



Fact Sheet

What is a Family Place Library?

The Family Place Libraries™ initiative is 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 on 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 Libraries model aims to ensure that all children enter school ready and able to learn and it positions libraries as key early childhood and family support organizations within the local communities.

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 explore, play and share books together.
- A five-week Parent-Child Workshop program 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 literacy and child 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 parents, caregivers and low-income and immigrant 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 families. Community agencies, educators and family services providers benefit from having a strong community partner able to reinforce and/or enhance their missions, share resources and develop cooperative services. Children's librarians benefit from exposure to research on early childhood development, training and technical assistance in planning and implementing their Family Place services and from 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 bi-annual Family Place symposium, peer exchange and other online resources, and one-on-one email/phone consultation. Children's 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.

What are some of the underlying assumptions of the Family Place model?

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

- Is comprehensive in its approach, including attention to space development, collections, programming and other family supports;
- Involves intensive and ongoing professional development for children's librarians;
- Recognizes that all learning is interrelated and, therefore, extends beyond literacy 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 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 Libraries™), community agencies provide resource professionals who participate in the program. Family Place Library staff actively develop and promote collaborative services.

How does a library become a Family Place library?

Libraries interested in joining the Family Place Libraries™ initiative are required to send one librarian and one administrator to attend a 3 ½ day Family Place Training Institute and complete seven hours of pre-training online sessions. After the training, libraries are expected to implement the program during the following 18 months at which time an onsite visit is conducted by national staff. Family Place Libraries must complete a recertification survey to remain part of the network. Members of the Family Place Libraries™ network consistently offer the core components of the program, including staff trained at the Family Place Libraries™ Institute.

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. Trainings are sporadically offered at the Carson Branch of the County of Los Angeles Public Library. 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 1996. Since then the program has expanded into a national network of over 400 libraries in 29 states. A map of Family Place libraries is available on the website. The network is administered by the Family Place team at the Middle Country Public library.

Who funds Family Place Libraries™?

Each library raises its own funds to implement the program model. These funds generally come from multiple sources including library operating funds, state library development offices, Friends groups, municipal or county governments, private foundations or local business sponsors. In 2011, The Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded funds for expansion and demonstration of the Family Place model in 28 libraries in 8 states.

Has Family Place Libraries™ been evaluated?

Several evaluations of Family Place have been conducted over the past decade. These evaluations focus on the 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 Kathleen Deerr, national coordinator for Family Place Libraries™, at deerrkathleen@middlecountrypubliclibrary or 631 585-9393 ext. 204.