circle of parents
Sharing Ideas. Sharing Support.

Nurturing Parent Leadership

- Provide a mentor and/or be a coach.
- Don't invite just one parent. Have at least two (2) involved in the planning process to avoid the likelihood of just one becoming a "token" parent.
- Accept parents as they are: clothing, speech patterns, special needs and problems.
- Remove and/or help parents overcome the barriers to participation.
- Hold meetings at times convenient for parents.
- Prepare parents in advance of meetings with: who will be there, how others will be dressed, what will happen at the meeting, and what their role may be if it's unique from the roles of other participants.
- Give parents easy to read definitions and explanations of acronyms and other language used at the meetings or within the program, organization or system.
- Don't take it personally when parents express anger at the program, organization or system or tell how they really experience things as a parent.
- Pay attention to what is happening in the parent's personal life. It may affect his/her ability to participate.
- Make sure you and others allow parents the opportunity to talk.
- Make sure you and others listen to what parents have to say.
- Follow-up on what parents say, even if it is to explain why a suggestion they give isn't possible in your program, organization or system.
- Follow-up with the parent after each meeting to make sure he or she understands what happened, when and where the next meeting will be, and how they will continue to be involved.
- Invite parents to attend workshops, conferences and other educational opportunities along with you.
- Provide appropriate articles and other resources to build the skills and knowledge of parents.
- Provide positive feedback and constructive criticism to parents that will encourage further participation and provide concrete ideas for increasing their leadership and expertise.
- Look for opportunities to involve parents in agency initiatives in both traditional and non-traditional and creative ways.
- Help others in your program, organization or system understand and embrace the principles and benefits of parent engagement and involvement in existing or newly-forming family support and child abuse prevention initiatives.
- To the extent they are comfortable, get to know parents on a personal basis and build relationships that value mutual respect.

Adapted from handouts created by Circle of Parents for the FRIENDS Parent Leadership Ambassador Training (PLAT) Curriculum and Guide.