

LENA<sup>®</sup>

*Building brains through early talk*

# Guide to Recruiting Families for Community Programs



# Why is recruitment important?



An effective recruitment strategy is at the core of your program's success, and, ultimately, its impact on the community.

While recruitment will look different in each community, in this guide we've outlined commonalities and best practices from more than 50 LENA sites across the country to help you get started.

The heart of recruitment is building relationships, both with the families you are serving and the institutions in your community that may refer them. **Recruitment is not a one-time event, but an ongoing effort throughout the life of a program.**

Many underestimate the challenge. It requires a lot of outreach to drum up support for a new program, and even after families have expressed interest, thoughtful, consistent follow up is necessary to ensure they attend the first session. Compounding the issue, those who may benefit most from a community program can sometimes be harder to reach through conventional channels.

But the hard work will pay off. Creating long-term benefits for families and your community is the end game of an effective recruitment strategy.



“Recruitment is going to be tough at first, but it gets easier. I was shy, and I didn't want to talk to anybody, but I pushed myself to do it. People are just people, they're not going to eat you. You'll get three 'nos' for every one 'yes.' People will say no to you, people will look at you weird, and you just have to keep going. If you want our future kids to be successful, we have to do this now.

— Jennifer Calderon, Providence Talks graduate and Recruitment Specialist”



## Strategic questions to consider before beginning recruitment:

While recruiting participants may seem like the first step to implementing a community program, there are a few key elements that should be in place before you begin. This guide will be most useful if you have already:



**Once you have completed these tasks, you're ready to begin recruiting!**<sup>2,4</sup> Read on to begin planning your recruitment strategy. If you'll be running a virtual program, reference pages 13-16 for specific virtual recruitment tips



## Phase 1: Plan logistics.

**Designate a recruitment team lead.** Together with your coworkers and partner organizations, talk through who will contribute to recruitment efforts and what each person's role will be. If possible, dedicate resources to hiring a recruitment specialist, or set aside a certain percentage of one employee's time specifically for recruitment.<sup>4</sup>

**Start early!** It is never too early to start talking to families about the program. Pinpoint your message for families, and consider how many touchpoints it will take to engage them — it's rarely just one conversation.

If you're running a group program, lock in your timeline for the first and second classes right away so that you can offer parents a flier with the dates, times, and locations of upcoming sessions during recruitment. Consider what times of day and days of the week will work best for the families you are serving. If you are running two groups simultaneously, offering them at alternate times — like Wednesday evening and Saturday morning — will facilitate attendance from families who work a variety of schedules.<sup>2</sup>

While recruiting is an ongoing effort, we have found that focused efforts approximately six weeks before the first session or home visit yield the bulk of enrollment. To determine the overall session schedule, plot your timing backwards so that you aren't trying to recruit new families or wrap up sessions in the middle of a holiday. In concrete terms, this means it is generally better to start spring sessions in mid-February, and fall sessions no later than the first week of October if you're running a two- to three-month program.

**Find a convenient location.** It is critical that the location be convenient for families. Consider whether families will get stuck in traffic trying to get to group sessions, or if there are convenient public transit options available. Selecting a location close to child care or neighborhood schools can save parents time and travel expenses. Consider starting sessions around the same time that parents drop off children to make it more convenient for them to attend. Once you have a location selected, figure out a place-based recruitment strategy that leverages families who live in surrounding neighborhoods.

Ask: Is there a place where there are groups of families already being served? For example, some partners work with an Early Head Start center and recruit all families from that center or focus on a certain neighborhood school and the families who live nearby. Having this focus may help you pinpoint your recruitment efforts.

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### Questions to consider:



- What organizations in the neighborhood work with families?
- Is there a school or child care provider where you can recruit or hold sessions?
- Does the facility where you're meeting have limitations on when sessions can be scheduled?
- Who might be able to attend a daytime session versus an evening or weekend session?
- Would holding the session immediately before caregivers pick up or after they drop off children make the timing more convenient?
- Could you offer incentives to families who bring or refer friends as part of your recruitment strategy?

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**Figure out incentives.** Once families complete the first few sessions, they usually go on to finish the program. Consider offering an extra incentive to encourage them to schedule or attend the first session, and determine what other incentives you will offer throughout so that you can talk about them in your conversations with potential families.



We've seen LENA sites offer diapers, prepaid gas or bus cards, meals before sessions, small raffle items, gift cards, and donated passes to local museums and attractions. You may also want to consider providing incentives for specific accomplishments, such as completing the first LENA Day, achieving 10 stars, or reaching a certain goal in your program.

**Identify obstacles to enrollment.** Ask your partners to help you understand what common barriers to engagement might be. Teachers, family liaisons, or program staff will have unique insights into the local landscape on what factors might prevent families from attending your program. For example, consider whether there are different cultural norms within your target audience relating to your program goals. Once you understand the barriers, identify a plan to address and reduce them for families. As the first groups of families graduate from your program, loop them in to the feedback gathering process as well.<sup>2,3</sup>

Outreach efforts to families can include<sup>2</sup>:

- Personal phone calls
- One-on-one conversations
- Letters mailed to homes
- Fliers posted or distributed by community partners
- Highlights in school district newsletters
- News bulletins on local TV stations
- Advertisements in local newspapers
- Paid or organic social media posts

## Phase 2: Engage trusted messengers in your community.

**Create a list of recruitment-focused community partners to contact**, and schedule time to meet with three to five of them within the next month. For ideas, start with the “Partners to Engage” list included on page 8. Consider which partners have access to the most families, a history of helping recruit for other programs, and who are “influencers” on parent decision making (for example, doctors and teachers).

helping children soar



**PROJECT  
LAUNCH  
GEORGIA**

“

We know that it's necessary to have partners to have a successful program. We invite all our partners to the initial LENA Start Coordinator Training to provide them with a very hands-on introduction to what we're doing and to get buy in.

— Semilla Neal, MPA, Past LENA Start Project Coordinator, Georgia Department of Public Health

**See page 11 to read more about how the Georgia Department of Public Health recruits participants.**

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**Craft a short “elevator pitch” for potential partners.** They generally want to know the basics: How long is the program? What are the incentives and benefits of participating? When and where will sessions be held? What do parents who have completed the program have to say about it? If you don't have any program graduates yet, you can use a video from [LENA's YouTube Channel](#). Don't forget to practice your pitch!

**Create info sheets with contact information.** You'll want to provide your partners with everything they may need to help with recruitment, so create an informational flier using a LENA template or design your own. Your partners may prefer to talk directly with families and get their permission to share contact information with your team. Either way, make sure that everyone is clear on how contact information will be shared.

You'll have the most success if the coordinator or home visitor reaches out directly to interested families as soon as possible. Consider sharing program materials with partners to show to families, so they can see firsthand how it works.

**Take advantage of your partner organizations' communications channels and resources to reach new parents.** Ask: Do any of our partners have mailing or email contact lists for parents that we could utilize? Do our partners have a physical space or a social media channel where they could share class information?<sup>2</sup>

**Leverage existing groups.** Especially before you have successful graduates to help spread the word, existing parent groups are the best place to look for participants to join your first session. Start by reaching out to:

- Groups for new parents at the hospital or a medical clinic
- Family resource centers or parenting support organizations
- Child care centers looking to provide additional programming for parents
- Existing playgroups or story time groups

**Plan your visits to build a long-term relationship.** The goal is not just dropping off fliers and leaving, it's about engaging a trusted community organization that is invested in your program for the long haul. Your first visit may be just to share information, but how will you keep them engaged and keep the program top of mind after that? On later visits, consider bringing cookies for the office staff and doing a short presentation on the importance of early talk and why you're running a LENA program. Ask how you can support their goals as well, and create systems to facilitate regular two-way communication.<sup>2</sup> After you've built a strong connection, you can arrange times to set up a recruiting table or offer a pop-up story hour to meet with families.

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## Build buzz about your program.



**Recruitment begins with awareness, so take steps to get the word out in your community.**

- **Create a Facebook page** for your program. If you're running a LENA program, you can share posts from the [@LENAEarlyTalk Facebook page](#) to get it up and running.
- **Issue a press release** that highlights the program to your community. You'll find a template for sharing about LENA programs in our Partner Communication Kit.



*Dan Richter of the Marathon County Public Library talks with a local TV reporter to promote the launch of LENA Start in Wausau, Wisconsin.*



## Phase 3: Communicate directly with families.

**Try using multiple methods of outreach to connect with families, mixing digital, print, and in-person communications.** Ask: Are there digital or physical spaces in my community where families congregate? Meet people where they are, whether that's on an elementary school's Facebook page or at the local farmer's market.<sup>2</sup>

**Host an orientation session.** Hold an initial session to introduce families to the program, introduce them to the child care staff or volunteers, and answer questions.<sup>1</sup> If you're running LENA Start, we provide customizable slides for this session, referred to as Session 0 in your Coordinator Notes.

**Recruit at least 25 families.** We recommend that all LENA Start groups be between 15-20 families, but it's common for families to express interest in the program, then run into scheduling conflicts or other circumstances before it starts. Expect that 60-80 percent of the families who tell you they will participate will actually show up to the first session.

**Reach out, reach out, reach out.** A lot of things can happen for a busy parent between sign up and the first session or visit. Be sure you reach out before the first day and encourage them to attend.

- **Call every family with a reminder before the first meeting.** They may not pick up on the first try, so make at least three attempts to connect and be sure to leave a voicemail. Postcards are also a great reminder for families if you have their address. Some of our partners have shared that sending a children's book to the family as a reminder after the first session helps build motivation to attend.
- **Follow up with a phone call within 24 hours if a family doesn't attend the first meeting.** Consider letting families know ahead of time that you will do this, as an added incentive for them to follow through. If you're running a group program, be prepared with options for families to complete a make-up session prior to the second session so they can still participate in the program.



*Many of the graduates from the LENA Start site in Detroit, Michigan referred others to the program for later group sessions. Graduates can be highly effective ambassadors during the recruitment process.*

“

My LENA Start coordinator Maura was so great to me and my family. I met her at a breastfeeding class when I was pregnant. She called me after I had my son Ruari, when he was two or three weeks old. And she was like, 'Just come try the class, it will be great.' If she hadn't done that, I wouldn't have come and fallen in love with it."

— Kayla Jackson, mom and LENA Start participant from Houston, Texas

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## Phase 4: Engage Key Stakeholders

### Create an advisory board for your program.

Family engagement is a shared responsibility across the community.<sup>3</sup> Pulling all stakeholders together once a month or every other month provides an opportunity to brainstorm new ideas for outreach and incentives, as well as to review the data and celebrate your program's successes. Identify ways to track progress toward your enrollment goals, and report on them to this group regularly.<sup>2</sup> As you're looking for members to engage, try holding general info sessions and invite contacts to come learn more about the program. Set up a recurring meeting schedule early on, as it will become harder to find time for everyone to meet after the program launches.<sup>2</sup>

### Use your graduates!

We can't stress this one enough: parents are more likely to trust other parents from their own community. Consider which parents will be the best ambassadors for the program and encourage them to share their experiences with friends and family via word of mouth and social media. Different families may be able to help in different ways: by reaching out to their faith-based community, talking to friends one-on-one, posting on Facebook/Nextdoor/or other social media, or adding a flier to their housing community's bulletin board.



*The Greensboro Housing Authority in North Carolina, a past LENA Start partner, offered classes on site, minimizing travel for participants and making it easy to attend sessions.*

While you may ask your whole group to help with recruiting, following up with families individually may prove most helpful. This is their opportunity to serve as a mentor and help other parents! Through your LENA subscription, you have access to resources like customizable, informational fliers that can be given to parents to help them spread the word about the program. Try adding an incentive for graduates who recruit new families.

Families can also support recruitment by strategizing ideas with your team and advisory board. Their insights and feedback can help to refine your recruitment strategy for future groups.<sup>2</sup> They may be able to identify barriers to enrollment and possible solutions, or suggest new locations or communications channels to try.<sup>3</sup>

### Host alumni events.

Invite alumni families to bring other families to events throughout the year. Consider anything from a potluck and story time to attending a larger community event together, or create an email listserv to notify graduates of on-going community events. Not only will this support your recruitment

efforts, but it's a good opportunity to continue serving families by connecting them with resources after graduation. The more connected alumni feel to your organization and the work you are doing, the more likely they are to speak positively about it to others.

### Communicate across groups.

Facilitate information sharing between different groups of stakeholders. While you may be meeting with alumni and partner program staff separately, create a process for ideas and feedback to be shared collaboratively. Combining perspectives will help to strengthen your recruitment strategy.<sup>2,5</sup>





## Partners to engage and places to present.

Look for trusted organizations in your community that work with the families you would like to serve. Think beyond just your existing partnerships. Take time to strategically identify partners who have the expertise and resources needed to reach and serve your target audience and support your initiative.<sup>2</sup> It's not unheard of for community partners to have such a positive response to a LENA program that they decide to hold or coordinate a group themselves!

**Doctors' offices and community health centers:** Having promotional materials available in the waiting room when caregivers bring in babies for "well baby" visits can be a great way to raise awareness about the program. One site has worked specifically with the office staff at pediatricians' offices. These staff members talk about the program with every family that checks in with a child under the age of three, and they share the LENA Start recruitment video on an iPad. Parents can then sign up directly from the iPad by completing an interest form online. While having nurses and pediatricians talk about the program would be ideal, the reality is that pediatricians have only about 60-90 seconds to cover all anticipatory guidance during a visit. Thus, engaging the entire clinic staff is key, so that no one staff member is carrying the burden alone and promoting the program becomes part of the office routine.

**Apartment complexes:** Housing communities offer access to a large number of families in close proximity. Some sites have paired with local housing authorities to offer a class right on site, and even work to give families housing credit for completion of the program. Not only can housing authority offices be key partners in recruitment and hosting sessions, but other complexes and communities may have space to host sessions and may have interest in increasing their engagement with families living in the community.

**Child care centers:** Many child care centers offer classes and resources to their parents. Several of our LENA Start sites have partnered with child care centers to bring the program to the center at drop off or pick up time. One structure we've seen: the initiative provides the classes (including the coordinator and incentives), and the center agrees to help with recruitment and child care during the sessions.

**Libraries:** Libraries are already connected to parents through story times and parent education programs. Tap in to that network and ask your local children's librarian to mention your program to families.



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Working with LENA — the world leader in supporting language development through technology — and partnering with the OUR Center and the City of Longmont creates a national model for how communities can assure we're doing everything possible to prepare our children to get the most out of our schools.

— Bob Smith, Past President of St. Vrain Valley Schools Board of Education

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**Schools:** Consider holding a session at a local school. They are highly trusted, the location is generally convenient for parents, the classroom setup is already in place, and there's plenty of space for both the session and child care. Schools may be able to support recruitment by sending information home to families, helping to identify families who might benefit from a LENA program, and engaging resource workers or teachers in recruitment. Additionally, schools have a strategic interest in building stronger relationships with families, and so may be willing to directly or indirectly support your program.

**Religious institutions:** Religious leaders are trusted messengers, and religious institutions provide a ready-made audience and facilities to host sessions. Many religious institutions are excited to share their space with the community during the week, may have volunteers who can help with child care, and can reach not only their congregations but also refer other congregations. A church in Tulsa has even integrated the importance of talk into their [baby dedication ceremonies](#).

**Women, Infants and Children (WIC):** In addition to connecting with families during their visits to WIC offices, cities often hold major WIC events throughout the year. Find a complete listing of local programs with contact information at links on the [WIC website](#).

**A few others to consider:** Food banks, departments of Health and Human Services, community centers, community recreation centers like YMCAs and YWCAs, local employers, credit unions and community banks. Local volunteer organizations like Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and Junior League may be willing to team up to help with your recruitment efforts. Local businesses may be interested in [referring employees](#) to your program, supporting it as an employee benefit through in-kind donations, or running a group on site.

## Recruiting resources

If you're running a LENA program, you'll have access to a library of recruitment resources to help you share information on early brain development, LENA technology, and how the program operates. These resources include bilingual informational videos, slide decks for presenting the program to both parents and potential partners, posters, fliers, social media posts, graphics, and FAQs.

For testimonials from parents, partners, and experts, visit [www.LENA.org/blog](http://www.LENA.org/blog). To access videos of parents, teachers, coaches and coordinators sharing about LENA programs, please search "LENA Early Talk" on YouTube, and subscribe to our channel.

Notice something missing? Just ask. We're always looking for more ways to support outreach and recruitment.



## What does successful recruitment look like?



A LENA Start site in Iowa started by recruiting families for their first groups at the library through fliers, discussion at story time, and advertisement in their library online catalog. They also met with agencies in their town and gave them recruitment fliers to share with families. At the same time, they engaged families digitally by creating a Facebook page for their program.

These strategies yielded the first year's enrollment. Nearly all of the families recruited for the first groups came as a result of library-based advertising, indicating that those enrolling in the program were already seasoned library users.

The staff in Iowa knew that they wanted to reach deeper into their community to recruit families. They targeted health care clinics and child care centers to help with the effort.

As the program grew, they hired a coordinator who had previously worked with several of the clinics in town. In her previous role, she learned about the program and, in her new role, was tasked with boosting recruitment from these sites. She helped the team realize that just giving a recruitment flier to partners isn't enough. The people talking to the families need to be excited about the program and able to talk about its successes.

As they've shifted their strategy toward building stronger relationships and ensuring their partners are fully bought in, they've seen a significant uptick in enrollment from families who were not already patrons of the library.

This site continues to have a strong Facebook presence, sharing content, pictures from sessions, and engaging families on a weekly basis.



## What does successful recruitment look like?



The West Central Health District (WCHD) of the Georgia Department of Public Health launched LENA Start in early 2019 to support healthy child development and family engagement in Muscogee County.

Muscogee County sits on the western edge of the state and is home to Columbus, the third-largest city in Georgia. About 250,000 people live in the county, and about a quarter live in poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Sixty percent of children in elementary school in the county qualify for free or reduced lunch, the school district reports.

When LENA Start began in Muscogee County, the team at the West Central Health District drew on a wide range of existing community partners to find space to run classes and recruit parents.

Every month, their office hosts a Young Child Wellness Council, which brings together 75 community organizations to strategize on supporting child health locally.

“We know that it’s necessary to have partners to have a successful program,” past project coordinator Semilla Neal said. “We invited all our partners to the initial LENA Start Coordinator Training to provide them with a very hands-on introduction to what we’re doing and to get buy in.”

Their partners offered space for classes — with spring and summer classes taking place at the local library and fall classes taking place at the University of Georgia Extension Office — and supported participant recruitment.

For example, at the beginning of the year WCHD offered a community baby shower for new and expectant parents in partnership with the local WIC office. More than 15 parents signed up to attend LENA Start classes at the event.

WCHD also reached out directly via email to every parent they’d served in the year prior to launching LENA Start, inviting families to join the class or refer a friend. By keeping enrollment permanently open, the team is able to capture the contact information of interested parents, even if the next class doesn’t begin for several weeks.

Through a partnership with Reach Out and Read Georgia, WCHD has been able to reach out to families living at the local army base, Fort Benning. Reach Out and Read operates a chapter at the hospital on the base, where two parent alumni presented about how they’ve seen LENA Start benefit their children.

“We’re finding that the partnership with the military is a great opportunity for those families to get involved as well,” Neal said.

By leveraging the connections and resources of their existing partners, the West Central Health District has been able to strategically engage with families and enroll them in LENA Start.



Heads up, parents! @LENAEarlyTalk is returning to Columbus. Every Weds beginning June 5. Meet other parents, learn more about LENA technology, and help your baby grow! Enroll today for this FREE 10-wk program: [zurl.co/SPqK](http://zurl.co/SPqK) #ColumbusGA #LENASStart @GaDPH #MMoms



9:00 AM · Jun 3, 2019 · Zoho Social

1 Like



*Community partners, like this group for moms in Muscogee County, helped to share the word about upcoming LENA Start classes on social media and local parenting websites.*





## Tips for creating materials for varying literacy levels

Because literacy levels can vary greatly from family to family, try to create recruitment materials that are accessible to everyone. Here are several tips to ensure that your content is attractive as well as easy to read and understand:

Use a **light** background with a **darker** text.

Use **positive** statements rather than **negative** statements.

Use a mix of **lower** and **upper case** letters. Don't use all caps.

The message should be **short, direct, and specific**.

**Short explanatory headings** are better than single word headings, which may be confusing.

Place the illustration **next to** the line of text it is illustrating.

Use **everyday language**, including words or phrases that the family would use, whenever appropriate.

**Did you know?** LENA START

★ Talk builds babies' brains!

Parents and caregivers of children aged 0-3:

**FREE** LENA Start classes can help you make a difference in your baby's life **just through early talk and interaction!**

**LENA Start families receive:**

- ★ **FREE** on-site child care
- ★ **10 FREE** children's books
- ★ **[add another perk or delete]**

**Class start date:** Saturday, August 24, 2019 at 10 a.m.  
**Class location:** Springfield City Public Library, Southeast meeting room

**For more information, contact Jane Smith at**  
**(123) 456-7890**  
Or at [JaneSmith@SpringfieldLibrary.org](mailto:JaneSmith@SpringfieldLibrary.org)

**LENA**  
Building brains through early talk

**Source:** Flamboyant Foundation. For more resources and information, please visit: [FlamboyantFoundation.org](http://FlamboyantFoundation.org).



## Adapting to virtual family engagement

Your program may have transitioned to be partially or fully virtual in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. If so, you may be wondering: will families be interested in signing up for an online program? How will I keep participants engaged if I never meet them in person? These are questions you may find yourself asking if your program needs to meet virtually. Although many of us have a natural preference for in-person communication, we can still create high levels of interest and engagement in a digital context. The framework below can help your team create strong messaging that captures the interest of prospective families through virtual connection. Here's what families are looking for:

**Connection:** the desire to build relationships with other caregivers and their trusted community

**Growth:** opportunities to learn more to support their child's development

**Resources:** simple and practical tools that inform and support the developmental growth of their child

### Unique opportunities of virtual engagement:



**Weather is no longer a factor.** Rain, sleet, and snow won't keep families from attending sessions. They are given a safe opportunity to engage in your program from the comfort of their homes or location of choice.



If you use a program like LENA Start, **you'll have flexible options** for presenting program content and offering make-up sessions when needed.



**Randomized breakouts** encourage participants to interact with everyone in their group, promoting cohesion and collaboration.



**Geographic diversity:** Sites can extend their outreach to neighborhoods they might not have been able to reach with in-person sessions. Barriers like transportation no longer need to play a factor in the decision to participate.



**Less costly:** incentives that would need to be provided for in-person sessions (meals, transportation vouchers, child care, etc.) are not necessary.



## Recruiting parents for virtual community programs

### How can I pitch my virtual program to families in my community?

Parents and caregivers unfamiliar with your program may not immediately see the benefits that it offers, and may be reluctant to sign up to join. Try to meet parents where they are, and explain the program in a way that will benefit them – we suggest using the Problem/Solution/Ask formula. This method addresses problems families may be facing at home or in their communities, frames your program as a way to support them in solving those problems, and then asks parents to join. We hope that this framing will help you attract and help more families in your community!

#### Start with the problem:

First, begin with a hook: a brief message that addresses a problem/need/desire a parent has that aligns with your program as an effective solution. Examples of hooks that address problems or concerns can include:

- Their child's future academic achievement
- A parent's hopes and dreams for their child, or their life trajectory
- Reading enough with their child at home

#### Next, introduce the solution:

After connecting with a caregiver and their particular needs or problems, offer your program as a solution. Explain how your program can support them and address some of the pain points they are facing. It may be helpful to start with some background on your program, and speak about some of the evidence behind the approach.

- Talk about the background.
- Explain the program you're running, the program logistics, and the incentives offered.
- Explain the data behind the program and its effectiveness.

#### Finally, ask them to join!

At this point, it may be helpful to provide more details about your particular program, the next meeting, or any other pertinent information. If families are unsure, offer to stay in touch and answer any other questions they may have at a later time. Creating a personal connection with potential families is important to maintaining a sense of trust, and making sure that parents and babies benefit from the program.



## Recruitment techniques on virtual platforms

When virtually introducing your program to families on websites and social media, it's important to capture interest without overwhelming families with too many details at once. Here are some strategies:

### Use hooks that are relevant to the current needs of prospective families.

Identify how your program can meet the needs of the family you are speaking with.

### Start gradually with a soft intro.

Post a brief description of the program followed by an invitation link to an orientation. Give families options for dates and times to attend an orientation. In the orientation invitation, ask families for their name and best form of contact to follow up (i.e., phone or email).

### Build excitement.

Highlight incentives through photo sharing, announcements, and weekly challenges. You could create an announcement that shares the incentive earned for completing a particular phase of recruitment. e.g., "Earn a \$25 gift card for every family you recruit to this program."



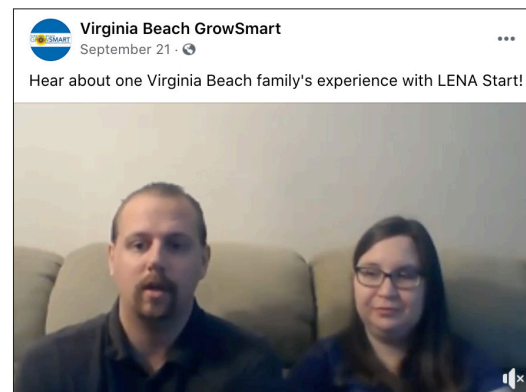
### Develop a promo video.

Create and post a one-minute intro video to your program that highlights the details of your sessions to your social media platforms and website. Incorporating stories from past participants in your video is a great way to build credibility.



### Increase audience response by creating FOMO – Fear of Missing Out.

Use messaging like "there are only a few seats left" or "limited spots available."





### Digitize recruitment materials.

When going virtual, switch to electronic recruitment documents that can be uploaded or linked to multiple virtual platforms for recruitment purposes. Consider:

- Adding questions to e-forms that will inform your virtual engagement strategy, like “What is your home language?”
- Asking how comfortable families are using Zoom.
- Adding a link to sign up virtually, for example by adding QR codes to fliers, yard signs, and website profiles.

### Recruit niche groups.

Virtual engagement allows you to explore creating groups dedicated to populations of your community you may not have normally reached. For example, you could target:

- Father groups
- First responders and educators
- Grandparents



The flyer is titled "LENA START" in large, colorful letters. It features several circular images of diverse families and children. At the top right, there are logos for "bhm talks" and a circular seal. The main text reads: "Did you know? Adult words are powerful brain - builders for your child! Learn about the power of early talk with FREE classes for parents & caregivers of children ages 0-3! Scan here to register your interest today!" Below this is a QR code. Further down, it says "When? Starting the week of September 14" and "Where? Online". A section titled "Participating START families will receive:" lists "Gift card" and "Children's books & toys". A pink banner says "Limited space!". At the bottom, it provides contact information: "For more information, contact: Raven Johnson (205) 719-6506".

Once you've recruited families for your program, it's important to use intentional methods to build strong relationships with them throughout the duration. Take a look at strategies for keeping families engaged in a virtual community program here: <https://www.lena.org/virtual-retention-strategies/>



## Source material and further reading:

- Source 1:** Flamboyant Foundation, [www.flamboyantfoundation.org](http://www.flamboyantfoundation.org)
- Source 2:** The Family Engagement for High School Success Toolkit, created by United Way and the Harvard Family Research Project, <https://globalfrp.org/Archive>
- Source 3:** The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-parent-family-community-engagement-framework>
- Source 4:** Strategies for Enrolling Traditionally Underserved Families in Early Childhood Education Programs, <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v15n2/fowler.html>
- Source 5:** Frameworks for understanding effective family engagement, <https://www.lena.org/family-engagement>

# » Who is LENA?

LENA is a national nonprofit on a mission to help communities support language development in children birth to three to foster closer family relationships, improve children's health, and to close opportunity gaps.

During a baby's first three years, talk is the biggest single factor driving brain growth and kindergarten readiness. LENA's wearable language technology provides feedback that helps parents, teachers, and other caregivers increase interactive talk with children and create improvements in children's talk environments.

Learn about our data-enabled early talk programs at:

**[www.LENA.org](http://www.LENA.org)**



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