Sustaining and Supporting Family Leaders
Today’s Presenters/Facilitators

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Session Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

• Identify strategies, practices, and approaches for effectively preparing and supporting family leaders to engage in programmatic and policy decision-making.

• Identify content and related resources that can be used to develop a comprehensive and sustainable family leadership development program.
Getting Set-up with Poll Everywhere

Mobile Phone:
Send a text to 37607 message ECPCTA

Tablet or Laptop:
Go to PollEv.com/ecpcta
Who is in the room?

- Parents
- EI Providers
- ECSE Providers
- ECE Providers
- Higher Ed Representatives
- Administrators or Lead Agency Staff
- Child Care Providers
- Head Start Providers
- Other
What's the first word that comes to mind when you hear "family leadership?"
Federal Commitment
Federal Legislation

- Head Start Act
- Child Care Development Block grant (CCDBG)
- Maternal, Infant and Child Health Home Visiting Program
- Public Health, Title V
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
OSEP Parent Program

• 3 components
  – Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) - serve the population of an entire State or specific region in a State
  – Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) – operate at the local level in an identified community that includes underserved parents of children with disabilities, including low income parents, parents of limited English proficient children, and parents with disabilities.
  – Parent Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs) – there is a national PTAC and 4 regional PTACs provide TA to the PTIs and CPRCs
PTIs and CPRCs

PTIs and the CPRCs provide almost identical services to families:

- Provide appropriate training and information to parents of children with disabilities;
- Serve families of infants, toddlers, and children with the full range of disabilities;
- Ensure the training and information meets the needs of all parents, including low-income parents and parents of limited English proficient children;
- Assist parents to:
  - better understand the nature of their children’s disabilities,
  - how to communicate effectively and work collaboratively with personnel responsible for providing services,
  - participate in decision making processes and the development of IEPs and IFSPs; assist parents in resolving disputes effectively;
- Assist parents and students to
  - understand their rights and responsibilities under IDEA, and
  - how to effectively use procedural safeguards.
PTACs

• The PTACs provide TA on the following:
  – Effective coordination of parent training efforts;
  – Dissemination of scientifically based research and information; promotion of the use of technology;
  – Reaching underserved populations;
  – Including children with disabilities in general education programs;
  – Facilitating transitions; and
  – Promoting alternative methods of dispute resolution, including mediation

• PTACs also participate in the broader TA & D Network
U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)  
Parent Training & Information Centers

- **Work** with families of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, birth to 26
- **Help** parents participate effectively in their children’s education and development
- **Partner** with professionals and policymakers to improve outcomes for all children with disabilities
- **Collaborate** with early childhood TA centers

Find your parent center at:

[https://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/)
U.S. Department of Education’s
Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships
(version 2)

The Challenge

- Educators
  - Have not been exposed to strong examples of family engagement
  - Have received minimal training
  - May not see partnership as an essential practice
  - May have developed deficit mindsets

- Families
  - Have not been exposed to strong examples of family engagement
  - Have had negative past experiences with schools and educators
  - May not feel invited to contribute to their children’s education
  - May feel disrespected, unheard, and unvalued

Essential Conditions

- Process conditions
  - Relational: built on mutual trust
  - Linked to learning and development
  - Asset-based
  - Culturally responsive and respectful
  - Collaborative
  - Interactive

- Organizational conditions
  - Systemic: embraced by leadership across the organization
  - Integrated: embedded in all strategies
  - Sustained: with resources and infrastructure

Policy and Program Goals

- Build and enhance the capacity of educators and families in the “4 C” areas:
  - Capabilities (skills + knowledge)
  - Connections (networks)
  - Cogitation (skills in beliefs and values)
  - Confidence (self-efficacy)

- Educators are empowered to:
  - Connect family engagement to learning and development
  - Engage families as co-creators
  - Honor family funds of knowledge
  - Create welcoming cultures

Capacity Outcomes

- Families engage in diverse roles:
  - Co-creators
  - Supporters
  - Encouragers

- Educators
  - Mentors
  - Advocates
  - Models

Effective partnerships that support student and school improvement

IDEAs that Work
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services/Dept. of Education

Policy Statement on Family Engagement in the Early Grades

Provides recommendations to early childhood systems and programs
A System Framework for Building High-Quality Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Programs

Family engagement cuts across all components of high-quality systems.

Available at: ectacenter.org/sysframe
CONNECTING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND FAMILY LEADERSHIP
Definition of Family Engagement

**Family engagement** refers to the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children’s development, learning, and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems.

Professional Values and Commitments

Programs with strong family engagement have certain values and commitments in common that, in turn, promote family leadership (Geller, McAlister, & Tung, 2015):

• Build upon family members’ strengths and assets
• Value and support family members’ ideas and opinions
• Incorporate family voices into decision-making and implementation of new initiatives/reforms
• Provide multiple ways of soliciting family input
• Provide continuous feedback to families, with honest and open sharing of thoughts, ideas, and information

Additional references: Martinez-Cosio, 2010; Ishimaru 2014; Warren & Mapp, 2011
What We Know about Family Leadership

• When families are engaged as leaders, they can:
  – Place concerns on policy and program agendas that were not previously acknowledged;
  – Suggest and act on new ways to solve problems;
  – Draw on their own political and organizational networks to influence change; and
  – Bring to bear supportive resources (Fine, 1993).

• Family leadership efforts are most effective when they are broadly supported by program staff (Dyrness, 2011; Ishimaru, 2014).

• For family members to effectively engage in leadership and advocacy activities, they must be met with trust and respect by professionals and other family leaders (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, & Shogren, 2015).
Beliefs about Leadership

• **Leaders are not born** – they rise out of a person’s passion for how they want the world to be.

• **Leadership isn’t a gift** – it’s accessible to anyone who wants it.

• **Leadership isn’t a calling** – it’s a matter of listening to a question and trying to come up with an answer.

• **A leader is anyone** who has a very big and compelling story of how it could all turn out.

Source: Serving on Groups That Make Decisions
10 family engagement practices

- F10: Practitioners inform families about leadership and advocacy skill-building opportunities and encourage those who are interested to participate.

Available at: http://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices
DEC Recommended Practices Ambassadors

ECTA Center
The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

Meet the aRPy Ambassadors
Family Ambassador Roles

- To bring awareness to the existence of the RPs and the resources that support their implementation within the Parent Center network
- To collaborate with fellow Family Ambassadors to develop and share strategies and resources for informing families about the RPs
- To share the DEC RPs and ECTA resources with families and with Parent Center colleagues and staff
- In states where there is also a Professional Ambassador, collaborate with that individual to further raise awareness of the RPs
Sustaining Family Leaders
WHAT ARE YOU DOING:

• To Recruit Family Leaders?

• To Sustain Family Leaders?

• To Avoid Burning them Out?

• To build a Cadre of Leaders who support one another?
Before
- Articulate purpose of the work / decision / discussion
- Describe role of stakeholders
- Provide resources to build background knowledge on implementation and related data that will be discussed during meetings

During
- Invite unique perspectives
- Provide a safe forum to ask questions, share information, and confirm understandings
- Use effective techniques for leading group discussion to ensure each voice is heard

After
- Close the loop - communicate decision and provide rationale
- Identify areas of needed improvement and strategies for addressing those areas in a timely and effective manner
Sustaining meaningful engagement of families starts at recruitment.

- Be clear about what you are asking of them.
- Provide the length of the commitment.
- Provide a range of opportunities, requiring varying levels of time and commitment.
- Remember that families who are engaged in smaller ways at first might become more deeply engaged over time.
Providing Roles for Family Leaders

• Some family members may not see themselves as leaders. A personal invitation let’s them know that you recognize leadership traits in them.

• Ask family members to take on a specific role that is compatible with what you know about their individual experiences, expertise, or skills.

• Provide opportunities to:
  – Attend and present at conferences
  – Serve on committees or task forces
  – Participate in staff and family development
  – Plan special events
What Do Family Leaders Want/Need

- Alternative ways to participate
- Varying meeting locations for convenience
- Initial orientation and training
- Flexible meeting and event times
- Mentoring (developing leadership skills)
- Ongoing training
- Financial compensation/other supports

*Sustaining and Diversifying Family Engagement in Title V MCH and CYSHCN Programs* (2016)
Supporting Families in Leadership Roles

Conversations with Family Leaders: Final Reflections
Takeaways

• Develop authentic partnerships
  – *But what does that mean?*
  – *How does that happen?*
• Identify programmatic activities in which families can participate and articulate a clear, intentional purpose for their involvement
• Use a variety of methods to inform families of opportunities to become involved
• Close the loop about decisions
Find Us Online

ECTA Center: http://ectacenter.org

ECPC: https://ecpcta.org/

Parent to Parent of Georgia: http://p2pga.org/
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Thank You

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