



Practical Tips: Working Effectively with Culturally Diverse Families

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CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

PACER Center

- Founded in 1977.
- Provide assistance to the entire state.
- Most PACER staff are parents or family members of children with disabilities
- PACER's National Center for Bullying Prevention

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PACER Projects

- PACER serves children ages birth through young adults.
- Simon Technology
- Almost all services are free to parents of children with disabilities
- PACER's Multicultural Projects
- MN Statewide Family Engagement Center (SFEC)



Bonnie Jean Smith

- Bonnie Jean Smith has been a multicultural specialist, Parent Advocate and trainer for PACER Center for 20 years. She is a member of the MN Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, an evaluator for the MN Council for Quality, and a member of the monitoring and TA Review System team for the Fed. Administration on Developmental Disabilities. Bonnie Jean has also worked with high school students as a behavior specialist and as educator and director at an Early Learning Center. As the parent to 2 children with developmental disabilities, Bonnie Jean has used her parenting experiences to help other parents by writing a book, "How Big is the Fly: Asking the Right Question" and Co - author "Person Centered Thinking and Planning, The Natural Rhythms of Life" .



Dao Xiong

- Parent advocate and trainer at PACER Center for 26 years
- Came to the United States as a refugee 40 years ago
- Parent of 7 adult children and 16 grandchildren, including a daughter with a mild cognitive disability and a son with mental health needs
- Participates with many organizations in an advisory role

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Hassan Samantar

- Parent Advocate and Trainer for 12 years, Community Outreach Specialist and advisor to Somali parents
- Served on several district Interagency Early Intervention Outreach Committees
- Collaborates with State and Federal Agencies in Mental Health/ASD projects
- Former member of the DHS Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council
- Parent of a child with a health impairment

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Jesús Villaseñor

- Parent advocate, at PACER for 23 years
- Member of the Diversity Advisory Committee and Chair of the Latino Affairs Council (former)
- Former National Field Reviewer for Cultural and Linguistic Appropriate Services Institute (CLAS)
- Member of the advisory board of Institute of Community Integration (U of M)
- Parent of son with a learning disability

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Perception of Mental health/Disability

- Stigma/taboo and Culture
- Understanding the Disability; Visible vs Invisible
- Family Stress

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Communicating and Engaging Diverse Families

- Start with conversation
- Indicate how behavior adversely impacts academic (give examples)
- Confidentiality
- Do not make assumptions

Communicating and Engaging Diverse Families

- Do not overwhelm with Information
- Provide interventions in the early grades to avoid over identification for special education in the upper grades
- At the conclusion of the meeting, explain what will happen next in the process and provide an anticipated timeline for future activities

Communicating and Engaging Diverse Families

Language Barriers

- Working effectively with interpreters
- Meet in advance/debrief
- Translation; family friendly

Helpful Resources and Publication

Pacer resources for educators and Families

- “Working Effectively with Families from Diverse Cultures”
www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c261.pdf
- “Engaging Diverse Families: What Parents Want Teachers to Know and Do” (Presentation)
- Resources for Parents from Diverse Cultures (Translated in to 3 languages) www.pacer.org/pdf/ge/GE-1.pdf

Q & A's

The more divergent your culture is from the family's culture, the more intentional you need to be in your interactions.

- Check for understanding, *ask questions*, and talk things over.
- Do not assume—seek to understand.