



## *Shared Leadership Practices are Unique*

- ~ Service providers and families work together in relationships based on **EQUALITY** and **RESPECT**
- ~ Service providers **enhance families' capacity** to support the growth and development of all family members (adults, youth & children)
- ~ Families are **resources** to their own members, to other families, to programs & communities
- ~ Shared Leadership practices affirm and strengthen families **cultural, racial, and linguistic identities** and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society
- ~ Shared Leadership practices are embedded in communities and **contribute** to the community-building process
- ~ Shared Leadership practices advocate **with** families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served
- ~ Professionals work with families to **mobilize** formal and informal resources to support family development
- ~ Practices are **flexible** and continually **responsive** to emerging family and community issues
- ~ Shared Leadership practices are **modeled** in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration

### **Premises of Shared Leadership**

1. Primary responsibility for the development and well-being of children lies within the family, and all segments of society must support families as they raise their children.
2. Assuring the well-being of all families is the cornerstone of a healthy society and requires universal access to support programs and services.
3. Children and families exist as part of an ecological system.
4. Child-rearing patterns are influenced by parents' understanding of child development and of their children's unique characteristics, personal sense of competence, and cultural and community traditions and mores.
5. Enabling families to build on their own strengths and capacities promotes the healthy development of children.
6. The development processes that make parenthood and family life create needs that are unique at each stage in the life span.
7. Families are empowered when they have access to information, other resources and able to act to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.



# Family Involvement Benefits / Barriers of Shared Leadership

## ***Benefits for Families***

- Improves services for own family
- Provides opportunity to effect meaningful change
- Feels good to make a societal contribution
- Increases confidence in ability to effect change
- Makes providers accountable to families
  - Provides opportunities to network with other families and providers
- Builds knowledge and skills
- Models community involvement and empowerment for own children and family
- Creates fewer passive recipients of care and services
- Makes things better for other families
- Opens doors to employment
- Creates a sense of belonging
- Offers a sense of accomplishment
- Increased sense of personal power
- Offers leadership role models for other families

## ***Benefits for Providers / Staff / Legislators***

- Enhances relationships between families and providers
- Enhances providers ability to do their job (producing healthier children & families)
- Develops providers knowledge and skills
- Increased responsiveness to family-identified needs
- Provides a reality check for legislators, providers, and staff
- Develops fresh perspective on how services should be delivered
- Increased empathy and understanding of families
- Shares responsibility
- Increases providers efficiency and cost effectiveness
- Helps providers link with other families
- Builds an advocacy base
- Strengthens accountability from service providers

## ***Benefits for Communities, Programs, Agencies***

- Improves quality of programs and services
- Increases responsiveness of programs and policies
- Keeps programs relevant and realistic
- Brings fresh perspectives, creative solutions, and limitless creativity
- Increases visibility of and respect for program in community
- Increases cohesiveness and collaboration between agencies
- Helps save funding, reduces waste
- Improves ability to accomplish mission
- Develops a constituency that can advocate for program / agency
- Increases appreciation of various cultures
- Contributes to the stability of the community

# ***Common Barriers***

## ***Attitudes:***

- Service providers don't feel comfortable talking about issues in front of families
- Families don't trust the providers
- Providers think families are too overwhelmed to participate
- Providers aren't willing to accept families as equals
- Providers are authoritarian
- Families feel they might be 'labeled'
- Families think they have nothing to contribute
- Providers worry that families will violate client confidentiality
- Varying cultural beliefs between the provider and family members
- Family values are not understood
- An individual's uniqueness

## ***Logistics:***

- The program cannot provide childcare
- Transportation is unavailable for families to get to meetings
- Funding restrictions to pay for gas/transportation or childcare
- Time constraints
- Meetings are held only during work hours
- Families are not reimbursed for the time they take off work to attend meetings
- Language barriers

## ***The System:***

- No system is in place for paying consumers
- Staff can only be paid for work done during regular working hours
- Resources are not made available for supporting family involvement
- Expectations that parents can consistently *volunteer* their time without reimbursement

## ***Lack of Information and Skills***

- Families have never participated in planning and governing activities
- Families are unaware of procedures
- Providers aren't experienced in working with families who are involved in planning and governance
- Families and providers lack information about all that is included in their roles

# Self-Assessment for Organizations

## ~ *Shared Leadership Examples* ~

The first step in self-assessment is to honestly and constructively explore questions and issues surrounding family involvement. For this process to be useful, please be truthful in your judgments of both *strengths* and *challenges*. The purpose of self-assessment is not to grade or judge efforts, but to provide a basis for reflection and ongoing growth.

**How much do each of the following statements describe the quality and nature of family involvement in your work?**

Self-Assessment Statements	<i>Extremely Well</i>	<i>Moderately Well</i>	<i>Not at All</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b><i>Supporting Involvement</i></b>				
1. We create opportunities for families to engage in peer networking and support with each other and staff.				
2. We personally invite parents/caregivers to join committees, planning groups, boards, decision groups, etc.				
<b><i>Training &amp; Education</i></b>				
3. We offer training sessions for services providers and families, which are co-facilitated by participants and staff, on how to work collaboratively with each other.				
<b><i>Communicating Clearly</i></b>				
4. We make sure that the information we share with families is free of jargon and can be easily understood by the participants.				
5. Information is provided in all languages spoken in our groups.				
<b><i>Support from the Top</i></b>				
6. The quality of family involvement (e.g., intensity and meaningfulness of involvement) is one of our measures of program success for evaluation and monitoring.				
7. Our initiative devotes resources, such as staff time, funding, materials, to family involvement.				

Self-Assessment Statements	<i>Extremely Well</i>	<i>Moderately Well</i>	<i>Not at All</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b><i>Achieving appropriate Representation &amp; Recruiting Diversity</i></b>				
7. We recruit and engage families who have not typically been involved in decision-making or other family involvement.				
8. The program participants involved in our efforts are representative of the larger community in terms of race, culture, language, income, and education.				
<b><i>Flexibility and Responsiveness</i></b>				
9. Our meetings and opportunities for involvement are offered at times and locations that are convenient for family members.				
10. We have a flexible involvement policy that allows family members to determine the level and intensity of their involvement.				
<b><i>Going Beyond Meetings</i></b>				
11. Parents participate in ongoing evaluation and assessment of our initiative.				
12. In our initiative, parents participate as <i>paid</i> staff.				
13. We encourage and support parents' involvement in community advocacy and leadership efforts beyond our initiative.				
<b><i>Setting Goals</i></b>				
14. Family members who are involved have clear roles and expectations.				
<b><i>Going Beyond Token Involvement</i></b>				
15. Family members on decision-making committees have full voting rights.				
<b><i>Changing Organizational Attitudes</i></b>				
16. Family members trust the relationship they have with the service providers in our organization.				
17. The service providers in our organization respect the opinions of family members and work with families to make these recommendations a reality.				