

Ensuring an Intentional Approach to Family Access

Early childhood systems building initiatives focus on coordination of, access to, and quality of services in order to improve outcomes for young children and families. As part of this work, programs and systems have a responsibility to analyze the access experience of families and improve upon strategies to ensure families have access seamless delivery system of services that meet their needs in a timely fashion. All families will need some level of access to a predictable set of services and supports as they raise their young children.¹ Programs, and the organizations they are part of, are well served to take a deeper dive in to the concept of access.

Access is not solely defined by the number of families that seek out and engage in programming, just as the state of having access to a service is not only defined by the presence or absence of that service in the community. In order to advance intentional thought on the concept of access, we put forward a break down of the core components of access, which builds upon strategic thinking of early childhood leaders in Georgia around the issue of access. Access is composed of the following elements: aware, affordable, accessible, available, accommodate, and acceptable. These elements are presented through a self-assessment tool guiding programs to consider both the experience of access for the families they serve and to go more broadly by thinking about access for those that are not reached by the program.

Part I: Thinking about the families you are currently reaching and serving, how intentional are your efforts to address these six elements of access?

Elements of Access	<i>How intentional is your program in addressing each element of access?</i>		
Aware Population is informed that service exists and what the service provides	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
Affordable Prices of services meets the ability of the population to pay	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
Accessible Location of supply aligns with population location and demand	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
Available Size or volume of the supply meets population needs	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
Accommodate Delivery of service accommodates population needs	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
Acceptable Characteristics of service providers and population are acceptable to each other	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional

¹ Gruendel, J. and Carroll, E. When Brain Science Meets Public Policy: Rethinking the Governance of Early Childhood Systems, Institute for Child Success, February 2015. Retrieved at http://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/mydocuments/brain_science_pt2.pdf

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Part II: Next, push your consideration of access to your programming by expanding to thinking about the full community. In this process start by analyzing your awareness and understanding of what defines the community you serve eg how do you know you are reaching everyone?

Community Demographic Construct	Community Data	Children/Families Served
Number of children under age 6		
Income (related to federal poverty level) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # residents below 100% FPL • # residents below 185% FPL • # residents above 200% FPL 		
Race <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African American/Black • Asian/Pacific Islander • Caucasian/White • Native American • More than one race 		

For those families you are not reaching or serving, how intentional would you rank your efforts around each of the following elements of access?

Elements of Access	How intentional is your program in addressing each element of access?		
Aware Population is informed that service exists and what the service provides	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
Affordable Prices of services meets the ability of the population to pay	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
Accessible Location of supply aligns with population location and demand	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
Available Size or volume of the supply meets population needs	Unintentional	Somewhat Intentional	Intentional
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How do you work with partners in your community to address those you are not reaching? Consider your responsibility to ensuring families access the services they need, if your service is not the match for their needs then who will serve the family?
