



Engaging Family Volunteers in T.R.A.I.L.

Family members are primary influences on our Club youth. Families pass along traditions, culture, and even healthy habits. It is easy to see that family engagement in the On the T.R.A.I.L. to Diabetes Prevention program can have a positive impact on the Club participants. Engaging family members reinforces two key concept in T.R.A.I.L.: respecting their personal heritage and sharing knowledge of healthy eating with fellow community members. By engaging parents and guardians as volunteers at your Club, healthy habits are more likely to be practiced at home and with extended family! Below are talking points on how family engagement can enhance the T.R.A.I.L. program for your participants and how other Clubs' have found success in recruiting parents, guardians, or family members to take part in program activities.



Remember parent/guardian volunteers can include grandparents, aunts, and uncles! It is important to respect the relationship the adult has with the T.R.A.I.L. participant and their families' customs.

Why does family engagement matter?

- Family engagement leads to better outcomes for the youth.**
The After-School Corporation reports that a common factor among the highest-performing youth development programs is family engagement. In programs with family volunteers, the youth had higher grades, higher school attendance, and positive relationships with staff. Highlighting these positive trends can be a powerful recruiting tool!
- Family involvement boosts youth participation and attendance.**
According to New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development, community-based educational programs with family volunteers have significantly higher levels of participation and retention among youth. Family and Elders play a large role in T.R.A.I.L. communities. For Clubs that have trouble retaining T.R.A.I.L. youth, family volunteers could increase youth participation and reinforce the lessons of the program. Seeing those important faces in the Club will show participants that the influential members of their life are invested.
- When family is present, the youth are more likely to bring their learning home!**
Studies have shown that family volunteers boost engagement in the home through increased homework help, encouragement to read, and participation in school events. For T.R.A.I.L., family engagement encourages and educates parents to incorporate the healthy habits and behaviors into their daily life!





The Club Experience: T.R.A.I.L. Guide to Family Involvement

Each Club has a different experience with parent, guardian, and family involvement. The Clubs below are “T.R.A.I.L. veterans” who have shared best practices about the benefit of knowing the families they are serving and how personal, family connections can make a difference.

- **Boys & Girls Club of White Earth:**
Like many other Clubs, the Boys & Girls Club of White Earth was having challenges successfully recruiting and retaining parent volunteers. White Earth began collaborating with their Human Resource Department to review and revise their volunteer application process after realizing that their recruitment process was too lengthy! Now it is easier for parents to participate.
- **Boys & Girls Club of the Missouri River Area:**
The Boys & Girls Club of the Missouri River Area is a perfect example of the positive outcomes that result from parent engagement. Since parents have been recruited, the T.R.A.I.L. youth have been able to listen to their family’s personal stories about diabetes and how it affects the community around them. The parents help with meal preparation and incorporate traditional cooking methods to reinforce the curriculum and encourage healthy cooking at home!

Once your Club has successfully recruited family volunteers, there are several ways they can be active in the T.R.A.I.L. program. Depending on how much time each parent/guardian can offer, here are a few areas in the curriculum that could incorporate family involvement:

- PA challenges and activities assistance
- Administer pre-tests and post-tests
- Assist with snack demonstrations and meal preparation
- Serve as a chaperone (Chapter 9’s Healthy Chef Field Trip)
- Support the Community Service Project

For more information about family engagement, visit the following resources for additional ideas:

- [Expanding Learning- Engaging Families](#)
- [National Mentoring Resource Center- What Works in Mentoring for Family Engagement](#)