



"BUILDING BLOCKS"
OF PARTNERSHIPS

Considerations for Trainees Preparing
to Engage Families in Research

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BUILDING BLOCKS OF PARTNERSHIP: A TRAINEE GUIDE

Trainees are in a "sensitive period" in learning how to do research and engage families in their work. This stage of career development presents a perfect opportunity to integrate this practice into your toolbox of research methods practices and begin establishing this practice in your process!

We know that trainees need for more resources to learn about how to engage in partnership, even as a starting place. We hope this guide will help you locate resources, both physical and interpersonally, to help you along in your journey of developing Family Engagement in Research (FER) practices during your training.

"Building Blocks" of Partnerships: Considerations for Trainees Preparing to Engage Families in Research

Family engagement in research (FER) moves boundaries by giving families a voice in research, but many trainees do not know where to start developing skills in engaging families in research!

These blocks are yours to build with – take what you need, in the order that works for your project and learning, to take steps toward developing practices for meaningfully engaging families in research!

General Recommendations

- Family members' help can be used in **ALL** research phases, not just when determining relevant research questions or disseminating knowledge!
- Do not let the amount of 'extra' FER-work discourage you! It's ok to start small with **'JUST' ONE** family member.
- The personal experiences of a family member may not necessarily generalize to the whole target group of your research. **Choose wisely!**



Determine your questions and aims

- How can the inclusion of family partners uncover questions related to your objectives?
- What type of family member are you interested in (e.g., child, parent, sibling)?
- How will family partners be involved?



Search for partners

Consider reaching out to:

- Family groups and research organizations
 - E.g., *Solutions for Kids in Pain*, *CanChild*
 - E.g., your provincial *Supporting Patient Oriented Research (SPOR)* group
- Clinical or school settings (e.g., care teams at hospitals, school boards)
- Social Media (e.g., advertising via *CanChild* on Twitter)

Trainee Mentorship in Developing Family Partnerships

Seek mentorship opportunities:

- **Research supervisors**
- **Formal training programs**
 - E.g., *Family Engagement in Research (CanChild/McMaster University)*
 - E.g., *Patient Oriented Research Curriculum in Child Health (PORCC/CHN/Child-Bright Network)*
- **Experts in your field**
 - Seek researchers in your field who are champions in FER!
- **Your trainee groups and research organizations**
 - Your trainee peers may have expertise in FER and can offer advice.

Collaboration

- Communicate about expectations and preferences **EARLY AND OFTEN**. Consider using the Involvement Matrix.
- Family partners may have competing demands and their situation or availability can change suddenly.
 - Build flexibility into your plans: things will often take longer than you think.
 - Consider that your schedule may need to be outside your typical working hours.



Managing Expectations

- Families do not want to spend time sharing ideas that cannot happen!
 - Be **clear** about the givens and realities of the project (e.g., compensation, project priorities)
 - **Discuss** what makes it valuable for them to participate and try to accommodate for that. Think outside the box!

Created for the McMaster University, CanChild, and Kids Brain Health Network
Family Engagement in Research Program
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Links for QR codes:
https://researchgate.net/publication/32224558_Early_career_researchers_perspectives_and_roles_in_patient-oriented_research
<https://www.canchild.ca/en/research-in-practice/family-engagement>
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0840470417744548?journalCode=emfj>
<https://www.kirubrecht.nl/involvement-matrix/>

These building blocks are yours to build with!

Build with the blocks you need, when you need them, and in the order you need them in. There is no one approach to building your practice in engaging families in research!

HOW TO USE THESE BLOCKS

These blocks can be used as springboard for discussion with your committee as you discuss how family partners can be incorporated into your research.

They can also be used as you develop your dissertation plan, to help embed different learning and outreach objectives.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Validates that starting small is okay
- Highlights the role of personal experience in the partnership process
- Shares resources on taking some early steps and starting small

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DETERMINING QUESTIONS AND AIMS

- Consider how partners can be involved at the question development stage
- Include diversity of family members who can assist in developing new and relevant questions of interest to other populations, and whom may also then contribute to, and/or benefit from your research
- Seek partners in a variety of spaces - this can also support endeavors to ensure a breadth of families are included in your work

TRAINEE MENTORSHIP IN DEVELOPING FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

- Outlines where trainees can look for mentorship on partnership
- Highlights the role of peer support and learning to help establish the role of communities of trainees to not only learn more in the moment, but contribute knowledge to the "next generation" of researchers

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COLLABORATION

- Shares the importance of early and frequent communication around ideas, in addition to resources that support engagement
- Reminds that collaboration = flexibility in expectations

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- Strategies for setting expectations and how to manage when the end result looks different
- Key aspects of conversations to have with partners about the research process at the outset

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ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS
(E.G., SHARED DOCUMENTS)



REGULAR MEETINGS TO DISCUSS
WITH FLEXIBILITY



CHIMING IN ON EMAIL WHEN
AVAILABLE AND BEING FLEXIBLE
WITH EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS



BEING OPEN TO THE IDEAS OF
OTHERS AND RESHAPING ONE'S
OWN PERSPECTIVE IN THE
PROCESS



BEING COLLABORATIVE AND
SUPPORTIVE OF EACH OTHER'S
IDEAS

STRATEGIES THAT CAN FACILITATE YOUR PROJECT