

Effective Strategies for Empowering Parents

A Training for Family Peer Partners

Presented by:

CLIP Parent Steering Committee

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Welcome

Introductions

Enable vs Empower vs Engagement

Do not do for a parent what a parent is able to do for themselves:

- ❖ We are here to empower parents not to enable
- ❖ Offer resources
- ❖ During engagement sit with them and go with them to assist with navigation

Service Providers Go Away Over Time

Remember that we and other service providers go away over time:

- ❖ We are there to assist parents with being independent
- ❖ Families who require a lot of assistance in the beginning of your service, can and will require moderate assistance and soon minimal assistance. Congratulate them as they move through these phases.
- ❖ Families who try to do everything on their own may need a different kind of nudging regarding asking for help and delegating

Family Partners Are Not Surrogate Parents

- ❖ “If the parent is not engaged, then the parent partner is not engaged”
- ❖ We work closely side by side with the parent, not for the parent
- ❖ This is sometimes difficult for collaborators to understand

No Meetings About us Without Us

Do not attend meetings about the parent without the parent:

- ❖ Besides the Wraparound team meeting and internal staffing meetings, the meetings you attend on behalf of the family should be at the invitation from the parent.
- ❖ If invited by another party, ask if the parent will be there and is the parent aware that you are inviting me.
- ❖ Follow up with the parent and make them aware that you accepted the invitation
- ❖ Talk them through developing an agenda for meetings

Beware of Unintentionally Offering Parents a False Sense of Security

We are parents assisting other parents:

- ❖ Offer solutions during a safety/crisis planning from a family perspective but don't create safety/crisis plans on your own with a family.
- ❖ Set reasonable boundaries around phone calls (unless you are on call crisis responder).

Be Clear with Parents What You Can and Can't Do in Your Role.

- ❖ The better you understand your role, the easier it is to clarify with the parents you are working with.
- ❖ With some people you can simply state what your role is and have it to be understood and respected.
- ❖ Other times it may become necessary to revisit this with a parent from time to time.
- ❖ It is much harder if boundaries are loose to then go back and explain roles.

Just Say No.....

Say “no” and give explanation if asked to do something outside your role:

- ❖ People really do appreciate explanations and most are very accepting as they learn the concept of “parent partner”
- ❖ There are a variety ways to explain when having to say no.... One way is to go back to philosophies described herein. You can also defer to policy if this is applicable. You can also rely on training for example, you may say “In my training I was informed

HIPPA

Confidentiality:

- ❖ Sometimes we find it difficult to separate our private lives with our professional lives.
- ❖ We must be careful when talking on the phone at home or with our family in the car that we respect this issue as much as possible.
- ❖ When driving our private vehicles it is also important to consider the following; do not have papers out where your family or other passengers can see or have access to confidential information.
- ❖ Do not take family members or other passengers to the homes of families even if they are just waiting in the car.

Assisting Parents to Learn about Multi-Systems Often Encountered

- ❖ In assisting parents to learn about multi-systems that are often encountered first begins with educating ourselves.
- ❖ Parent Partners can be a wealth of information for each other when accessing a system that you are unfamiliar with.
- ❖ Be careful when offering up your own insight that information be as accurate as possible and if necessary give your insight but follow up with telling the parent “I don’t know for sure, but let’s find out together”.
- ❖ Try not to set parents up for services that they are not eligible for.

Family Education

Encourage parents to attend educational events such as:

- ❖ Conferences (in our state or not)
- ❖ Parenting Retreats
- ❖ Stakeholders meetings
- ❖ Advisory committees meetings
- ❖ Support Groups
- ❖ Children's Behavioral Health Summits and Symposiums

Group/Table Activity

Work with your table and discuss ways that you have assisted parents to learn about Multi-system's often encountered by families.

Report back outcomes of when things went well or not so well

Maintain your Living Room View

Always maintain your Parent perspective:

It is important that you think things through from a parent's perspective.

Put yourself in the parent's shoes and try to assist in simplifying and prioritizing.

Sometimes parents are asked to do things that look good on paper but are difficult to implement and follow through on. Watch for signals from the parent, whether verbal or non-verbal cues. Encourage them to speak up for what works in their family.

When working with collaborators, be the sounding board as well as the echo on behalf of the parent if required to get needs met for all.

Do's and Don'ts

Be clear with collaborators what you can & can't do in your role:

As above with parents, it is important that collaborators understand what you can and can't do within your role. An example would be, parent partners have been asked to supervise visits for CPS. This would not be something you would do in your role as a parent partner. Collaborators are respectful of our limitations when they are aware.

Say “no” and give explanation when asked to do things outside your role:

- ▶ As with parents, collaborators appreciate explanations when offered regarding limitations in your role. Refer to philosophy, policy and training when relevant, just as you would with the parents we are working with.

Effecting Change.....

Ability to Offer Insight to Effect Change in Parenting Dynamics

- ❖ Requires the ability to establish a trusting relationship with parent
- ❖ You can establish trust by having a common ground. This is why parent partners are so helpful. Because you are a parent going through similar struggles is the beginning of a trusting relationship.
- ❖ Meeting one on one with a parent is crucial. Many professionals have shared that parents share more with parent partners than they do with said professionals.

Sharing Your Story

Sharing your story or the story of other's (confidentially) when appropriate:

- ❖ When telling your story it should be done in a way that is helpful and it's solution driven.
- ❖ Make sure that we are not contributing to any negativity with parents.
- ❖ Share parts of your story to professionals, as well, when opportunities arise and again always remain solution driven and non-adversarial.
- ❖ Be sure you are listening more than sharing.

Use Strategies in “Assessing True Needs of Families”

- ▶ Effective supervision for their children
- ▶ Balance of Self Care with Family Care
- ▶ Good school placement for their children
- ▶ Good Communication with their children’s school(s)
- ▶ Support from other family members including extended family
- ▶ Support from other parents and their community
- ▶ Coping Strategies
- ▶ Parenting Strategies
- ▶ Need to feel hope

Use Strategies in “Assessing True Needs of Families”

- ▶ Need to feel qualified to parent their children
- ▶ Spiritual Needs
- ▶ Structure
- ▶ Rules, Consequences and rewards
- ▶ Boundaries and limits
- ▶ All authority figures to be on same page
- ▶ All family members to have mental health & physical health needs met
- ▶ Understand their individual and family strengths
- ▶ Fun

Ability to Confront Bias in a Non Adversarial Manner with Collaborators

Assisting others to use parent friendly terms in meetings:

- ❖ Parents often do not understand acronyms or jargon used by professionals. Assist others to clarify what they mean or what acronyms stand for to assist the parent in getting all information necessary in a meeting. The parent may be uncomfortable to address this for themselves especially if it appears they are the only one not understanding such jargon.
- ❖ When opportunities come up assists professionals with replacement language that is parent friendly, such as reminding them that simple words make the difference. For example using the term “parenting strategies” is easier for parents to hear than “parenting skills”. Do this at a time that a professional can hear this and usually not in front of a group. This will help them to refrain from making comments that parents may feel are judgmental.

Family Strengths

We encounter situations where there is communication breakdown for a variety of reasons. Parents can sometimes be frustrated with professionals as well as professionals are sometimes frustrated with parents. When this occurs parents often feel as if they are being judged. Assist others to look at the strengths of families and help them to recognize what they are doing well. In turn you can also assist the parent to see the strengths in the service providers. This reframe can be just as effective as it is with seeing the strengths of the children. Remember “what you focus on grows” works in a variety of settings.