



Family Leader Role Description Checklist

FAMILY LEADER DEFINITION

This checklist is designed to help programs consider key components when developing a role description for family leaders. Family leaders are critical partners in ensuring early childhood systems are centered around family needs and perspectives. They draw on their own experiences – as well as those of others in their community – with early childhood programs (e.g., early intervention, home visiting, special education, well-child visits) to make positive changes for their family, community, and beyond.

This checklist aligns with core principles and the four domains of the Family Voices Family Engagement in Systems Assessment Tool (FESAT). Early childhood programs can use this checklist to foster a sense of shared purpose and direction while helping family leaders understand what is expected of them.

Please note that the items in this checklist are suggestions and not requirements. As a team, you can determine priority areas and add in other components over time.

Project Overview

Have you clearly described:

- ☐ The purpose, goals, and scope of the project or initiative?
- ☐ The organizations, funders, or partners involved?
- ☐ The title of the family leader role?
- ☐ The type of engagement (staff, advisor, consultant, volunteer)?

Knowledge and Experience

Have you included:

- ☐ A requirement around lived experience with early childhood programs (early intervention, early childhood special education, home visiting, child care)?
- ☐ A clear statement that formal degrees are not required?
- ☐ Qualities like curiosity, collaboration, and desire to share voice?
- ☐ Skills that can be supported or developed (speaking in meetings, reviewing materials)?

- ☐ Experience from different types of family structures and identities (foster, adoptive, multilingual, Tribal)?

Representation and Accessible Considerations

Have you addressed:

- ☐ Whether individuals with dual roles (provider and parent) are eligible?
- ☐ Your intention to engage families from communities that are currently underrepresented?
- ☐ Whether the community already has a trusted relationship with your organization?
- ☐ How participation challenges (technology access, language, trust) will be addressed?

Tasks and Activities

Have you specified:

- ☐ What family leaders will be asked to do during meetings (share input, co-facilitate, present)?
- ☐ Any between-meeting tasks (reviewing documents, emailing feedback)?
- ☐ The frequency, length, and format of meetings (virtual, in-person, hybrid)?

Time Commitment

Have you included:

- ☐ The total length of the project or term of engagement?
- ☐ Expected time per week/month/quarter?
- ☐ What activities are expected at different stages of the project?

Participation Expectations

Have you clarified:

- ☐ Meeting attendance (minimum requirements to stay engaged)?
- ☐ Travel expectations or flexibility?
- ☐ Dress code for in-person or virtual meetings (if applicable)?

Compensation

Have you explained:

- ☐ Whether family leaders will be compensated for their time and expertise?



- ☐ Whether family leaders will be compensated in advance or reimbursed for expenses related to participation (child care, meals, lodging)?
- ☐ The amount and frequency of payments?
- ☐ The method of payment (check, direct deposit, prepaid card, gift card)?

Accommodations and Support

Have you planned for:

- ☐ Language interpretation or translation?
- ☐ Live captions and/or screen reader-friendly materials?
- ☐ Advance sharing of materials in accessible formats?
- ☐ Support for participation (child care, meals, transportation, technology assistance)?

Benefits of Participation

Have you described:

- ☐ How family leaders will contribute to change and systems improvement?
- ☐ What they will gain (skill-building, networking, certificates, leadership opportunities)?
- ☐ How their contributions will be acknowledged or celebrated?

How to Apply

Have you included:

- ☐ A link or instructions for applying?
- ☐ Contact information for someone available to answer questions?
- ☐ A clear list of what applicants need to submit (if anything)?
- ☐ A timeline for when selections will be made?



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FESAT DOMAINS REFLECTED IN THE CHECKLIST

Commitment

- Define clear goals and purpose for family leader roles to show that family engagement is a core value.
- Describe how family leaders will influence change and improvement, ensuring families have real decision-making power.
- Clearly outline compensation and supports (child care, transportation, meals, technology) to remove challenges and show value for family contributions.

Representation

- Seek family representation to ensure those engaged reflect the community served.
- Build relationships and trust with communities to increase authentic participation.
- Address challenges such as language access and technology to ensure fair participation.

Transparency

- Define roles, responsibilities, and expectations clearly so families understand what is expected.
- Explain time commitments and activity schedules in plain, accessible language.
- Communicate compensation details (amount, timing, method) clearly and upfront.

Impact

- Include families in decision-making roles beyond consultation to ensure their voices shape systems.
- Engage families as co-facilitators, presenters, or agenda planners to give them leadership opportunities.
- Acknowledge lived experience as expertise and provide recognition for family leaders' contributions.



ACRONYM LIST FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY ENGAGEMENT WORK

Acronym	Full Term	Definition
CYSHCN	Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs	Children who have or are at increased risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions and require health and related services beyond what is generally required.
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education	Special education and related services for children ages 3-5 with disabilities or delays, provided under IDEA Part B.
EI	Early Intervention	Services for infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) with developmental delays or disabilities, provided under IDEA Part C.
FESAT	Family Engagement in Systems Assessment Tool	A tool developed by Family Voices to help programs assess and improve how they engage families in systems-level work.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	Federal law ensuring special education services to eligible children with disabilities across the U.S.
IEP	Individualized Education Program	A written plan developed for a child with a disability, outlining goals and the services the child will receive in school (starting at age 3).

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