

Sustaining Parent Engagement

Audio Descriptive Text

Title: Chapter 3. Engaging Parents to Support Healthy School Environments; Sustaining Parent Engagement. Image of Active Child icon.

Video Summary

- Schools need to identify ways to sustain parent engagement by overcoming challenges that keep parents from being connected and engaged in school health activities. Common challenges include the following:
 1. Schedule conflicts
 2. Lack of transportation
 3. Uncomfortable at school activities and events
 4. Unfamiliarity and language barriers
 5. Inexperienced or untrained school staff
 6. Lack of financial support for parent engagement
- To ensure the sustainability of parent engagement, it is important for schools to have a dedicated team or committee that oversees this work.

Audio Script

Keeping parents engaged may be difficult, especially as children grow into adolescence and move on to middle and high school. Schools need to identify ways to **sustain** parent engagement by overcoming challenges that keep parents from being connected and engaged in school health activities.

Here are six common challenges to sustaining parent engagement in school health, as well as some ideas schools and groups can use to overcome them.

1. Schedule conflicts

If parents are unable to attend school health meetings or activities because of schedule conflicts, this challenge could be addressed by scheduling meetings and activities to match varying parent schedules or provide alternative ways for parents to get the information.

2. Lack of transportation

If parents cannot attend school health meetings and activities because of a lack of transportation, schools can try to bring the meetings to them by having an online meeting option available.

3. Uncomfortable at school activities and events

Parents may be uncomfortable at school health meetings and activities as a result of negative experiences when they were in school, unfamiliarity with the school culture, or other factors. Schools can try to overcome this discomfort by introducing them to school activities and school staff in nonthreatening ways.

4. Unfamiliarity and language barriers

Because of language barriers or unfamiliarity with school-specific terms, parents could have trouble understanding information provided at school health activities and meetings. If possible, schools should provide translation services for non-English speaking parents to help overcome those barriers.

5. Inexperienced or untrained school staff

School staff may not be experienced or trained to work with parents and have trouble sustaining relationships and parent engagement efforts. If this is the case, schools can provide professional development opportunities for school staff that focus on strengthening parent engagement.

6. Lack of financial support for parent engagement

If there is difficulty sustaining school administrative or financial support for parent engagement, long-term school staff can encourage parents to speak to school administrators about the positive impact of engaging parents in the health of students and the school.

To ensure the sustainability of parent engagement, it is important for schools to have a dedicated team or committee that oversees this work. Individual schools and school districts should determine what actions are most feasible and appropriate, based on the needs of the school and parents, school level, and available resources. Schools should also evaluate their efforts to increase parent engagement in school health to learn which actions have the greatest impact. The *Check-In Questions* are a great resource to track progress in parent engagement.

Now, let's take a moment to check your knowledge on the parent engagement framework and on what parents can do to support a healthy school environment by answering a few questions.