



Healthy Relationship Principles for Providers

Complex co-parenting issues surface daily in our work with parents and caregivers. Since the Fathers Corps was established in 2013, we have offered numerous trainings on co-parenting and healthy relationships. In March 2021 we began meeting with a variety of direct service providers and mental health specialists to identify the set of Healthy Relationship Principles (HRP) below. We ask providers to regularly review, discuss, and practice these principles to ensure we, as community and family support professionals, are doing our best to assist parents with building strong and healthy co-parenting relationships.

1. **Maintain** focus on the well-being of the child(ren) in all interactions with families.
2. **Acknowledge and reflect** on your life experiences, and on systemic and personal biases, to ensure these experiences and biases do not negatively impact your engagement with and support of parents.
3. **Reinforce, coach, and model** healthy communication skills.
 - a. Healthy communication includes respecting the other parent's perspective and engaging in non-judgmental, deep, active listening.
 - b. Providers are helpful when they model healthy communication, and provide opportunities for parents to practice communication skills (e.g., role play difficult conversations).
4. **Remind** parents that their children are watching and learning how to manage positive and negative emotions and how to resolve conflict. Children will remember who took the “high road” as they grow older and reflect on their family relationships.
5. **Acknowledge and normalize** the emotional complexity and challenges of parental relationships.
6. **Support** parents with separating emotions and expectations regarding the other parent when discussing or making parenting decisions.
7. **Use** inclusive language (i.e., co-parent, child’s mother/father, team approach, parent experiencing challenges) that uplifts and honors parents and eliminate the use of harmful stereotypical terms.

8. **Be** an advocate for your client, allowing space for them to vent frustrations and disappointments, while consistently emphasizing the importance of all caregivers functioning as a team while adhering to any standing legal orders.
9. **Emphasize** the importance of quality time spent with children.
10. **Be** knowledgeable of, and connect both parents to available resources that support their individual needs.