

# Reaching and Engaging Hard to Reach Families

## Follow Along – the Video Outline

***Please note: This resource is meant to accompany the SIRCH Community Services video, entitled “Reaching and Engaging Hard to Reach Families.” A full explanation of each point is included in the video. A copy of the responses of our “experts” (as outlined in the video) is also available on our website at [www.sirch.on.ca](http://www.sirch.on.ca).***

### **3 Groups of Hard to Reach**

Doherty, Hall, and Kinder (2003) believe that in early intervention and prevention, the term captures the following three groups, each of which also provides a different frame of reference for thinking about hard-to-reach families:

#### **1. The underrepresented**

These are people who are:

- marginalized
- economically disadvantaged
- socially excluded...

in other words people who are usually underrepresented in mainstream social programs.

#### **2. The invisible or overlooked**

These are families who may slip through the cracks when service providers overlook their needs – leaving families under served or alienated.

#### **3. The service-resistant**

These are people who choose not to engage with services...

- they may not recognize that they need help
- they may feel wary about service involvement.

### **8 Challenges to Reaching and Engaging Hard to Reach Families**

1. Identifying target client groups and making initial contact
2. Working effectively with families in adverse circumstances and with complex needs
3. Encouraging involvement in ways which prevent stigmatizing
4. Reaching clients where transportation or access is an issue
5. Attracting staff and volunteers appropriate for engaging target groups

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6. Ensuring sufficient time to build relationships
7. Ensuring program design is appropriate for target groups
8. Establishing effective partnerships with other agencies to promote reach and engagement

### **18 Strategies to Reach and Engage Hard to Reach Families**

1. Promote programs in positive terms.
2. Be aware of, and sensitive to, the cultural backgrounds of families, and the manner in which service goals are framed to parents.
3. Ensure there are similarities between parents and providers.
4. Have informality and flexibility at entry points.
5. Have bridging strategies (e.g. home visits, telephone reminders of appointments).
6. Ensure that service provision is offered in places that are not stigmatizing.
7. Recruit participants as volunteers and workers – this facilitates their growth, self confidence, connection to the community.
8. Engage all family members - especially male authority figures.
9. Provide incentives like food and social activities.
10. Have the time and resources to build relationships prior to group, for example, through one-to-one visits to parents.
11. Flexible program content and timing is important.
12. Allow participants to set their own goals.
13. Be aware of and realistic about your expectations of participants and of their skill level.
14. Adequate and stable funding is essential to accessing hard-to-reach groups.
15. Engaging during times of transition (having a baby, relocation, new partner, child starting school).

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16. Transportation and physical access is particularly important, given the time and financial constraints and complexity of circumstances among target families.
17. Make friends with your partners - engage families beyond existing networks by identifying and partnering with other organizations.
18. Make sure you evaluate your program, and adapt to the larger community picture.

***This is one in a series of videos available through SIRCH Community Services. To see other relevant videos and resources, visit our website at [www.sirch.on.ca](http://www.sirch.on.ca)***