



## ENGAGE:

### *Consider the parent's experience*

It is important to consider a parent's experience of your practice setting and procedures – from the moment they or you make that first phone call to set up an appointment to when they or you walk through the door. Pretend you are a parent calling for an appointment. Listen to the way phone calls are handled. Is the parent offered a flexible set of potential appointment times to allow for school or childcare schedules? Explore the waiting room. Is there a place for children to play while a parent is waiting for an appointment or meeting with someone?

If you are meeting with a parent at home, anticipate the situation and circumstances. Can you make accommodations in your conversations depending on whether children are present and within hearing distance? If the television is on to occupy or distract the children, are you annoyed by the extra noise? How would you respond? Are you prepared to answer children's questions about why you are there and what you will be doing with their mother or father? If the home is messy or not clean, can you sit comfortably and focus on the conversation? You may have opportunity to see the parent and child interact. If their interaction is not positive or age-appropriate, have you thought about what you might say to guide or role model a better approach without seeming intimidating or threatening? Are you prepared to acknowledge a parent's strengths and capacity to interact well with his or her children?

Considering issues like these, in advance, will help you respond in sensitive, respectful, family-focused ways.