



The FRIENDS National Center for CBCAP Parent Advisory Council Newsletter



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Meaningful Family Engagement: It's Not About Why, It's About Why Not?

Question: How do you best demonstrate your commitment to integrating parent engagement within program development and implementation?

Answer: Fund positions whose sole purpose is to ensure the parent/caregiver presence is a constant as both the consumer and stakeholder. As the state Title V administrator within the North Carolina Division of Public Health, the Children and Youth Branch implements this parent engagement model on several levels.



Christy Moore and Holly Shoun

First, it develops family liaison coordinator positions that are responsible for increasing and overseeing activities for family support and engagement. Family Liaison Specialists Holly Shoun and Christy Moore work to have families engaged in meaningful ways. "There is a distinction between family involvement and family engagement" according to Christy Moore. "Involvement implies doing something to one or more people, as compared to engagement which refers to doing something along with other people." Educating and training branch staff, establishing relationships with families and engaging families in meaningful ways is a process. Our job is to keep this process in motion and at the forefront of our program development and implementation.

Families, including children and youth, have the first-hand knowledge of how to best shape programs and services to effectively meet their needs. "Their participation in program planning,

implementation and evaluation is crucial," says Christy. A second family engagement strategy involves identifying family stakeholders to co-train with branch staff. The parent perspective offers a real life experience and authentic application of the topic.

Finally, the branch works to develop a leadership group of diverse parents who would effectively and efficiently offer local training. The training is designed to engage and empower parents as leaders within their community, to enhance the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities. Best practices of parent engagement can have many approaches and appearances; because it's not about why, it's about why not! ✨

*February is
National Parent
Leadership Month!*

Visit the PAC on the FRIENDS website at www.friendsnrc.org

Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency (PLCSP) Team:

Under the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Children and Family Services Division the Children's Trust Fund partners with Minnesota Communities Caring for Children (MCCC) a chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America and National Circle of Parents) for Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency whose goals are to:

- Connect parents to policy and practice initiatives
- Develop and promote strategies for prevention and child safety public awareness
- Promote the protective factors that help keep parents and their families strong
- Address systemic and programmatic issues around race/ethnicity, culture.

Beginning in 2009 *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* was created. Team members are now called Volunteer Parent Consultants.

Volunteer Parent Consultants commit to attend monthly trainings and serve on the team for a minimum of three years. Consultants receive a stipend for their time and expenses, technical assistance, professional and personal guidance, and training for being an active contributing participant at the public child welfare system table. Parent Consultants partner with the child welfare system and use life experience, as well as knowledge from their communities, to improve family service practices.

Volunteer Parent Consultants are empowered to recognize their own vision and goals and share them with their family and in their communities. As part of this initiative, parents build skills that include creating co-learning environments with state agencies, community organizing and

facilitating community dialogues and utilizing the Minnesota Parent Café model to promote the protective factors within their communities.

Parent Consultants from the first cohort partnered with William Mitchel Law School to create a Child Protection Clinic. Parent mentors are trained to work together with law students and families with CHIPS cases with the goal of reunification.

In 2015 Parent leaders and community stakeholders worked together to create a House Legislative Resolution promoting

the well-being of all Minnesota Children.

During the 2015 February, Parent Recognition Month, DHS & MCCC recognized 16 parents, with more than 60 people in attendance, including families, state legislators, and community stakeholders

Also in 2015 nineteen Parent Leaders worked more than 1,100 hours advising service providers, raising awareness statewide about family resilience and community needs, and enhancing their own knowledge and skills. ✖

From the Director of the FRIENDS National Center

Parent Leadership: Extending the Reach

February in the south can come in like a lion with snow, ice and cold weather, and just as easily end with daffodils, crocuses, and forsythia in full bloom. Good parents are similar in that they have the ability to fiercely protect their children and wade through many storms, as well as provide hugs, kisses, and words of encouragement to support their child's journey to adulthood. It is hard to be a good parent, yet most people who have children make it through the many storms; and some even take the knowledge gained from experience and share it with others. This, in part, is what parent leaders do.

February is National Parent Leadership Month (NPLM), a campaign initiated by Parents Anonymous, Inc., and a time to recognize parent leaders across the country. The FRIENDS National Center believes that parents are a crucial part of policy development, programming, and awareness campaigns that are centered on child abuse and neglect prevention.

FRIENDS' Parent Advisory Council has compiled several resources in recognition of NPLM with most available in English and Spanish, and a new voki—unique speaking characters that anyone with a computer can create. Please use these materials in your programs and offer us feedback on how they were used and received by the families you serve. We would also like to learn about resources you may have developed to recognize parent leadership. You can share these through our FRIENDS Listserv or by sending an e-mail to your CBCAP State Lead or the FRIENDS T/TA Coordinator who works with you.

Please read about our Parent Advisory Council members on our website, <http://friendsnrc.org/parent-advisory-council>, and if you attend the annual CBCAP Grantee Meetings, take the time to get to know our PAC members. Many attend every year and would love to talk with you about ideas for developing parent leadership and their own diverse experiences. ✖



Together Again Conference

On September 26th, 2015, forty-six parents from the states of Washington and Oregon got together to talk about their communities at the South Sound Sports Center in Seattle WA. The conversations were around these questions: What helps your family feel a sense of belonging in a community? What more would you need to learn to take a bold step towards strengthening families?

After spending a day together learning more about community cafés, our dream was to have a safe place for our children and a beloved community to live in. We, as adults, committed to the children in our community to:



Robin Higa and Fatima Gonzalez-Galinda



- Interact with every young person I see or meet
- Community Garden where children are welcome
- Make everyone smile
- Help all children
- Work harder to host better Community Cafés for the sake of children
- Ask kids questions and listen to them and to all children
- Be part of the Together Again
- Continue to spread the word
- Help kids have a voice
- Hearing your voice about kids working together will help in adults working together
- Support kids working together
- Make community stronger
- Have gratitude for your creativity
- Fun for all kids
- Duplicate with colleagues and community

Submitted by
Fatima Gonzalez-Galindo
FRIENDS PAC



Recognizing and Celebrating Parent Leaders

At the Massachusetts Children's Trust, we engage, recognize, and celebrate parents and parent leaders in a number of ways. Within our organization, parents share their story at large events, receive awards, and attend training opportunities. In preparation for speaking engagements, the Children's Trust provided parents with support and guidance on public speaking. And also, in support of parent's time and effort all parents are provided a stipend and offered assistance with childcare and transportation.

Below are a few ways the Massachusetts Children's Trust engages, recognizes, and celebrates parents:

Family Recognition Award

Each year the Children's Trust convenes an annual family support conference, A View from All Sides: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Parenting Education and Family Support. During this past year, over 500 family support professionals attended the conference! As part of the event, the Children's Trust presents several awards, one of which is the *Family Recognition Award*. This award recognizes a participating family from one of our funded program models who has taken great strides to enhance the lives of their family and community through their participation. Below is a picture of this past year's award winners. This is a great way to celebrate parents for their outstanding leadership!

An Evening of Promise Annual Gala and Auction

Similarly, each year the Children's Trust also hosts an annual Gala and auction, An Evening of Promise. The Gala is another venue to share parent's



(Left to Right: Karole Rose, Family Support Program Manager, Naveed Ahmad, Parent, Saima Ahmad, Parent, Suzin Bartley, Executive Director)

stories. At this year's Gala, we presented a video program that shared the stories of two families at two different Family Center programs. The video explained the benefits of parenting support programs to the event audience. We invited the four parents featured in the video to attend the Gala and be recognized for their commitment to support their families and build their parenting and leadership skills.

Within our Programs:

Parents also participate in many other leadership opportunities through Children's Trust funded programs. At the local program level, parents facilitate groups, plan special events, lead fundraising efforts, support the development and distribution of monthly newsletters, assist with outreach efforts and are active participants in governing boards. Programs support the involvement of parent leaders by provided stipends and other support services such as food, childcare, and transportation.

At the *Valuing Our Children (VOC) Family Center* the staff honored 26 parents (with 21 in attendance) at their first annual Parent Leadership Appreciation Breakfast in February 2015. They honored parent leaders by providing a pancake breakfast that was served by program staff. Parents were formally recognized through an awards ceremony receiving certificates for their leadership service. The staff observed that during this event the parents stood tall and with great pride as they talked about what they bring to VOC programming and activities. Parents glowed with bright smiling faces as they were formally recognized and honored with certificates and they took great pride in their skills as role models for future leaders. Due to the positive response from this event VOC is committed to providing a yearly event and awards ceremony to recognize our parent leaders.

The parent leader activities

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Recognizing and Celebrating Parent Leaders

include the following:

- Facilitate child care groups (support groups and parent education groups)
- Provide office support running the Community Clothing Center (free clothes for anyone in need)
- Provide playgroup facilitation
- Provided rides to participants attending program activities
- Provide support group co-facilitation
- Help at community special events (National Night Out, The Big Read Literacy Fair, Family Fun Day, Back Pack Drive, and Fall Festival)
- Advocacy with legislators (State House events, state conferences, writing bills for

- submission to State House)
- Members of the Peer Review Team
- Membership of VOC Board of Directors
- Membership in DTA and DCF Board of Directors
- Outreach activities such as delivering welcome baby baskets

At the **Cambridge Center For Families (CFF) Family Center**, parents are engaged and employed as Playgroup Leaders / Outreach Workers and work as part of an outreach team with other Center for Families staff with the goal of engaging parents of children ages birth-8.

One of the ways that CFF works

hard to recognize and support parent leaders is by participating in city-wide initiatives that create career ladders and opportunities for parents to grow and develop into new roles within the City. For instance, CFF recently hired, with support from the City of Cambridge, a parent who started out in the English as a Second Language Family Literacy Class, then became a Playgroup Leader/Outreach Worker and was hired as the Center for Families Family Support Program Assistant. Additionally, in the bi-monthly newsletter, the "Caught in the Act" section highlights parent leaders who show commitment and dedication to supporting Cambridge families. ✨



FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council members (from l to r): Dawn Patzer, Jill Gentry, Sam Furhmann, Eliza Cooper, Jessica Diel, and Sam Blue. (Not pictured: Fatima Galinda Gonzalez, Art Hernandez and Brook Hoffbauer)

About the PAC

FRIENDS has established a Parent Advisory Council to provide useful overall program direction and guidance to the activities of the National Center. Committee members share their experience and expertise in child abuse prevention and family strengthening through their active participation in FRIENDS workgroups and the annual Grantee's meeting, development/review of FRIENDS written materials, and by providing resource center staff with consultation and advice.

Contact Information:

Eliza Cooper, Editor
friends@friendsnrc.org

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