

Making it a Reality: Parents as Partners in Child Welfare

Key Family Contacts
Networking

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Overview

- Child Welfare Resource Specialist Role
- Challenges and Opportunities for Partnering with Child Welfare
- Family Centered Practice as a Foundation
- Lessons Learned - Parents as Leaders, Trainers, and Mentors in the Child Welfare System



What does the Child Welfare Resource Specialist do?

- Strengthening COLLABORATION
- Sharing resources and information
- Making connections – providing contacts
- Identifying barriers and exploring opportunities
- Sharing lessons learned
- Creating tools and resources you can use



???Types of Questions???

- Partnering with child welfare: understanding goals, priorities and unmet needs
- Federal funding for child welfare
- Engaging families in decision making
- Creating parent mentor/navigator initiatives
- Supporting child welfare in systems change and moving to family-centered practice



What are your experiences in working with child welfare staff and agencies?



Changing the Culture:
Family-Centered Practice as the
Foundation



Making a Paradigm Shift

Given power imbalance	→	Acknowledgment of power imbalance with family and that their fears and concerns are real
"I'm in charge" attitude	→	Positive engagement
Controlling	→	Collaborative
Law enforcement approach	→	Helping/Social worker approach
Multiple case managers	→	One service manager
Multiple service plans for child	→	Single plan for child and family
Family blaming	→	Family partnerships
Deficit-Based	→	Strengths Focused
Mono Cultural	→	Sensitivity to culture/linguistics and family ritual

Conlon, L. Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health and Orrego, M. E. & Lazear, K. J. (1998) *EQUIPO: Working as Partners to Strengthen Our Community*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida



Family Centered Practice is More Effective

- Increased engagement, involvement and empowerment on part of families
- Enhanced access to more resources
- Increased job satisfaction on part of caseworkers
- Reduced time to reunification and permanency arrangements
- Reduced racial disparities



Understanding Child Welfare Priorities

Practice Principles

- Family-centered practice
- Community-based practice
- Individualizing Services
- Strengthening parental capacity

Child and Family Service Reviews – Outcomes

- Safety
- Permanency
- Well-Being



Resistance To Change



Initiating a New Approach and Moving in a Different Direction

- Respect different perspectives
- Value efforts and affirm goals
- Tell stories of success
- Be prepared to take one step at a time



Strategies

- Cross training in Systems of Care principles
- Identify a champion
- Recruit a family member to tell their story



Parents as Leaders Shaping Child Welfare Practice

- Parent Leadership Team (Alamenda County, CA)
- Parents Taking Action (Orange County, CA)
- Parent Leadership Program (Oregon)



Parents as Trainers Understanding the Child Welfare System

- Co-lead Parent Orientation Classes (Alamenda County, CA)
- Parent videos (Orange County and Sacramento, CA)



Parents as Advocates/Mentors Helping Families Navigate the System

- Warm-line (Orange County, CA)
- Parent Advocate Program (Jefferson County, Kentucky)
- Family Handbook (Kansas)



Lessons Learned – Sharing Concerns

- Who do you talk to?
 - Caseworker
 - Supervisor
 - Customer service representative (office, region)
 - State Liaison Officer
- What do you say?
 - Articulate need and concern in non-adversarial manner
 - Communicate the message clearly



Making it a Reality: Parents as Partners

“Having a birth parent who has successfully reunified with their children involved with our agency has been invaluable... they’re part of our interview and training process for new social workers and foster parents, they participate in team decision making and advisory committees. The birth parents help us keep it real.”

-Family to Family Coordinator



Sustainability through Child Welfare

- IVE Waiver (Oregon)
- TANF (Kentucky)
- IV B – Subpart 2 - Promoting Safe and Stable Families (Kansas)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation– Family to Family sites)
- Family Involvement as a requirement of contracts with providers



Developing and Implementing Parent Partner Initiatives

- What are your experiences?
- Challenges?
- Strategies?
- Helpful tools?



Working Together....

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