

Parents' Role in System Change

Children Come First Conference
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Deb Ramacher, Wisconsin Family Ties
Carolyn Blackdeer, Ho Chunk Nation
Carol Pulkrabek, Eau Claire Department of Human Services
Dan Naylor, White Pine Consulting Service

White Pine Consulting Service, Inc.
(715) 258-5430 whitepine@mwwb.net
www.wicollaborative.org

Objectives

- Understand key roles of parents at the County/Tribal levels on family teams and Coordinated Services Team Coordinating Committees
- Understand how parents become actively involved on state committees, active in legislation and policy change

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Building Trust: Interviews with family members

- Listen with true concern without judging
- Don't rush decision-making
- Two-way conversation – get to know each other
- Be honest
- Don't pretend to understand if you don't
- Treat parents as equals – acknowledge they know their child best
- Step “into their world” – work with families where they're at
- If you don't know the answer, say you don't
- Clear Expectations

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Adapted from interviews between Wisconsin Family Ties advocate, Tina Swinford and parents involved in the CST/ISP process
6/04

Trust Breakers: Interviews with Family Members

- Going behind a participant's back to get information to “keep tabs” on them
- False statements of understanding
- Taking control – power over
- Not calling back or putting them off
- Not following through, broken promises
- Changing plans/making decisions without participant
- Forcing/pushing for formal services that may not address the participant's need

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Collaboration with Families

“Nothing about me without me”

Quote from the National Mental Health Recovery Initiative

- **Voice:** The child and parent have a voice in decisions that are made.
- **Access:** The child and parent have access to needed services and supports.
- **Ownership:** The child and parent agree with and commit to any plan concerning them.



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Team Member Selection – Family and Youth Voice and Choice

- The family and youth should be provided with support for making informed decisions about whom they invite to join the team, as well as support for dealing with any conflicts or negative emotions that may arise from working with such team members.
- The family and youth should be supported to explore options such as inviting a different representative from an agency or organization.

Source: National Wraparound Initiative – The Principles of Wraparound;
Chapter 2.1; Oct 1 2004

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Involving Peer Support Specialists

- A parent or caregiver of a child with emotional or behavioral disorders
- Specifically trained for an information, support, and advocacy role
- Genuinely understands and appreciates the culture of a family living with a child with special needs, because it is also their culture
- Typically employed by an organization other than service-providing agencies

Source: Employing Parent Peer Specialists to Improve Outcomes, Hugh Davis, Wisconsin Family Ties

Team Development The Role of Advocacy and Peer Support

- Reinforce Coordinated Services Team process
- Use their experience to support the family and youth
- Attend & participate in team meetings
- Encourage balanced participation
- Clarify communication
- Ensure team members are being heard
- Encourage active listening
- Engage family and youth

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The Value of the Coordinating Committee

- Creates shared ownership and decision-making
- Helps ensure sustainability
 - Continual support for principles
 - A potential pool for service coordinators
 - Multiple grant and grant-writing options
- CST funding as well as many other grant/funding opportunities require an interagency committee be in place
- Helps strengthen existing intra-agency relationships as well as building new relationships
- Provides an opportunity for an educational forum
- Provides a forum to promote and model appropriate conflict resolution
- Opportunity to enjoy good cookies

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The Importance of Parent and Youth Involvement on Coordinating Committees

- Parents and youth are essential for the development of realistic policies and procedures
- A parent and youth perspective ensures the committee stays grounded
- Parents and youth bring real life and experience
- Parents and youth know what works and what doesn't

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Recruiting Parents and Youth as Coordinating Committee Members

- Make personal contact, initiated by someone who has a trusting relationship with the parent or youth
- Eliminate barriers
 - Childcare
 - Transportation
 - Time & location of meeting
- Help ensure an active role
 - Encourage active participation
 - Encourage involvement as a committee officer
- Provide a mentor
- Provide orientation and ongoing education

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Alumni Involvement

- Informal Resource
- Advocacy
- Support Groups
- Coordinating Committee Membership
- State Committees / Policy-Making

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