Healthy Families America

Developing Parent Leaders – Strengthening Families, Programs and Communities
What makes parent involvement necessary?
COMMON LANGUAGE:
Starting at the same place:

Parent

Professional

Leadership

Parent Leadership
3 Types of Leadership

- Mainstream
- Traditional
- Bridge-Builder
Leadership Continuum

Is leadership:

- A quality you are born with
- Something you learn
Parent Leadership Principles

- No one has all the solutions
- Parents and Practitioners are Equal Partners
- Mutual Respect, trust, open-mindedness
- Collective Action – vision, ownership, accountability
- Consensus Building vs. Democratic Process
Definition of Parent Leadership

Parent leadership is successfully achieved when parents and practitioners build partnerships affect their own families, other families and their communities.
The Parent Leadership Ladder

What does parent leadership feel like for parents?
What does parent leadership feel like for agencies?

5 minute group discussion
Parent Leadership Ladder

1. Creating Avenues for Parent Involvement
Valued Activities: Date Night, Family Outings, Trainings, Community Events

2. Parent Leadership Activities
Support Groups: parent support groups, Mentor Program Opportunities: Advisory Council, Newsletter Articles, Website Maintenance, Committees, Fundraising
Parent Leadership Ladder Cont’d

Community Councils and State and National Advisory Councils: volunteer opportunities at community events, member, chairperson, officer

State and National Conferences: attendee, hostess or host at agency booth, presenter, member of planning committee

Legislative/Advocacy Opportunities: provide legislative testimony, attend/present at advocacy events, volunteer or be a hostess/host at an advocacy event
3. Laying the Foundation

Effective Communication: identify barriers, active listening, feedback and non-verbal communication skills

Problem Solving: define and understand problem, alternatives to resolve the problem, selection, implementation and monitoring

Decision Making: don’t make decisions that are not yours to make, avoid snap decisions, do it on paper, what is right not who is right, consider all involved and trust yourself

Self-Management: monitor responsibilities and set limits, recognize signs of stress, get a mentor, be assertive and recognize accomplishments!
4. **Maintaining Organizational Parent Leadership Policies**

- Define roles and opportunities for parent leaders
- Prioritize to provide stipends, transportation, child care etc.
- Provide internal/external resources to nurture leadership
- Arrange for mentoring/shadowing
5. Practicing and Encouraging Shared Leadership

- Agency’s mission and commitment to parent leadership should be known throughout the organization
- Opportunities for everyone to be involved
- Leaders and Agency Staff should be committed together
- Empower/Recognize Parent Leaders
- Involve everyone; parents, agency staff, partners and funders
Storytelling: Empowering Parent Leaders and Strengthening Your Organization
Parent Stories

* Benefits
* Challenges
Preparation

- Think about your “ask”
- Selecting parents
- Setting expectations
- Obtaining consent
Strategies for Gathering Stories

* Individual vs. Group Setting
* Asking the questions
* Following up
* Consider your intended audience
  * Call to action?
The Role of Parent Stories

- Communications/Marketing
- Advocacy
- Fundraising
- Organizational Development
- Community Outreach
- So much more!
We need:

1 volunteer to be the parent leader
16 other volunteers to blow up a balloon and read out a scenario
PARENT INVOLVEMENT =

* Time, resources and patience

* Commitment from everyone at the organization

* An understanding and acceptance of the impact parents can have on their children, family, and community
Change is difficult!

* What did you notice during this activity? Why was it so hard to figure out things to change?
* The first changes represent surface changes and are sometimes easier to make, but it takes more time to change at a deeper level.
* How does this activity relate to real life? How might implementing change surrounding parent leadership be difficult?
* It is often not comfortable to make changes, and we encounter the barrier of fighting for the “status quo.”
Leadership and Implementing Changes

* Focus is power: Pay attention to what needs are
* Expectation shapes reality: People’s preconceptions have an impact on what they perceive.
* Use repeated, purposeful, and focused attention to get your point across.
* Organizational flexibility comes from the “bottom up”

Adapted from Leadership and Implementing Change
Kathleen Fasanella
Circle of Parents Video

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