

PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

DEMONSTRATE FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AND CONTRIBUTION:

- Develop a plan for identifying a diverse, representative group of families to participate.
- During and after meetings, specifically recognize the value of the family's participation.
- Recognize individual family strengths while respecting the different methods of coping and adjustment.
- Demonstrate how Federal programs support families to attend national conferences.

PROVIDE FAMILY IDENTIFIED SUPPORTS TO ASSIST THE FAMILY'S PARTICIPATION:

- Provide convenient meeting times and locations for family members.
- Compensate families for their time, expertise, and expenses.
- Clearly identify a staff person to be the primary contact person for reimbursement and other issues. Be Sure she/he understand that timely reimbursement and contacts are essential.
- Develop provisions that ensure that parents are present to participate in policy related activities including direct staff support, stipends, travel expenses, and childcare.
- Identify these supports in RFPs, grants, and policy.
- Match veteran parents with inexperienced family members to ensure that new members feel supported in their roles as advisors and have the opportunity to share their ideas.
- Consider incorporating a "family leave" policy so family members can choose an inactive role but maintain their membership should family circumstances require some time off.
- Recognize that some family members may require more and different kinds of support than other to participate in a meaningful way.
- Encourage and facilitate family-to-family support and networking.

PROVIDE FORMAL ORIENTATION FOR FAMILIES AND PROVIDE INFORMATION FOR INVOLVING THEM:

- Provide orientation to both family members and staff about the issues, participants, and process.
- Provide informational support for parents to be prepared to participate as equal partners on a "level playing field" with their professional counterparts.
- Provide technical assistance, leadership mentoring, training, and other parent leadership teaming.

ENSURE DIVERSITY AMONG FAMILY MEMBERS:

- Honor the racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity of families.
- Provide all materials in the families' preferred language.
- Recruit broadly from the community and the population the program serves.
- Bring in new families.
- Adapt collaborative models to diverse cultures. Manage changing distribution of power and responsibility. Incorporate principles of collaboration into professional education.
- Insure broad representation among parent groups based upon the community(s) in question.
- Be particularly careful to include members of traditionally underserved groups.
- Avoid any appearance of tokenism.

BE READY TO HEAR WHAT FAMILIES SAY:

- Encourage and support family members to find their voice.
- Ensure that parent perspectives are not considered a separate component of the policymaking process, but instead are infused throughout.
- Always consider an individual parent's story as being valid.

RESPECT THE PASSION FAMILIES HAVE FOR CHANGE.

CELEBRATE THE PARTNERSHIPS OF WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE:

- Support staff in developing an understanding of the value of family participation.
- Provide clear information about the goals of the board, task force, or committee and the role of individual members and the roles of family members.
- Balance membership on committees between families and professionals.
- Consider shared leadership—parent and professional co-chairs or teaming.