



SBIRT Implementation Support

Tips for Engaging with Multilingual Learners and their Families



When working with multilingual learners and their families, use best practices to ensure linguistic accessibility and cultural competence.

Here are some strategies and tips to help with this:

★ Language Accessibility

- Offer translated materials to families when possible:
 - GAIN-SS & Consent Form: Spanish
- Use interpreters for family communication and translation services for SBIRT materials.
 - Using interpreters with students in SBIRT can raise issues like confidentiality, misunderstandings, and lack of SBIRT process understanding. Collaborate with interpreters beforehand to address these challenges and educate them about SBIRT.
- Utilize visual aids (pictures, short text, visual displays).
- Avoid acronyms; use clear, simple language and speak slowly.
- Encourage questions and feedback.

★ Fostering School-Family Partnerships

- Build rapport and trust with families.
- Consider Teacher Care Meetings to strengthen engagement. Protocol and Flowchart for Teacher Care Meetings.
- Recognize that family engagement varies—use a strength-based, non-judgmental approach.
- Partner with families to:
 - Identify what has/hasn't worked.
 - Set shared goals for the student.
 - Ensure everyone feels empowered, respected and heard.

★ Cultural Sensitivity & Competence

- Learn about and acknowledge cultural differences in mental health, substance use, and help-seeking behaviors.
- Collaborate with community & multilingual resources for support.
- Consult with CESA & DPI resources for additional guidance:
 - DPI EL Policy Handbook – Parental Engagement & Support Chapter.

HERE ARE SOME COMMON HURDLES/BARRIERS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

HURDLE

"I don't have time"
"The family doesn't answer when I call or respond when I email."

"There are so many cultural differences."
"Their family does not believe in counseling."

"The family does not speak fluent English and this makes it hard to communicate."

POSSIBLE SOLUTION

Work with families to determine the best modes of communication (text, email, in-person, phone call) and the best times to communicate, possibly through a survey. This will save you time in the long run.

View cultural differences as assets and strengths versus hindrances. Try to learn about the family's culture. Ask questions and be curious.

Does your district have access to interpreters? If so, partner with them for communication. Avoid using educational jargon or acronyms and if they are necessary (ie. SBIRT) explain the meaning clearly.

Students succeed more when families are engaged in the SBIRT process, in fact project evaluation results show that obtaining quicker parental consent results in more positive behavior changes for students.

RESOURCES

Resources and collaborations used to create this tip sheet:

- [The ABC's of Family Engagement](#) (WIDA)
- <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/ells-families>
- [The Drive in with Dr. Robin Rivas Podcast episode on Effective Parent Conferences and Open House Strategies for Engaging EL Families](#)
- [School Counselor Collaboration with Language Interpreters: Results of a National Survey](#)
- Thank you to Audrey Lesondak, Senior Director, Language & Culture at CESA 2

Additional resources on Multilingual Learner Family Engagement:

- [World Class Instructional Design and Assessment WIDA \(Wisconsin\)](#)
 - [WIDA Family Engagement](#)
 - [The ABC's of Family Engagement](#)
- [Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education](#) (United States Department of Education 2016)

To learn more about School SBIRT and the support provided by the WISH Center visit <https://www.wishschools.org/resources/schoolsbirt.cfm> or contact the [WISH Center](#).

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