

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing or tours of programs can be a very powerful way to involve community members in a conversation about the importance of investing in early childhood. This can be used as a publicity event to throw light on early childhood programs and services in your community as well as an opportunity to bring together people of differing viewpoints to have a discussion about the needs of a certain community. People to invite may include:

- Mayors
- City council members
- Businesspersons
- Legislators
- Local celebrities
- Faith based organizations
- Community action groups.

This “how to” can be customized to fit any size program or any budget. Single center visits could be coordinated by a single lead teacher, a director, or an involved parent. A multi-center event may require collaboration with other groups such as the Great Start Coalition or Child Care Resources.

Individual Center/Program Visit:

1. Invite a prominent community member into the program for a few hours to “work” as a provider. Sample letter is attached.
2. Be prepared on the day of the visit so that the visitor has some activity or task to do (i.e. read to children, assist at a small group activity, or interact at a free choice center).
3. Welcome the visitor and give a brief tour with a description of the program.
4. Encourage the visitor to become engaged in the daily life of the classroom.
5. Leave time at the end of the visit for any questions or comments: What was unexpected or surprising to the visitor? What experiences or memories will he/she take away?
6. Have something the visitor can take. This could be a keepsake or photo from the day (make sure children have photo permission slips); or a brief list of ideas of ways to support young children; or a brochure of your program and upcoming events where the visitor could support or advertise the program.
7. Publicize the event (either before or after) to local newspapers, AEYC website, a newsletter, city council meetings, school board meetings, GSC meetings, etc.
8. Follow up with a thank you to the visitor and an invitation to share the memories that were experienced that day with other members of his/her organization.

Tour of Multi-Centers/Programs:

1. Decide how best to present the programs you want to highlight. In a big city with many programs located close to each other, rented vans took 12 people to six different centers. In a rural county where programs are not geographically close, participants went on a “virtual tour” from a centrally located area.
2. Individually invite centers and programs to be involved with this “tour”. Explain what their commitment will involve and what the goals of the event are (to raise support and public awareness of the early childhood programs your community offers).

3. Invite local community members to participate. Emphasize that they will be showing support for early childhood education and the families of the area by learning about the programs available to families with young children.
4. The day of:
 - a. When doing our physical tour of centers, we met at a central location and divided up the participants between 2 vans. As they went to centers, the directors of the programs invited them to join in the activities and sometimes suggested a certain role that they take if the person seemed hesitant.
 - b. In doing our virtual tour, we invited the participants to a central location with the proper technology and they were given a packet explaining each program that we were "visiting". We divided up programs based on where they fit into the Great Start star (pediatric & family health, social & emotional health, child care & early education, parenting leadership, family support). Then a representative for each program gave a brief overview of what their organization provided.
5. At the end of the tours, participants were treated to a discussion over lunch. A facilitator at the lunch posed some open-ended questions or discussion topics revolving around what they had heard or experienced that day and how families with young children could be more supported in the community.
6. Participants were given a "gift" made by local children in the area that they could take and display in their office to remind them of their day. We also provided an "ask"; participants were asked to check all the activities they might be able to commit to in the next 6 months. Activities ranged from small time commitments to larger time commitments (see attached).
7. Follow up thank you letters went out from each program involved.

Invitation to Community Member (sample letter)

Dear (Community Member):

As you may be aware, Michigan celebrates April as the **Month of the Young Child®**. Families with young children are an important part of our community and their needs are getting greater all the time. Our community has many wonderful programs to benefit young children and we would like to make you aware of them.

We would like to invite you to be a part of an annual program in our community called **Work a Mile in Their Shoes** on **April 20**. This program will give you the opportunity to see what local child care centers are doing to educate young children and support their families. We are asking for one morning of your time in which we hope to provide you with an experience you will find very valuable when considering the important issue of early childhood programs.

We invite you to start the day at _____Center where you and other participants will receive a van ride to local childcare centers. During your brief time at the centers you will be given the chance to “work” in the program (i.e. participate in the activities of the classroom, read to a child, watch the learning process firsthand). Following your tour we will transport you back to _____Center and provide you with a lunch while we all process through our experiences of the day.

This event is not political and is non-partisan. We do plan to publicize the event to our local community to encourage others to educate themselves on the resources our area has to offer in early childhood. We hope that you will find it both informative for the work that you do in our community and enjoyable for yourself.

Thank you for your commitment to our city and we look forward to your response to this invitation.

Sincerely,

Month of the Young Child® chairperson
(Contact Person)
(Contact Information)

ASK (sample)

Thank you for your participation today. We are asking that you make a commitment to early childhood in one or more of the following ways.

In the next six months, I can commit to:
(Please check all you are comfortable with)

- Telling 3 people about my experiences today
- Writing an editorial to the paper about my experiences today
- Calling a legislator to advocate for early childhood programs
- Calling a legislator once a month to advocate for early childhood programs
- Calling a legislator once a week to advocate for early childhood programs
- Attending Early Childhood Rocks Conference (May ___ in Kalamazoo)
- Attending Star Power Rally (May ___ in Lansing)
- Sponsoring or voting for legislation on behalf of young children

Name _____

Best way to contact me _____