The Role of Meaningful Family Involvement in Planning, Implementation and Evaluation

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PLANNING:

Invite families from the very beginning of a project/stakeholder group.
Where can we go to recruit families?

Can be internal *or* external to an organization/agency

- A parent/professional on staff
- ICC Parent Representatives/State Advisory Council Representative
- Parent Co-Trainer of the Parent Training Center
- Parent Training and Information Center

Provide guidance on the progression of a defined scope of work
Engaging Families

An ongoing cyclical process

1. Recruit Families
2. Offer Background Information
3. Evaluate/Are we allowing families to meaningfully participate?
4. Engaging families ongoing
5. How are we supporting families to participate?
Questions to Ask…

☑ Is this the right time for the parent within their personal situation to join this stakeholder group?

☑ Do they have what they need to make an informed decision about participating on this stakeholder group?
  ☑ Time commitment, support to attend the meetings, etc.
  ☑ Is there a reimbursement structure? Is this clearly explained to the parent? What is the process?
  ☑ Is there more than one parent involved?
    ☑ Don’t want to be a token parent representative
    ☑ Is there a mentor assigned to each parent?
Building Relationships

Families need to be informed?

• What is their role?
  – Do they represent families or their own family experience only?
    • How can they connect with other families to truly be representative?

• How to meaningfully participate
• Changes in expectations as the project evolves
Things to consider

? Do we truly want to engage and allow families to participate?
  ? Watch the body language and non verbal cues of the group
  ? Watch the use of acronyms at the beginning

? Are written materials clear, visually appealing, informative, easy to read and understandable?

? Are there resources available to support families?
  ? Is there funding support for family involvement?
    ? If so, what is the mechanism and the process.

? How long is the commitment?
  ? Short term, long term or ongoing?
Suggested Strategies

- Develop procedures to prepare families for active participation
- Develop guidelines or checklists for families to complete before each critical event
- Prepare a list of commonly used terms, acronyms and abbreviations
- Call on experienced parents to assist other families through the process
EVALUATE

☑ Are there ongoing training opportunities for families to grow their skills?

☑ Did we assign a mentor/support person for families to go to for any questions/clarification?

☑ Ask the family member:
  ☑ Are you offered the opportunity to meaningfully be involved?
  ☑ Are there other opportunities that you are interested in?
  ☑ Is there anything that we can do better to support families?
  ☑ Is this still the right opportunity for you?
  ☑ Do you feel effective in your involvement?
SUCCESS!
Take Home Messages!

- Invite more than one parent to participate
- Ask parents if this is the right time for them to participate *(don’t assume)*
  - Provide expectations and time commitment
- Provide background information to prepare parents to meaningfully participate
- Funding mechanism to engage more than one parent
- Support/mentoring available for families