

# Getting to the Heart of the Matter

## Family & Youth Engagement and Involvement Strategies



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## Objectives

- Participants will learn the difference between engagement and involvement
- Participants will learn key elements which support family engagement
- Understand the knowledge and values bases for Family and Youth Involvement
- Identify attributes, benefits, barriers, strategies, hallmarks, and steps related to Family-Centered, Youth-Guided Care



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[www.youtube.com/embed/Me9yrREXOj4](http://www.youtube.com/embed/Me9yrREXOj4)



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### Family/Youth Involvement vs. Engagement

One Involves **“Doing to”**, the other implies **“Doing With”**



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When staff **involve** parents, they are leading with the agencies desires and interests.

When agencies **engage** parents, they are leading with the parents interests in an effort to develop and sustain a genuine partnership.

**Involvement** to “enfold or envelop”  
**Engagement** “to interlock with; to mesh”



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### Family /Youth Engagement

...goes beyond the simple involvement by **“motivating and empowering families** to recognize their own needs, strengths and resources and to take an active role in working toward change” - Steib 2004

- **Enhances** the helping relationship
- **Promotes** Family/Youth “ buy-in”
- **Expands options** ~ natural supports
- **Builds** family/youth decision-making skills
- Enhances the **fit** between family needs and services



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## Family-Centered Practice

- Is based upon the belief that the best place for children to grow up is in a family
- Is the most effective way to ensure children's safety, permanency, and well-being is to provide services that engage, involve, strengthen, and support families




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## Family-Centered Beliefs

- Safety of the child is the first concern.
- Children have the right to their family.
- The family is the fundamental resource for the nurturing of children.
- Parents should be supported in their efforts to care for their children.
- Families are diverse and have the right to be respected for their special cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious traditions; children can flourish in different types of families.




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## Family-Centered Beliefs

- A crisis is an **opportunity for change**
- Inappropriate intervention can do harm
- Families who seem hopeless can **grow and change**
- Family members are **our partners**
- It is our job to **instill hope**




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## Key Practice Elements

- *Clear, honest, respectful*, communication
- **Commitment** to Family-Centered Practice
- **Strengths**-based approach
- **Shared** decision making and participatory planning
- **Individualized** service plans
- **Praise** and **recognition** of parents




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## Key System Elements

- Agency Leadership
- Organizational Culture
- Policy and Standards
- Trained Supervisors
- Manageable Work-loads
- Training and Coaching
- Program Improvement Plans
- Systems Change Initiatives




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“Understanding that many child serving agencies got their start rescuing children from bad situations. That history of child rescuing has historically included rescuing children from their families, and in particular their parents. To move away from that image to an image of partnership represents a major **cultural shift** in many organizations.” - Patricia Miles




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## Family-Centered Scale

*How do you see things?*



- Families as the problem
- Families as a possible resource
- Families as an equal partner
- Families in the driver's seat




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## The Relational Stance

- From Problem to **Competence**
- From Expert to **Accountable Ally**
- From Professional Turf to **Family Turf**
- From **“Teaching To”** to **“Learning With”**




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## Engagement

**What 's Needed:**

**Thinking Differently About :**

- Children's needs
- Family partnerships
- Professional roles
- Current service structures
- Community capacity
- Less Control and Containment
- Improved Family Supports
- Community Networks
- Improved Permanent Safe Options
- Use of Multiple Strategies

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## Why Engage Families?

“When families are involved and respected, outcomes improve in schools, in medical care and in the system of care that serves children with mental health challenges.”

- Obrochta, et al, 2011



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## “ Collaborative Therapy with Multi- Stressed Families”

William C. Madsen ( 2007)

Interactions characterized by:

- Respect
- Connection
- Curiosity
- Hope



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## Engage Us - Families Speak

- Ask us what we think
- Learn what our goals are
- Ask us what has been tried, what worked, what didn't and why
- Keep us informed and plan for us to be involved
- Be honest with us, but be hopeful
- Treat us with dignity and respect
- Strive to create a program you would be comfortable with and confident in if your own son or daughter needed help



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### Families Perceived as Reluctant to Engage

"The first rule of any program, should be to do no harm." - Family Member

- What is guised as resistance may be **fatigue**
- **Don't misunderstand our anger**, for some of us it is the only way to advocate for services
- We may have been told to **give up our rights** to obtain service
- In some cultures the **stigma** of mental health causes ridicule and possible isolation for accepting help
- Never underestimate the importance of **having staff who look and speak like us**




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### Families Perceived as Reluctant to Engage

- Do not take unreturned calls or meetings cancelled by families personally
- Families need an approach that is trauma-informed and cognizant of grief and loss
- Consider what families might be needing when faced with major life stressors
- Meet families "where we are" - validate our experiences
- Recognize families strengths
- Do not label or judge families as resistant, manipulative or uncaring
- Don't give up on families




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### Focus on Strengths Not Pathologies

- To **feel valued** as individuals with strengths
- To be **listened to and heard**
- To be regarded as **experts** on our children
- To **be at the table** when decisions are made
- To have **access** to information and records
- To be **involved** in a meaningful way
- To feel **less guilt** and **blame**
- To be **informed** and **knowledgeable**
- To **feel accepted**, without judgment
- To be in a position to **be proactive not reactive**
- To **feel hopeful** for our children's future




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## Moving from Active Listening to Active Learning

- **Listen** to the family's story
- **Build** on the family's concepts and language
- **Acknowledge** and validate emotions
- **Ask** questions versus providing answers
- **Share** information in a clear, timely and sensitive manner
- **Co-create** solutions with the family




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## Tools for Engagement

Examples for capturing families' stories include:

- Drawing genograms
- Building timelines
- Creating Strengths Inventories
- Drawing a picture of a positive future
- Connections Maps
- Video histories




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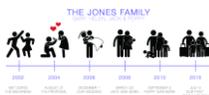
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## Timelines

- Start back at least one generation
- Good Events
  - "What made them special? what did you like most about it?"
- Negative events
  - "How did you cope with this? Did anyone or anything help to make it better? How did that impact what happened next in your life?"




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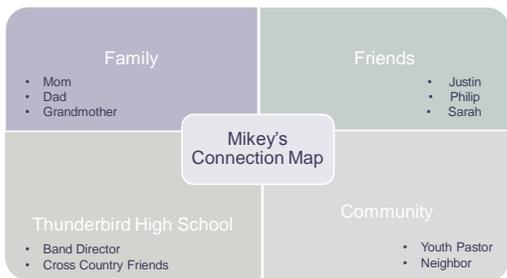
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## Mapping Connections




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### Additional Engagement Strategy: *Hire Parent Partners*

- Their presence **changes** agency culture
- Creates a conduit between treatment settings and family settings/cultures
- Sends clear message to staff - **Parents are valued**
- Can utilize own story to **create learning opportunities**
- **Challenge** assumptions, bias and stigma
- Provides a reality review - will this really work perspective




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### From Hello To Help

- Assure the Parent/Caregiver or Youth Perspective
- Provide friendly support and information
- Create capacity for recognition of self in others (breaking the loneliness)
- Brainstorm new ideas
- Assure access to resources
- Promote insight, a new perspective
- Problem-solving
- Inspiring hope among team members
- Assuring Quality: Keeping the process honest




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## Connecting with the Community

- Families/Youth value relationships as well as expertise
- Providers should represent cultural and ethnic make up of the families served
- Providers from same culture provide a culturally comfortable, safe environment
- Understand natural community supports
- Some families/youth need active outreach, multiple strategies




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## Engaging Youth




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## What Ties us together

"Many children are not intrinsically connected to a hopeful future. Any time we connect them with hope, we empower them; when we fail to do so, we disable them. It is our job and our privilege to interrupt hopelessness."

- Margery Ginsberg




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### Ladder of Youth Involvement



- Step 1: Manipulated
- Step 2: Decoration
- Step 3: Tokenism
- Step 4: Assigned and informed
- Step 5: Consulted & informed
- Step 6: Adult-initiated, share decisions with youth
- Step 7: Youth & adult initiated & directed
- Step 8: Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults
- Step 9: Youth-initiated & directed

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### Family Involvement as a Developmental Process




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### Attributes of Family/Youth Involvement

- ACCESS
- VOICE
- OWNERSHIP




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Inspired by: Childwelfare.gov, Paperboat.com,  
Building Bridges Initiative and  
Sonoma County Parent Partners

Resources:

- Engage Us: A Guide Written by Families for Residential Providers  
<http://buildingbridges4youth.org/workgroups/youth-family/products-resources>
- Family Partner Competency Information  
[www ffmch.org/certification-2](http://www ffmch.org/certification-2)
- Wrap Around Manual for Parent Partners developed by Patricia Miles

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## Questions?

For additional questions or more information about our trainings, programs or service:

Please contact us at (602) 288-0155 or visit our website [www.familyinvolvementcenter.org](http://www.familyinvolvementcenter.org).

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