

Family participants play an important role by participating at local and national conferences. If the details of the conference are in order you can then concentrate on having meaningful involvement. Below is a general checklist to help you be prepared to get the most out of your conference experience. Review this checklist with the lead staff person from your sponsoring agency.

Before the conference

Expenses: Either the sponsoring agency will pay for the costs upfront or the attendee will pay and then be reimbursed for expenses.

Fill in what is covered and by whom



- Conference Registration _____
- Travel / Mileage / Parking _____
- Hotel _____
- Meals _____
- Child Care while away _____

What do you need for reimbursement (*bring an envelope to keep all of your receipts in one place*)



- Proof of attendance _____
- Boarding Passes (airline receipts) _____
- Mileage form/parking _____
- Hotel bill _____
- Meal receipts _____

Arrangements: Be clear on who will submit the forms and handle arrangements. Use below for notes of deadlines, responsibilities, when funds & tickets will be sent, etc.

Registration



- The conference brochure or website will have registration forms.
- To register on-line you usually need a credit card at that time.
- Be sure you note the start date and time of the conference for travel plans.

Travel



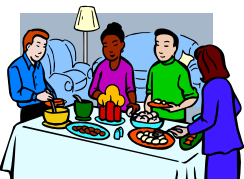
- Airfare
- Directions
- Taxis/shuttles
- Parking (fee)

Hotel



- If the sponsoring agency has a group reservation, will you have a roommate?
- Nearby hotels are generally listed in the brochure or website.
- If you are making your own reservation, be sure to tell the hotel what conference you are with. Most have a discounted rate.
- Incidentals (*internet access fees, movies, etc*) are not usually reimbursed.
- Many hotels require a credit card on file for incidentals, or a cash deposit (*debit card are not considered credit cards and cannot be left for a deposit*).
- Ask the hotel what is the best way to arrive (*for instance, do they have a free shuttle from the airport?*). Fill in for travel section above.
- Visit the hotel website to see list of available amenities to assist with your planning. (*Pool, hot-tub, exercise room, etc and is there a fee?*)

Meals



- Per diem is a set amount per day for meals.
- Is per diem received in advance or will you need to pay and get reimbursed?

Preparing to leave

Use the list below as the final checklist of information you will need

- Registration confirmation _____
- Airline Tickets _____
- Flight numbers and times _____
- Shuttle/Taxi phone number _____
- Driving Directions _____
- Exact Address of hotel _____
- Phone number of hotel _____
- Hotel confirmation number _____
- Cash as needed _____
- Agency contact phone number _____
- Phone number of other attendees _____

- Flight and Hotel information left at home for family to contact you _____

What to bring



- Be sure to check the weather for what clothes to bring.
- Dress in layers as hotel meeting room temperatures can be extreme.
- Most conferences are business casual. Check the brochure or call the conference planner if you are unsure of what the expected dress is.
- Bring a casual outfit for down time, including comfortable shoes to explore the city.
- Be prepared with a note book, pens and a small bag to collect conference goodies.
- **Cash!** Not all taxi's take credit cards. Include some small bills for tips as well.

Once at the conference

Checking into the Hotel



- Ask for two room keys. Leave one with a fellow attendee in case you lose yours.
- Write your hotel room number on the back of your nametag or conference packet.
- **Do not** keep key cards in a pocket with your cell phone or a credit card. It can deactivate them.

Checking into the conference



- Check in to the conference the evening before or early the first day. This will give you time to review the materials and pick up nametag.
- Review the agenda. Get familiar with the hotel map. Note when there will be breaks or down time as well as any open receptions or special events.
- If you are traveling with a group, it may be expected that members of the group attend different sessions to gather the most information.
- If you are sponsored by an agency you may be required to attend a specific topic and report back. Be prepared to share what you learn.

Attending Sessions



- Arrive to the session early. Leave your conference packet (not valuables) to reserve a seat. Many sessions get full so don't wait until the start time.
- Always wear your nametag to the sessions; this is your ticket to the conference.
- Be prepared with paper and pen. Turn your cell phone off or on vibrate.
- Jot down comments or questions as the presentation unfolds. It can be distracting and throw off the presentation to ask questions in the middle. Wait for the presenter to call for questions.
- If someone makes an interesting comment and you want to speak with them further make a note of it and be sure to find them after the session.

Networking tips



- Review the attendee list if included in the conference packet. Note other family members and policymakers/presenters you would like to meet. Make it a priority to find them.
- Take advantage of receptions or events. These can be informal times to meet with other families or meet important policy makers.
- Make the most of meals either provided at conference or off-site. Sit near people you don't know well. Get to know other attendees.
- When you sit with people you don't know simply introduce yourself and ask why they are attending the conference. This can be a great starter for conversation.
- Remember, people are there to learn new things and meet people with different ideas. Don't be afraid to approach others and start a conversation.
- Meet family members from other states to an opportunity to share experiences and learn what is happening elsewhere. This can help you in your own state.
- Introduce yourself to attendees from your state (directors, professionals, policymakers) that you may have not traveled with. Tell them your story and how they have or have not supported your family. These contacts can be important when you return.

City travel



- Never venture off alone! Try to find someone familiar with the area if you want to explore. Make a local friend (look at the attendee list). **Do not wear your nametag outside the hotel.**
- Taxis can be easy to get from door to door. But they can be expensive as well. Check if they accept credit cards before you get in or make sure you have cash.
- Subways/trains are inexpensive and convenient but can be confusing. Get a map when you enter the station and be sure you know your route before you get on. You can also ask the concierge at the hotel to write out directions.
- Arrange shuttle back to airport early. Many hotel shuttles and taxi services fill up on the travel day at the end of the conference. Be sure you have a reservation the day you ARRIVE for the day you plan to return.
- The hotel concierge is there to assist all guests. Ask for recommendations of where to go to dinner, attractions to see, the best way to travel within the city, etc...

After the conference

Keeping the connection: Conferences can motivate and inspire with new ideas and possibilities. Don't lose that momentum once you return home.



- At the end of each session or on the travel back home, write down 3 goals or new ideas you want to try in role as a family leader.
- Send a quick email or note to those you met. They may become great resources and motivators for you to continue your work.
- Send in reimbursement forms as soon as you return. Make a copy of everything you submit and save it until you are fully reimbursed.
- Thank those that sponsored you with a personal note. Add a few highlights or surprises from the conference.
- It may be required to report back or present on your experience. If it is not, offer to come to speak at a staff, board or council meeting for interested partners. This will show your dedication and commitment as a family leader and should lead to more opportunities.



WHERE I WILL BE...

CONFERENCE _____

DATES _____

CITY/STATE _____

FLIGHT:

LEAVE: AIRPORT _____

AIRLINE _____ FLIGHT # _____

LEAVE TIME: _____ ARRIVAL TIME: _____

AIRPORT: _____

CONNECTIONS

AIRLINE _____ FLIGHT # _____

LEAVE TIME: _____ ARRIVAL TIME: _____

HOTEL

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

I WILL RETURN HOME ON: Day: _____ Date: _____

FLIGHT:

LEAVE: AIRPORT _____

AIRLINE _____ FLIGHT # _____

LEAVE TIME: _____ ARRIVAL TIME: _____

AIRPORT: _____

CONNECTIONS

AIRLINE _____ FLIGHT # _____

LEAVE TIME: _____ ARRIVAL TIME: _____