



FAMILY PLACE LIBRARIES™
Building Foundations for Early Learning
A Fact Sheet for librarians interested in becoming part of the
Family Place Network

What is a Family Place Library?

The Family Place Libraries™ initiative promotes a national model for transforming public libraries into welcoming, developmentally appropriate early learning environments for very young children, their parents and caregivers. Based on research about the importance of early brain development, the Family Place Library supports the essential role of parents as first teachers and addresses the physical, social, emotional and cognitive aspects of child development to help build a foundation for learning during the critical first years of life. By partnering and working with other social, health and educational services providers, the Family Place model aims to ensure that all children enter school ready and able to learn and positions libraries as key early childhood and family support organizations within the local community.

What are the core components of a Family Place Library?

A Family Place library offers:

- A specially designed welcoming space for families with very young children to relax, play and share books together.
- A five-week Parent/Child Workshop program series for toddlers, parents and caregivers. Fun and play-based, the program provides an environment rich with toys, books and art activities and an opportunity for families to spend time together, make friends and talk one-on-one with early childhood and family support specialists.
- Collections of books, toys, music and multimedia materials for babies, toddlers, parents and service providers.
- Services developed in partnership with community organizations including outreach to new and/or underserved audiences such as new moms, immigrant and low income families.
- Librarians specially trained in child development and family support.

Who benefits from Family Place Libraries?

Children, parents and other adults caring for very young children benefit from specially trained staff, spaces and programs designed to meet the needs of very young children and their caregivers. Community agencies, educators and family services providers benefit from having a strong community partner able to reinforce or enhance their missions, share resources and develop cooperative services. Youth services librarians benefit from exposure to research on early childhood development, training and technical assistance in planning and implementing their Family Place services and access to a supportive network of peers. Libraries benefit from community and professional recognition as essential partners in early childhood development as well as increased support and use by families.

How does Family Place Libraries™ work?

Local libraries develop and administer their Family Place services with technical support from the national network team. This support includes a National Training Institute, pre-and post-training webinars, an onsite visit from the national staff, access to specialists in child development and children's library services, and a variety of support materials to assist in communications and planning. The national team also provides ongoing technical assistance via a Family Place symposium prior to Public Library Association (PLA) conferences, peer exchange and other online resources, and one-on-one email/phone consultation. Youth services library staff, trained in Family Place principles and practices, are responsible for implementing the program at the local level, with the support of their supervising librarians and library directors.

How does Family Place differ from other early childhood service programs in libraries?

The Family Place Libraries™ initiative helps librarians (and the parents they work with) apply the latest research on positive child development. As a model, it:

- Is comprehensive in its approach, including attention to space development, collections, programming, information and referral, parent engagement and other family supports;
- Involves intensive and sustained professional development for youth services librarians;
- Recognizes that all learning is interrelated and, therefore, goes beyond literacy preparation to address all aspects (social, emotional, physical and intellectual) of early childhood development;
- Positions libraries as partners in community efforts to improve outcomes for very young children.

How are community agencies involved?

Family Place is designed as a collaborative model. Family Place librarians partner and work with local service providers and early childhood educators to enhance the community environment for families with very young children and to reach new and/or underserved audiences. When conducting the Parent/Child Workshop series (a core component of Family Place) community agencies provide resource professionals as part of the program. In a well-developed Family Place Library staff actively develop and promote collaborative services.

How does a library become a Family Place library?

Libraries interested in becoming a Family Place are required to send one librarian and one administrator to a three-day Family Place Training Institute along with pre-training online sessions. After the training, libraries are expected to implement the program during the following 18 months to 2 years. After implementation, an onsite visit is conducted by national staff. Members of the Family Place Libraries™ network consistently offer the core components of the program, including staff trained at the Family Place Libraries Institute. Each library is asked to complete an annual recertification form.

When and where are the trainings held?

The Training Institute is conducted three or four times annually. Most of the trainings are held at the Middle Country Public Library in Centereach and Selden (NY) during the fall and spring months. See the network website for the most current information.

What is the Family Place Libraries™ Network?

The Family Place Libraries concept originated at the Middle Country Public Library in Centereach, NY, in 1979. Since then the program has expanded into a national network of over 500 libraries in 32 states. A map of Family Place libraries is available on the website. The network is administered by the Family Place Libraries team at the Middle Country Public Library.

Has Family Place Libraries™ been evaluated?

Several evaluations of Family Place Libraries initiative have been conducted over the past decade. These evaluations focus on the initiatives impact on parents, library staff, community partners and the public's perceptions and use of the library. Please refer to the website for full access to these evaluations.

How can I learn more?

Visit www.familyplacelibraries.org or contact Kristen Todd-Wurm, National Coordinator for Family Place Libraries™; todd-wurmkristen@mcplibrary.org or 631 585-9393 ext. 212.