: There were differences between intenders and non-intenders in regard to their beliefs about how likely location and fatigue would affect their attendance. Belief about fatigue was the only distinguishing factor between the two groups. With non-intenders, fatigue was more likely to prevent them from participating in parenting education compared to intenders.

What are the implications for practice?

Understanding the beliefs held by potential participants might be relevant for recruitment. However, the authors remind us that it is not always parent factors that prevent attendance; it could be program factors. Flexibility, responsiveness and strength-based approaches are important when it comes to recruiting members.

Engaging families: Best practice

Author	Dawson, K. & Berry, M. School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas
Year	2002
Title	'Engaging families in child welfare services: An evidence based approach to best practice'
Type	Journal article
Title	<i>Child Welfare League of America</i>
Volume	81 (issue 2)
Pages	293–317
Online	http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.rmit.edu.au/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=8&hid=109&sid=5dfc2c94-6642-4586-bad2-9557c41eb87d_per cent40sessionmgr112

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This article reviews research evidence relating to critical components of engaging families in child welfare services. Drop-out and non-compliance rates are high in child services and this can lead to the child being removed from the family. Strategies for successful engagement of families in the services are discussed and the authors give recommendations for practice.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

- Caseworker and agency behaviours were most important in engaging families in child welfare services.
- While empathy and respect are important in building a relationship, clear and concrete behaviours between the family and the caseworkers are essential in relationship-building.
- What helps in engaging families are setting mutual goals, providing helpful and relevant services, focusing on skills opposed to insights, and spending adequate time with the families.

What are the implications for practice?

- Supportive and encouraging environments where clients aren't judged or blamed
- Build good relationships between the client and caseworker, setting clear and mutually acceptable goals
- Spend sufficient time with families to demonstrate skills and to provide resources.

Engaging families: Preventive interventions

Author	Spoth, R. & Redmond, C. Institute for Social and Behavioural Research, Iowa State University.
Year	2000
Title	'Research on family engagement in preventive interventions: Toward improved use of scientific findings in primary prevention practice'
Type	Journal article
Title	<i>The Journal of Primary Prevention</i>
Volume	21 (no. 2)
Pages	267–84
Online	https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/t30174l3l07x6p00/resource-secured/?target=fulltext.pdf&sid=friqgggqikvpqb1552fgngv45&sh=www.springerlink.com

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The purpose is to review of literature on engagement of families into preventive programs. The article discusses factors influencing general population engagement and barriers to engagement.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Factors influencing engagement in universal family interventions:

- *Barriers to engagement:* Time and scheduling demands (what day of the week the program was on), family member resistance (i.e. one member enrolling in an intervention that requires multiple members to come when the others do not want to participate), and family member mental health (i.e. anxiety, hostility and distress.)
- *Beliefs about universal family-focused interventions:* Belief that programs were not useful was not a substantial barrier to participation. Aside from opinions of program worth, specific features of the programs do impact on participation decisions (e.g. program time, practical aspects of program design).
- *Socioeconomic factors* (e.g. ethnicity, parent gender, parent and child age, parent education, family income) were consistently important in families' health-related decisions. Socioeconomic status also found to be predictive of dropping out.

What are the implications for practice?

Attention to potential barriers to engagement is warranted.

Engaging families: Promoting parental engagement

Author	Morawska, A. & Sanders, M.R.
Year	2006
Title	'A review of parental engagement in parenting interventions and strategies to promote it'
Type	Journal article
Title	<i>Journal of Children's Services</i>
Volume	1
Pages	29-40
Online	http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ:107706/rs_107706.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This article reviews the factors related to parental engagement with interventions and describes strategies and implications for improving engagement.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

A number of factors were associated with engagement, including single parenthood and other socio-demographic factors, expectancies about therapy, motivation to change and parenting self-efficacy.

Strategies to help prevent resistance and process problems included:

- Educate the parent about the process of the intervention
- Give a clear rationale for homework tasks
- Avoid making interpretations of parents' actions
- Use self-discovery methods with parents in discussing causes of children's problems
- Focus on the developmental competence of the child as well as resolving problem behaviours

- Link intervention goals to future developmental tasks for parents and children
- Encourage personal ownership of goals
- Offer suggestions rather than prescriptions
- Give choices
- Encourage parents' self-evaluation.

What are the implications for practice?

Many of the factors identified in this review are potentially modifiable, and can be taken into account when planning family interventions.

Engaging families: Aboriginal families

Author	Shepherd, C. & Walker, R. Kulunga Research Network, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth, Australia
Year	2008
Title	'Engaging Indigenous families in preparing children for school'
Type	Topical paper
Title	<i>Report for Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth</i>
Pages	1–55
Online	http://www.playgroupaustralia.com.au/qld/index.cfm?objectid=88AB40A1-E7F2-2F96-39D6C7492A157E95

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The purpose of the report is to investigate research and practice evidence for factors relating to early development and school readiness of Aboriginal children. It examines what helps and what are barriers to positive school transition and outlines the challenges faced by these families that affect their engagement in early years' services. The paper has a number of case studies demonstrating 'what works' including a description of the Wakathuni playgroup in Western Australia.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Findings relevant to playgroups and other early years' services – critical elements of strategies to engage Aboriginal families include:

- Building relationships
- Strengths-based approaches as opposed to focusing on needs or problems
- Building in time for evaluation, to measure how effective programs have been in achieving outcomes
- Producing high-quality programs requires staff with training and qualifications in Early Child Development and cross-cultural competence
- Incorporating early learning and literacy programs that simultaneously target both parents and children (facilitating dual or trans-generational and community learning)
- Providing a culturally-inclusive space, where possible.

What are the implications for practice?

The report concludes with some guiding principles for engaging parents and families:

- Make sure that Aboriginal people are consulted in all stages of a program or intervention

- Build the capacity of parents and families wherever possible
- Acknowledge and respect different learning styles
- Recognise and respect Aboriginal peoples and cultures
- Understand the size and distribution of the Aboriginal population, especially in remote areas
- Account for the cultural diversity of the Aboriginal population.

There are also links to a range of parent and practitioner information and resources, Early Years research and Australian government sites relevant to Aboriginal people.

Retention: Parenting intervention

Author	Katz, K.S., El-Mohandes, A., McNeely Johnson, D., Jarret, M., Rose, A. & Cober, M., Georgetown University Medical Centre; Research Triangle Institute.
Year	2001
Title	'Retention of low income mothers in a parenting intervention study'
Type	Journal Article
Journal	<i>Journal of Community Health</i>
Volume	26 (no. 3)
Pages	203–18
online	https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/w8746x60728w427k/resource-secured/?target=fulltext.pdf&sid=frjqqqdkvpqb1552fngqv45&sh=www.springerlink.com

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The purpose of this article is to review the results of retention strategies for a parenting intervention study for women who had received inadequate prenatal care.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Strategies used in the study to retain participants were:

- Focus groups to make sure aspects of program were suitable to families (e.g. culturally appropriate)
- Intervention delivered by culturally sensitive lay home visitor with community links
- Records of multiple contact sources for the study participants, including the family's primary health care provider
- Gift incentives for those who completed program
- Transportation supplied
- Written project materials designed, mindful that some participants would have poor literacy skills.

A previous study on retention efforts that this program replicated noted that demographic characteristics of families who are hard to retain included:

- Income less than \$15,000 (US)
- Being African–American
- Being unmarried
- Experiencing stressful life events.

Reasons listed in study for dropping out were:

- Moving away from district
- Many contact numbers disconnected or went out of service, or the contacts denied knowing whereabouts of the participant
- Withdrawing consent
- Infant placed with another caregiver – mother incarcerated, or the child entering foster care
- Drop-out more likely to occur with control group, which suggests there was benefit in continuous contact between the intervention provider and participant
- Mothers who remained longer in program (after four months) were more likely to be concerned about their child's health, were more empathetic towards child's needs, and were more able to provide a developmentally appropriate environment for their child.

What are the implications for practice?

- Make benefits of study program very clear – primary incentive for participation is often the perception of benefits from the program. Continuous reminders of the benefits
- Support for families who are having difficulties, i.e. disorganised or struggling with routine
- Too many retention strategies can alienate families, i.e. intrusive tracking of participants
- Identify critical needs of participants – helps to highlight benefits that match needs
- Encourage use of local services.

Retention: Parental involvement in family support programs

Author	McCurdy, K. & Daro, D.
Year	2001
Title	'Parent Involvement in Family Support Programs: An Integrated Theory'
Type	Journal article
Journal	<i>Family Relations</i>
Volume	50
Pages	113–21
Online	http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2001.00113.x/pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This article outlines a conceptual model of parental involvement in family support programs, anchored in ecological and family systems frameworks. It reviews the literature that was available at that time to identify the multiple influences on enrolment and retention of families in programs.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Three major components of involvement of families were examined – intent to enrol, enrolment and retention. The main factors influencing these three components are related to the individual, the provider and the program. Each factor acts differently within each component:

- *Predictors of intent to enrol* are attitudes toward service, perception of service necessity **and** readiness to change
- *Predictors of enrolment* are intent to enrol, and intervening conditions (e.g. length of time between enrolment and receipt of services)
- *Predictors of retention* are objective program experience – strong match between program and personal goals **and** service provider’s capabilities, especially cultural competency and service skills.

What are the implications for practice?

The predictors of retention identified by the study can inform strategies to improve retention:

- *Individual factors* – a strong match between program and personal goals, provider meets participant expectations, service delivery consistent with participant expectations, and perceived benefits continue to outweigh costs
- *Provider factors* – cultural competence and service delivery style will influence retention, with success hinging on the direct service provider’s capabilities, especially cultural competency and service skills
- *Program factors* – four program components presumed to improve retention rates, independent of individual and provider attributes are low supervisory caseload, stable funding, low levels of staff turnover, and the program’s ability to offer tangible incentives
- *Neighbourhood factors* – communities with a high degree of social cohesion would be more supportive of family support programs and hence be the location of programs with high retention rates.

Retention and recruitment (A)

Author	Heinrichs, N.
Year	2006
Title	'The effects of two different incentives on recruitment rates of families into a prevention program'
Type	Journal article
Journal	<i>Journal of Primary Prevention</i>
Volume	27
Pages	345–65
Online	https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/f85726i205137x78/resource-secured/?target=fulltext.pdf&sid=frjqqgqikvpqb1552fqngv45&sh=www.springerlink.com

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This study experimentally manipulated two incentives for participation (monetary: paid participation for sessions, and setting: group versus individual) in a child behaviour problem prevention program to analyse their effects on recruitment and retention of families.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

In general, payment was an effective strategy to increase the recruitment rate and initial attendance, whereas the setting (individual or group) was not.

What are the implications for practice?

The finding that payment was more effective in increasing recruitment and retention while treatment setting was not a factor could have implications for recruitment and retention. However, the particular context of this study needs to be taken into account – the characteristics of the program, the provider and the participants.

Retention and recruitment (B)

Author	Lee, S.S, August, G.J., Bloomquist, M.L., Mathy, R. & Realmuto, G.M.
Year	2006
Title	'Implementing an evidence based preventative intervention in neighbourhood family centres: Examination of perceived barriers to program participation'
Type	Journal article
Journal	Journal of Primary Prevention
Volume	27
Pages	573-97
Online	https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/v3q63w3k412011x3/resource-secured/?target=fulltext.pdf&sid=friqqgikvpgb1552fgnqv45&sh=www.springerlink.com

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This study examines parents' perceived barriers to participation in a multi-component prevention program run by a community agency serving culturally diverse urban neighbourhoods.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Children's participation was linked to practical obstacles, such as being involved in competing activities, unreliable transportation and school transfers. In contrast to child participation, parent participation reflected barriers from multiple domains, including obstacles/stressors (e.g. crises at home, too tired, too many other things going on), demands imposed by the program (e.g. inconvenient scheduling of activities), relevance (e.g. did not understand what the program was about) and relationship with provider (e.g. provider did not try to contact me).

What are the implications for practice?

The differences in child and parental barriers reflect the need for any program to be flexible in adapting to these challenges depending on the target participants. This paper also includes a scale developed specifically to measure and assess barriers to treatment participation, which could be useful in evaluation of practice and in future research.

Retention: Child and family interventions

Author	Miller, G.E. & Prinz, R.J.
Year	2006
Title	'Engagement of families in treatment for childhood conduct problems'
Type	Journal article
Journal	<i>Behavior Therapy</i>
Volume	34
Pages	517-34
Online	http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=MImq&_imagekey=B7XMW-4JCY5HW-7-1&_cdi=29681&_user=10&_pii=S0005789403800333&_origin=search&_coverDate=11%20per%20cent2F2003&_sk=999659995&_view=c&_wchp=dGLzVtz-zSkzk&_md5=3f6e8f4edfc596f13b5e17f413013abf&_ie=/sdarticle.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The study was designed to examine the impact of treatment configuration on engagement and premature termination, taking into account parental cognitions.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

The study compared three conditions: parent only (enhanced family treatment), child only (child cognitive treatment) and parent and child combined (enhanced family and child cognitive treatment and enhanced family and child relationship support).

- Child-only treatment had the lowest premature termination rate, and parent-only treatment had the highest
- Families receiving parent-only treatment kept a lower percentage of appointments than families receiving either the child-only or parent-and-child combined treatments
- Parental motivation was the only variable associated with dropout status for parent-only and parent-child treatments. Parents who entered treatment with externalising motivational attributions were more likely to prematurely terminate than parents with internalising motivations
- When parents wanted to focus on parenting issues, but were then assigned to the child-only treatment, this was significant predictor of premature termination.

What are the implications for practice?

The main implication for practice is the importance of parental motivation and expectations. Externalising and internalising motivational style and the expectations and desires parents had for a type of intervention were shown to make a difference to engagement. The implication for practice is that it could be important to align interventions with what parents expect and are motivated to do.

Content: Early learning project

Author	Warrilow, P., Fisher, K. & Valentine, K. University of New South Wales Research Consortium
Year	2004
Title	'Early learning strategies: Final report for Families First Cumberland Prospect'
Type	Book: <i>Social Policy Research Centre Report (UNSW Research Consortium)</i>
Volume	Report no.6/04
Pages	1-44 including appendices
Online	http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/Report6_04_Early_Learning_Support.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This is a discussion of the research on an Early Learning Project in New South Wales. The aims of the research activities were to map existing opportunities and issues and develop a strategic plan for the years that followed.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

- Sound models of early learning are presented and reviewed
- A plan was developed for the Cumberland Prospect to follow over the next three years, incorporating:
 - *Universal principles*: ways to increase child and family learning opportunities
 - *Target populations*: adoption of inclusive practices to encourage engagement of target populations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse families, as well as children or parents with disabilities.

Strategies proposed by the authors for early learning services were:

- Weekly supported playgroups and home visits that promote in-home programs: goal – to boost family information and activities through a variety of locations

- Mobile outreach services with multidisciplinary teams: goal is to attract families who cannot easily access other services and need the help
- Develop linkages between services and families: goal is to improve communication and increase service availability
- Promote positive relationships with families through flexible, opportunistic delivery: goal is to support families and children in ways that incorporate parents' own goals.

What are the implications for practice?

- A number of implications for practice are discussed in the paper.
- Strategies for the Cumberland Prospect to follow included supported playgroups and home visits, mobile outreach services, better linkages to other services and better family and service relationships. Management considerations to sustain the existing programs and services, as well as the provision of further learning opportunities were seen to be important.

Content: Parent education and playgroups

Author	Turner, C. & Bredhauer, K.
Year	2005
Title	'Nice noise: Parent education and playgroups'
Type	Bulletin
Bulletin	<i>Stronger Families Learning Exchange</i> (of Australian Institute of Family Studies)
Volume	Bulletin no. 7
Pages	6–9 (4 pages)
Online	http://www.aifs.gov.au/sf/pubs/bull7/nice.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The authors discuss various projects funded by the Australian Government Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) that focus on parent education and playgroups. The bulletin discusses results from interviews of staff and participants from the projects.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

There were two main themes related to parenting education and playgroups:

- *Importance of parent education/playgroups*: workers highlighted the importance of early intervention: parenting is complex, research supports benefits of early intervention, incorporate the needs of community in the delivery of programs.
- *Best practice in delivering parenting education*: types of education that proved successful were use of groups, strength-based approach, a focus on empowering parents, the importance of networking to other services, and bringing children and parents together. Social links reduce isolation, and these groups encourage social connections between parents. Workers stressed the importance of looking at the parent's needs not just as a parent but as a person as well. Examples of ways this was achieved included stress management classes and budgeting advice.

What are the implications for practice?

- Shared views between different approaches were concerned with how the programs are developed and run, as opposed to the content of any one program.
- A social setting for delivering activities or programs had many beneficial effects, such as providing a social meeting place where there may otherwise not be one available, normalising problems experienced by the parents, social support for more

isolated families; and it allowed the parents to support one another and recognise their own skills and knowledge.

- The type and structure of parenting support is best directed by parents for programs to be most effective.

Content: Playgroups – caravan parks pilot

Author	Eddy, G., Family Action Centre
Year	2003
Title	'Caravan Parks Pilot Family Crisis Child Care Program'
Type	Program report
Report	<i>Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services: Period March 2001–January 2003</i>
Pages	1–42
Online	http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/families/pubs/family_caravan_parks/Documents/Family_Caravan_Parks_Pilot.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The purpose of the final report of this project is to highlight the main issues affecting families and children at risk of homelessness living in caravan parks. It also draws out policy and project implementation information from the actions and 'learnings' during the Pilot phase and makes recommendations to the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services based on the findings.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

- Older children came to playgroups with younger children. This caused difficulties due to different age-related needs
- Due to the complex needs of families, some parents either did not come to playgroup or came only now and again
- Organisations had to re-examine their organisational, structural and legal status in response to children coming to playgroup without their parents
- Parents who were more transient had no access to long day care, family day care, occasional care or pre-schools for their young children and, at times, made poor choices about child care
- Where playgroups were run once or twice weekly with families who came regularly it was possible to note continuing improvement in the parent–child relationship. With irregular attendance, only small, but positive incremental changes could be seen
- Successful engagement of families over time was due to the welcoming and positive approach of Pilot project staff, the non-threatening nature of the playgroup activity and maintenance of a regular presence on the park
- A designated Family Support Worker role and an early childhood and early intervention focus were essential. This worker could undertake crisis management to meet the immediate needs of families as well as developing prevention strategies, such as helping families create positive relationships with other services.

What are the implications for practice?

The full report presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings and their implications. However, it needs to be noted that their findings are specific to a particular program as it was carried out from 2001 to 2003. This might limit the general applicability of their findings.

Program effectiveness: Community-based parenting support

Author	Trivette, C.M. & Dunst, C.J. Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development
Year	2005
Title	'Community-based parent support programs'
Type	Book chapter
Book	<i>Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development</i> (online)
Pages	1–8
online	19 October 2005 (Rev. Ed 14 may 2009): http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/documents/Trivette-DunstANGxp_rev.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This article reviews the literature on community-based parent support programs. It examines evidence on the effectiveness of parenting programs that are community-based, and offer services like parenting classes, parent/child play groups, information and advice. Parent support programs were defined as community-based initiatives designed to promote resources and supports for parents that strengthen and improve the functioning, growth and development of family members.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

The conclusions of the review were:

- *Variety and options*: when a variety of parenting guidance and support options are offered in a family-centred manner, parents' confidence and competence increase and they are more likely to interact positively with their children, which has a positive effect on children's social and emotional development.
- *Family-centred help-giving*: there are benefits when parenting and family support is given in a family-centred manner. Relational practices (e.g. behaviours related to help-giving, such as compassion, active listening, and mutual trust) and participatory practices (e.g. involving the participants in decision-making and choice) have been found to contribute to improvements in parent and family functioning. Studies repeatedly show participatory practices have greater influence.
- *Children's social-emotional development*: in a comparison of evaluations of parent support programs, it was found that programs that focus on parent development as a primary goal had a positive influence on children's social and emotional development.

What are the implications for practice?

- *The way supports are provided to families* is as important as what is provided
- *Programs are likely to be more successful* if they incorporate participatory family-centred help-giving practices that actively involve parents in decision-making.

Program effectiveness: Universal family intervention

Author	Zubrick, S.R., Ward, K. A., Silburn, S.R., Lawrence, D., Williams, A.A., Blair, E. & Robertson, D.
Year	2005
Title	'Prevention of child behavior problems through universal implementation of a group behavioral family intervention'
Type	Journal article
Journal	<i>Prevention Science</i>
Volume	6 (no.4)
Pages	287–304
Online	14 September 2005: https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/k284351832859536/resource-secured/?target=fulltext.pdf&sid=friqqgqikvpgb1552fqngv45&sh=www.springerlink.com

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This Australian study evaluated the efficacy of a universally delivered group behavioural family intervention aimed at reducing problematic behaviour in pre-school children. The study had a longitudinal design, over two years.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

- Parents' levels of dysfunctional parenting behaviour declined as the children grew older. This remained consistent across 12 and 24 months post-intervention. Similar effects were seen with child behaviour problems
- Parent factors, such as depression, anxiety and stress, marital adjustment and parental conflict over child-rearing, showed immediate and long-term improvement
- Program was successful in attracting and retaining the high-risk families
- Observations of parents who did drop-out of the program found that the capacity to sustain attendance was impaired – poverty, family disorganisation, conflict and parental mental health concerns can stop people from coming
- Some parents who cannot come to centre-based programs can be offered home-visiting programs to promote engagement and increase motivation and commitment.

What are the implications for practice?

- Authors note that retention in the program was maintained through regular contact with the families, collecting follow-up details (e.g. address, e-mail, and phone numbers), carefully kept records of parents' names and name changes allowed checking the electoral roll in the event contact was lost and, by recording details of a non-resident friend or relative of the family and their local GP details, families could be traced if contact was lost.
- Authors attribute the successful engagement of families to initial social marketing efforts and focus group research to uncover attitudes of the community toward parenting interventions. These attitudes were reflected in promotional material distributed. Provision of free crèche facilities was crucial to the parents – knowing their child was cared for while they came to the program was important. Staff were enthusiastic and encouraging, and when the families were enrolled, the staff promoted the importance of completing the program.
- Authors recommend that group-intervention not to be the only form of assistance available. They suggest a careful selection of evidence-based strategies across

universal, selective and indicated intervention programs that will be evaluated for efficacy.

Program effectiveness: Parenting intervention

Authors	Akai, C.E., Guttentag, C.L., Baggett, K.M. & Noria, C.C.W. The Centers for the Prevention of Child Neglect
Year	2007
Title	'Enhancing parenting practices of at-risk mothers'
Type	Journal article
Journal	<i>Journal of Primary Prevention</i>
Volume	29
Pages	233–42
Online	https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/q0718t42528w3743/resource-secured/?target=fulltext.pdf&sid=friqggqikvpgb1552fqngv45&sh=www.springerlink.com

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This study evaluated the effectiveness of 'My Baby and Me', a program designed to improve early parenting by increasing understanding of infant developmental needs and promoting maternal responsiveness. This program was assessed by determining the extent of mothers' increased positive behaviour support for infants and decreased psychological control.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

The design of the study was a randomised controlled trial, with mothers randomly assigned to control or intervention groups. The intervention focused on parental responsiveness, developmental knowledge and loving touch. The results for the intervention group showed:

- An increase in mothers' use of rich, scaffolding language
- Direct teaching and demonstration of skills to infants
- Adoption of responsibility for their parental role
- Decrease in negative parenting behaviours such as rigidity and intrusiveness. However, there were no differences in the observational ratings of maternal warmth, positive effect, lack of negativity, and self-reported unhappiness for participants in the two study conditions.

What are the implications for practice?

The results show evidence that directly targeting parenting behaviours through video modelling, live practice and constructive feedback can have a positive impact on parents' attitudes and their interactions with their infants in meaningful ways.

Program effectiveness: Parenting programs

Author	UnitingCare Burnside
Year	2002
Title	Do Parenting Programs Make a Difference?
Type	Executive summary
Pages	1–6
Online	http://202.5.101.3/content/do_per_cent20parenting_per_cent20programs_per_cent20make_per_cent20a_per_cent20difference_per_cent20- per_cent20exec_per_cent20summ_per_cent202002.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This Australian publication is an executive summary of a study by the Macquarie University Centre for Child Development and UnitingCare Burnside into the impact of two parenting programs: NEWPIN (Bidwill) and Early Start (Family Learning Centre, Ermington, NSW).

What were the major findings/conclusions?

- *Parent engagement in early literacy practices:* There was a significant increase in the number of times mothers at NEWPIN, Bidwill, read to their children per week, and in the use of literacy materials. Early Start parents had a small but non-significant increase in positive parenting literacy practices.
- *Parent wellbeing:* Both sites showed a significant reduction in parent stress. There were two findings that almost reached statistical significance. Early Start showed a reduction on a measure of depression and NEWPIN showed a reduction in stress affecting the relationship to spouse.
- *Potential for physical abuse of the child:* Overall, the group of families moved from being in a high-risk category to a medium-risk category. Over the year, families became less inclined to be rigid in their expectations and management of their child and other family matters.
- *Family social support networks and child outcomes:* Mothers from the two programs found parenting groups to be less helpful in terms of support networks. There were mixed or inconclusive results on cognitive changes in the children, and no significant changes in children's interest in early literacy activities.
- *Parent understanding of infant development.* The general knowledge of infant development was maintained at both sites, at over 70 per cent accuracy.
- *Program satisfaction.* In both programs, mothers' satisfaction with the program components they received and with their experience overall, remained high from the start to the end of the year.

What are the implications for practice?

These two programs serviced areas that are socio-economically and educationally disadvantaged and the study results show that parents using these services increased their quality of parenting in most, but not all, of the target outcomes. This study also highlights the importance of program evaluation, especially for family services that target disadvantaged areas and populations. Evaluation studies allow for a more objective and quantifiable assessment of program effectiveness.

Program effectiveness: Setting up and maintaining playgroups

Author	Sneddon, J. & Haynes, K. Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital
Year	2003
Title	<i>Early Intervention Parenting Project: Improving access to playgroups for all families project. Final report</i>
Type	Report to Government – FACS
Pages	1–59 plus appendices
Online	http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ecconnections/EI_ParentingProject_final.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

To start with, this Australian project examined why some local government areas (LGA) had higher participation in playgroups than others. It also identified barriers to access in two LGAs. These findings helped develop models that were used in the two LGAs. This

final report describes the strategies employed to set up and maintain playgroups as well as the barriers. The participating LGAs ran both community and supported playgroups.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Strategies for establishing and maintaining playgroups were:

- Linking with existing community facilities, such as community centres
- Involving existing community professionals and services, such as Maternal and Child Health Nurses and Migrant Resource Centres
- Identifying suitable venues
- Promoting playgroups through flyers and newsletters
- Reducing the cost of playgroups
- Encouraging playgroup leadership training
- Resourcing and supporting groups, e.g. by providing parenting education
- Developing a database of local playgroups
- Identifying low-cost transport options for playgroup participants.

Barriers were:

- A limited number of suitable venues
- Poor understanding of the benefits of playgroups by both parents and professionals
- Lack of local promotion of playgroups
- Limited capacity of existing children's services staff to resource and support playgroups
- Lack of centralised waiting lists and central contact person
- Lack of up-to-date information on existing playgroups, making future planning difficult
- Difficulty recruiting playgroup leaders, particularly among high need families
- High cost of playgroup membership fees and the requirement to pay for a whole term
- Inadequate availability of low-cost transport when venues were not easily accessible by public transport
- Sustainability of playgroups, which was often related to difficulties in recruiting playgroup leaders.

What are the implications for practice?

There are 12 recommendations for practice including venues, promotion, removing barriers and staff roles and training.

Program effectiveness: Supported playgroups – NSW

Author	ARTD consultants
Year	2008
Title	Supported Playgroups: Evaluation Phase 2
Type	Report to government
Title	<i>Final report to the Communities Division of the NSW Department of Community Services</i>
Pages	1–48
Online	http://www.families.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/ffsite/m100006123/fnsw_per cent20supported per cent20playgroup per cent20eval per cent20june per cent2008.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

Supported playgroups are one component of the *Families NSW* program, which is jointly delivered by five government agencies in partnership with local government and the community. This report – Phase 2 of a larger evaluation program – documented the service model, outcomes for children, families and the community, described good practice and areas for improvement. The methods used included surveys, interviews, focus groups and reviews of existing documents.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Chapter 7 presents the findings on groups targeted, benefits to children and families and issues and challenges. The conclusions are that program has successfully established and maintained supported playgroups for disadvantaged communities across NSW.

What are the implications for practice?

The report gives details of what worked well and what could be improved. What worked well included flexibility to adapt to local needs and the groups interests. Maintaining a non-judgmental approach was seen to be important. Facilitators indicated that families responded well to a consistent session structure, and that a focus on play was an effective way of engaging both children and parents. Potential improvements related to the needs of local groups, such as transport and venues.

Father involvement: Participation in parenting education

Author	Bauman, D.C. & Wasserman, K.B.
Year	2010
Title	'Empowering fathers of disadvantaged preschoolers to take a more active role in preparing their children for literacy success at school'
Type	Journal article
Title	<i>Early Childhood Education Journal</i>
Volume	37
Pages	363–70
Online	https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/b458436108w621w2/resource-secured/?target=fulltext.pdf&sid=friqggqikvpqb1552fgngv45&sh=www.springerlink.com

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of a program designed to give fathers a more active role in their child's literacy development. Fathers in the study had children enrolled in the USA Early Head Start or Head Start programs.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Data were collected via interview transcripts, facilitators' journals and field notes. Fathers' results were:

- *Increased commitment and interest in the literacy development of their child:* Fathers adopted the role of teaching early literacy as part of their parent role. There was greater interaction between father and child, particularly during reading time. Fathers learnt to create their own literacy materials, which they shared with other fathers in the group.
- *Learnt the importance of literacy development and undertook regular activities promoting school success:* Fathers gained a better understanding of the importance of early literacy learning. They learnt that even though their own literacy skills were not great, they could be a positive influence on their child's development by giving them opportunities to learn

- *Supported each other:* Fathers formed strong bonds with each other and showed increased self-confidence. Not only did the groups help the children, but they helped the self-esteem of the fathers, giving them a sense of pride, accomplishment and purpose.

What are the implications for practice?

This project recommended:

- Welcoming and supportive staff, teachers and administrators
- Guidance and specific activities provided for parents to engage with their children
- Remove barriers to participation by making schools and early childhood centres a community resource
- Sharing resources for early literacy development.

Father involvement: Parent education/play group program

Author	McBride, B.A.
Year	1990
Title	'The Effects of a Parent Education/Play Group Program on Father Involvement in Child Rearing'
Type	Journal article
Title	<i>Family Relations</i>
Volume	39 (no. 3)
Pages	250–56
Online	http://www.istor.org/pss/584868

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This article is about a parent education/play group program in the USA and the impact it had on the fathers' involvement with their children and on their parenting skills. It outlines the program's effects on fathers' responsibility, types of involvement, and their perceived sense of competence in parenting. What is notable about this study is its research design. The study compared an intervention group with a wait-list control group, and is described as a pre-test, post-test quasi-experimental design.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

The parent education/play group program was a 10-week program with weekly two-hour sessions. Half of each session was devoted to group discussions on child development and parenting skills, the other was for father-child play. Results showed that play group fathers increased their sense of competence in parenting skills, compared with the control group. This program was also effective in helping fathers become more comfortable with their paternal role and in increasing the amount of responsibility they assumed in child-rearing.

What are the implications for practice?

This parent education/play group program used a discussion format, rather than the formal teaching approach often adopted by other parenting programs. This format was shown to be an effective way to engage fathers. Findings of the study have implications for future research on the modifiability of paternal involvement and for the future development of programs aimed at enhancing fathers' parenting capacity.

Father involvement: Engagement in family services

Author	Berlyn, C., Wise, S. & Soriano, G., National Evaluation Consortium (Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, & Australian Institute of Family
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	Studies)
Year	2008
Title	<i>Engaging fathers in child and family services: Participation, perceptions and good practice. Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004–2009</i>
Type	Report to Government
Title	<i>FAHCSIA Occasional paper No 22</i>
Pages	1–62
Online	http://www.facs.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/research/occasional/Pages/ops-ops22.aspx

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This study is part of the evaluation of the Commonwealth Government's Stronger Families and Communities strategy (SFCS) 2004–2009. It describes father participation in some of the SFCS programs and services. It also identifies successful strategies for engaging with fathers.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

- Fathers did become involved, however, their level of participation was far lower than that of mothers
- A range of factors were barriers to their involvement
- Programs that were exclusive to fathers and tailored for them tended to be more successful.

What are the implications for practice?

Strategies to improve father participation included:

- Flexible hours of operation
- Employing male facilitators
- Developing father-specific services
- Marketing services to men in male spaces
- Using male-friendly language and advertisements
- Service venues where men felt comfortable
- Services could consider the applicability of such strategies to their operations.

Barriers to engagement: Evidence-based solutions

Author	Snell-Johns, J., Mendez, J.L. & Smith, B. H. University of South Carolina; Temple University
Year	2004
Title	'Evidence-based solutions for overcoming access barriers, decreasing attrition, and promoting change with underserved families'
Type	Journal article
Title	<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>
Volume	18 (no. 1)
Pages	19–35

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This article is a review of research studies, largely focusing on targeted interventions rather than universal family approaches. As the title indicates, it presents evidence-based solutions to engagement problems.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Strategies for overcoming access barriers:

- *Offering transportation, child care, low-cost services:* these reduce access barriers. Have been proven to be effective in previous interventions
- *Using the telephone:* helps create a good relationship and good communications between family and therapist
- *Providing home-based services:* overcomes transportation barrier, work schedules, and it's easier to generalise skills learnt in the program
- *Facilitating self-directed and video-based interventions:* help decrease access barriers
- *Video-taped programming* helps offer privacy, self-pacing and flexible scheduling
- *Multiple families seen by one therapist:* helps decrease the stigma associated with receiving mental health services. Reduces access barriers (i.e. cost and child care).

Strategies for decreasing attrition:

- Decrease amount of time families are on a waiting list
- *Monitor therapists' behaviours and expectations:* it has been suggested that therapists' expectations might lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. This highlights how service provider or agency attitudes can influence a family's experience in therapy
- *Offer incentives for coming:* monetary incentives provide lowest attrition rates; however, this does not directly impact on outcomes
- Conduct *brief interventions*
- *Therapists are readily available:* willing to work with family anytime
- *Address parents' needs:* broaden the scope of training programs, to allow parents facing multiple problems, to enrol or continue coming to the program.

Strategies for promoting change:

- *Prepare families for therapy and deal with expectations:* the more relevant treatment is perceived to be, the more likely a positive change will occur
- *Provide culturally sensitive services:* family resistance could be strong if therapists are not sensitive to cultural variations in family structure, coping style and problem expression
- *Give family task assignments:* strengthen a family's ability to solve their own problems
- *Focus on family's strengths:* blaming can lead to poor intervention progress or drop-out
- *Conduct motivational interviewing:* this client-centred approach aims to increase motivation and explore and resolve ambivalence.

What are the implications for practice?

- Report on outcomes (i.e. families improved, got worse) to allow comparison across groups and populations
- Offer operational definition and clear guidelines for measuring drop-out rates

- Conduct and disseminate strategies for overcoming barriers, decreasing attrition and promoting change
- Agencies that provide these services to families are advised to adopt a social-ecological view when helping families through barriers and maintaining engagement in programs
- Train service providers in the teaching and practice of specific strategies for engagement.

Promoting engagement: Participation in Head Start

Author	Mendez, J.L., University of North Carolina
Year	2010
Title	'How can parents get involved in preschool? Barriers and engagement in education by ethnic minority parents of children attending Head Start'
Type	Journal article
Title	<i>Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology</i>
Volume	16 (issue 1)
Pages	26–36
Online	15 February 2010: http://www.researchgate.net/publication/41138278_How_can_parents_get_involved_in_preschool_Barriers_and_engagement_in_education_by_ethnic_minority_parents_of_children_attending_Head_Start

What is the purpose of this report/article?

The purpose of this article is to evaluate an intervention to promote involvement of parents from ethnic minority families enrolled in the Head Start program. The article discusses challenges in engaging parents in prevention programs.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

- African–American families did want to take part in the parent involvement services as part of their child's education. Satisfaction in the program was high, and the majority of participants would recommend the program to others. This suggests that preschool programs like this can be suitable settings for preventative services.
- It was possible that sending home materials from the program reduced the need for families to come along. However, of the materials sent home, most families said they used those materials once per week, and others said they used program ideas and materials three or more times per week.
- Being a multi-year study, attendance reduced as the school years progressed .
- Work/education/job training demands were noted as significant barriers to attendance.
- Parent factors, such as higher levels of depressive symptoms and lower income, lead to families not coming to the program.
- Some families may not have perceived a need for the service, especially if their child was doing well at school,
- Teachers who interacted more often with parents at the school were said to be more connected to the families. Similarly, strong parent–teacher relationships related to children's literacy and math competence. Strong relationships were also associated with fewer problem behaviours in the child and increased social competence, and for the ethnic minority group, social and academic benefits,
- Results linking parent involvement and child's school readiness were consistent with other work.

What are the implications for practice?

- Continued study of strategies for promoting involvement during preschool will likely reveal other mechanisms for promoting school readiness during the early childhood period .

- Further study of barriers and participation limitations for families with complex needs and circumstances is needed.
- Parents with higher depressive symptoms and lower income need more indicated prevention efforts, such as a home visit component (to reduce barrier of attendance/drop-out).

Cultural diversity: Playgroups for refugee families

Author	Jackson, D.
Year	2006
Title	'Playgroups as protective environments for refugee children at risk of trauma'
type	Journal article
Title	<i>Australasian Journal of Early Childhood</i>
Volume	31
Pages	1–6
Online	http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=739

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This paper discusses the possible long-term effects of trauma and also describes a small study that investigated whether or not a supported playgroup used by refugee families in western Sydney could be considered a protective environment.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

Although findings from this small study cannot be generalised, the emerging evidence suggests that playgroups might offer an effective means of support for refugee families if they have these characteristics:

- An understanding of child development and a predictable environment in which children are able to express themselves freely through language, exploration, movement, art and music
- An emphasis on relationships and interactions between participants
- Support for parents and children shown through tolerance and flexibility within the program and through the provision of emotional support, information and resources
- Allowing parents and children to remain together during the playgroup session to reduce the likelihood of separation anxiety
- Support for a transition-to-school process for children and parents when necessary.

What are the implications for practice?

This was an examination of the impact of parenting programs, and of playgroups in particular, on the welfare of children from refugee families considered at high risk. While this study affirms the benefits of playgroups for these children, it also provides an impetus for more research in this area.

Cultural diversity: Playgroups

Author	Oke, N., Stanley, J. & Theobald, J.
Year	2007
Title	'The inclusive role of playgroups in Greater Dandenong'
Type	Evaluation report
Title	<i>Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and the Playgroup Program</i>

Pages	1–30
Online	http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Inclusive_role_playgroups_Greater_Dandenong.pdf

What is the purpose of this report/article?

This report investigates the ways in which playgroups in Greater Dandenong were inclusive of a diverse community and identifies barriers to playgroup attendance for parents and caregivers.

What were the major findings/conclusions?

- Barriers to participation and involvement included long waiting lists, lack of suitable transport, difficulties created for parents by physical infrastructure (such as poor footpaths), lack of information about the services, and lack of awareness of playgroups. Factors that impacted on attendance were children's sleep times, commitments to other children's services, such as kindergarten, and parents' working hours.
- Facilitating factors were communication about playgroups via word of mouth within family networks, playgroup venues close to families' home, and flexible session times.

What are the implications for practice?

The main findings from interviews were translated into a framework model and grouped into three principles that have potential to impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of playgroups.

- *Principle 1: Overcome structural and practical barriers.* This relates to promotion and knowledge about playgroups, the costs associated with playgroups, transport, and issues around service provision, such as when and where the playgroup is held.
- *Principle 2: Build positive relationships.* Assertive strategies need to engage target groups in ways that will encourage regular attendance.
- *Principle 3: Ensure cultural sensitivity and value for effort.* The importance of understanding the differing functions of playgroups within a culturally diverse context. Playgroup design should accommodate these diverse needs.

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