Engaging Diverse Families in Leadership for Systemic Change

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Characteristics of Leadership

* What is a leader?
* What is leadership?
“Leaderful” Organizations

- Clear & compelling vision & mission
- Passionate & engaged Board
- Strategic approach to leadership development & engagement
- Effective communications & marketing
- Motivated, professional staff
Clear & compelling vision/mission

- Vision/mission “set the stage” for an organization that values parent leadership development
- What does your vision/mission statement tell:
  - *Parents* about your expectations for their leadership?
  - *Parents* about the opportunities for leadership?
  - *Your staff* about their role in identifying, recruiting, preparing, & supporting diverse parent leaders?
  - *Others* about the value you place on parent leadership?
Strategic plans provide the roadmap to achieving the vision & mission

What does your strategic plan do to:

- Integrate parent leadership as an integral component of each major strategic goal/direction?
- Support parent leadership development & engagement as a key activity/mechanism to achieve the goal?
- Ensure sufficient funding to sustain parent leadership development & engagement?
Communications/marketing/outreach activities:

* Let diverse parents know who you are, what you do, & how they can be involved
* Let communities understand the value you place on parent leadership
* Underscore to policymakers & professionals why parent leadership is - & should be – a core value
* How effective is your communications/marketing/outreach plan in achieving these goals?
Fundraising activities (including grantwriting) secure the funds needed to fuel your leadership work.

What do your grant applications tell funders about:

- Your commitment to diverse parent leadership as a core value?
- Your understanding about the resources needed to sustain effective parent leadership development & support?

How can you write parent leadership development & support into applications even when it is not a stated focus of the funding opportunity?
Your staff & Board provide the personnel needed to achieve your goals

How do your staff & Board recruitment policies & practices support your commitment to diverse parent leadership development & support?

How do you incorporate parent leadership development & support into Board & staff roles?

What does the composition of your Board & staff say to potential parent leaders?
Organizational Self-Assessment

- Family-Centered Services Self-Assessment
- Non-Profit Management Self-Assessment
- Cultural & Linguistic Competence Self-Assessment for Family Organizations
- Language Access Self-Assessment & Plan
- Parent Leadership Self-Assessment
Parent Leadership “Formula”

- Assess agency & staff readiness
- Improve agency & staff readiness
- Identify potential parent leaders
- Recruit diverse parent leaders
- Prepare diverse parent leaders
- Provide meaningful leadership roles for parent leaders
- Support parent leaders
- Recognize parent leader contributions

Speak Up!
Take Action!
Create Change!
Engaging Families as Leaders

- Involve those most affected
- Reflect the society we are working for
- Draw strength from/ be accountable to
- Gain access & voice
- Model collaboration
- Hold selves to high standards
Building New Leadership

- Nurture it
- Have a plan to:
  - Identify potential leaders
  - Build capacity
- Allow mistakes
- Make the space
- Provide support
- Listen, respond
Pathways to Parent Leadership

• Critical supports:
  – Contact with other parents in leadership roles
  – Opportunities to take on leadership roles, however small, & safe settings to practice them
  – Relationship with respected & trusted person who provides feedback & support
  – Sense of belonging
The Planned Change Process

1. Exploring
2. Assessment & Planning
3. Commitment Building
4. Implementing Change
5. Integrating Change
6. Assessing Progress
7. Growing
Key Leadership Qualities

* Challenge the process
* Inspire shared vision
* Enable others to act
* Model the way
* Encourage the heart
Underlying Principles

- Strengths Based
- Family Centered
- Building empowerment not dependence
- Relationship-based
- Solution Focused
- Continuous Quality Improvement
Starting place

* Identify small group of parents from targeted community & community cultural brokers

* Ask for their help in:
  * Understanding cultural, language, religious impacts (both sources of strength & potential barriers)
  * Developing strategies to reach, engage, & support families from their background
  * Implementing strategies
  * Evaluating progress & planning next steps

* Provide them with support
Why do parents get involved?

- The issue is important to them, their family, & their community
- They have something to contribute
- They believe that they will be listened to, their contributions respected, and their participation will make a difference
How do parent leaders stay involved?

- Multiple opportunities for participation
- The level of participation can vary as needed
- Families receive sufficient advance notice
- Family participation is facilitated
- Families are listened to; their ideas are supported & respected
- Families do not experience retribution as a result of their participation
- Family participation has an impact
- Family participation is consciously & visibly appreciated
Primary Supports Needed

- **Tangible** (stipends, provision of or reimbursement for childcare and transportation and reimbursement for lost wages).
- **Emotional** (respect, understanding, validation, and ongoing support to fulfill their roles, including times of transition and crisis).
- **Environmental** (training, equality with service providers, and full inclusion in activities)
Levels of Focus for Parent Leaders

• Level 1: Strengthening individual parent knowledge & skills
• Level 2: Promoting community education
• Level 3: Educating Providers
• Level 4: Fostering coalitions & networks
• Level 5: Changing organizational practices
• Level 6: Influencing policy & legislation
Token vs. Meaningful Involvement

- No preparation or information given prior to participation
- No meaningful role in meeting or forum
- Often one time only participation
- Professionals talk “around parents” using acronyms and terminology unfamiliar to them

- Adequate notice of the meeting and material supports are provided to assist parent attendance
- Materials and/or an orientation is provided prior to the meeting
- Parent input is valued and individuals work with parents to clarify terminology, systems and policies
- Follow-up is provided
Leaders Know Themselves

- Who am I?
- What am I doing here?
- What are my:
  - Goals, purposes, expectations, motivations
- What strengths & challenges do I bring?
- How can I best use my leadership skills?
- How can I make space for others?
Advocacy Leadership Knowledge

- Laws & regulations
- How institutions work
- Key decision-makers
- Formal & informal decision-making
- Facts; current status
- Barriers & solutions
- Qualities of effective systems
- Existing resources
Focus on Empowerment

- Educate
  - Build knowledge
  - Build skills
- Engage
  - Build trust
  - Build self-confidence
- Enhance effectiveness
  - Build mentoring
  - Build opportunities
Agencies:

- Explore past history
- Are you ready for full transparency
- Leadership support in all directions
- Willingness to be flexible
- Your budget is your policy statement!
Sustainability Strategies

• Commit to cultivating family leaders
• Articulate the value statement
• Clear expectations, roles and outcomes
• Flexible scheduling and meeting formats
• Engage in inter-agency data sharing
Sustainability Strategies

- Assure & continue to enhance competence
- Cross-agency impact reporting
- Implement corporate leadership strategies
- Leadership vs. Management
- Family leaders bring life to your mission
- Family engagement & leadership activities embedded in ALL grant proposals
Spheres of Conflict

- Structural Conflicts
- Data Conflicts
- Value Conflicts
- Relationship Conflicts
- Interest Conflicts
What is our action plan for involvement?

We know the why, we need to plan the:

* Who?
* What?
* When?
* Where?
* How?
Action Planning

- Steps of Action Planning
  - Reaching out to parents to participate in the Action Planning process
  - Conduct the organizational self assessment with parent participation
  - Prioritize areas of needed improvement
  - Develop a plan, in partnership with families, to address prioritized needs
Making It Real

• Identify a potential parent leader
• How are they currently involved?
• What leadership characteristics do they have?
• What is one new leadership role to which you could immediately introduce this parent?
• What development or support will they need?
• What’s the first step you will take - & when?
Be the pebble in the pond... causing ripples that spread in all directions!
Debriefing

- What worked?
- What could have gone better?
Key Resources

* National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, & Community Empowerment: www.parentsatthetable.org
* Serving on Groups Parent Leadership Development: www.servingongroups.org
* Family Engagement Inventory: www.childwelfare.gov/fei/practice-strategies/
* Parents Anonymous Shared Leadership: http://parentsanonymous.org/parent-shared-leadership/
* Program Sustainability Assessment Tool: https://sustaintool.org/