

# Nothing About Families without Families: Effective Strategies for Diverse Family Leadership and Engagement

7th Annual Help Me Grow National Forum

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Greenville, South Carolina



Help Me Grow  
Vermont



# Agenda:

Introductions	10 minutes
VFN Presents	35 minutes
SPAN Presents	35 minutes
Questions/Discussion	10 minutes



# Your Presenters

**Vermont Family Network:** Vermont Family Network (VFN) empowers and supports all Vermont families of children with special needs so that all children reach their potential. We are Vermont's Parent Training Information Center for education, Family to Family Health Information Center, Parent to Parent Affiliate organization, and Family Voices chapter for Vermont. We have over 15,000 contacts with families per year.

**Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) for New Jersey:** SPAN is a "one stop" for New Jersey families. SPAN is New Jersey's Parent Training and Information Center; Family to Family Health Information Center; Family Voices State Affiliate Organization; Parent to Parent USA affiliate; and a chapter of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

# Why is this subject important?

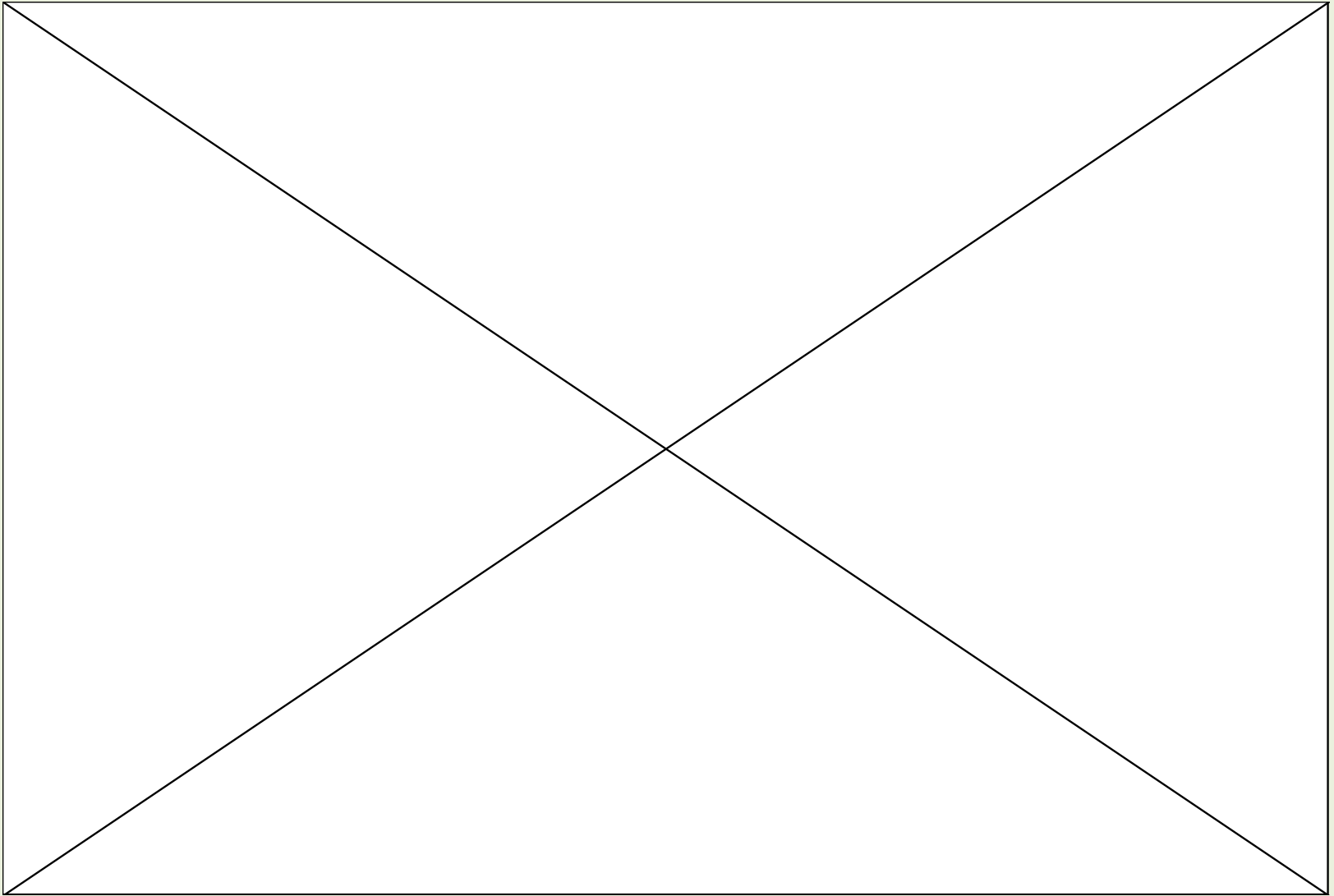
*“A keystone of this work – and what supports the nonpartisan appeal of Help Me Grow – is a widespread commitment to family engagement, no matter which factor is in the spotlight. Only through family engagement can we best understand what families need and how to best provide access to resources.”<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> The Help Me Grow Blog, April 7, 2015, by Paul Dworkin, M.D.

# So what is Family Engagement?

Common Threads in definitions:

- Respect and collaboration
- Joint decision making
- Information and knowledge
- Trust
- Validation
- Goals set together
- Listening actively
- Parent peer support programs



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh7RztQzuDXVxbDL9bsoGOg> retrieved 5.6.16 The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health

# Family Engagement is a means to achieving outcomes.

## Core Themes:

### 1. Connections:

Alliances are born, information is shared

### 2. Partnerships:

Relationships develop

### 3. Professional Relationship:

Ongoing communication between partners.

# Person-Centered Approaches

The ability to engage, communicate effectively with, and take direction from the individual in decisions affecting the design, delivery and evaluation of care management activities and service delivery, including honoring and respecting the individual's choices to take some risk in engaging in life experiences (i.e., the concept of “dignity of risk”).



# Important To

Those things in life which help us be satisfied, content, comforted and happy

- Support/people to work with.
- Someone to talk to.
- Be part of a community with similar goals.

# Important For

Issues of health or safety, or what others see as important to help the person be a valued member of their community

- Be part of decision making
- Child achieves goals
- Resources are available.

# Leadership and Engagement

Lead Synonyms: guide, direct, control, manage

Engage Synonyms: participate in, take part in, join in, become involved in, play a part/role in

We are talking about engagement here, but does leadership contribute?

# Vermont Leadership Series



**WHAT  
ARE  
YOU  
DOING?**



# Connecting in Vermont:

## Connection; Establish partnership

### Vermont Strategies:

- Families have knowledge and access to statewide system (HMG)
- VFN participates in HMG staff recruitment
- VFN assists in HMG in training call center staff
- VFN/HMG cross training
- Training events for families at convenient locations.
- Presence at community locations where New American families are.
- VFN outreach always includes information about HMG (tabling, etc.)

# Partnership development in Vermont:

**Partnership;**

**Value what everyone brings to the partnership**

## Vermont Strategies:

- Ongoing support for families based on their self-identified need(s)
- Ongoing updating of resource bank.
- Validation of family's engagement activities in decision making.
- Setting goals and making plans together
- Listening skills are practiced and reinforced through training
- Engaging and inquiring about the whole family
- Children and their development are at the center.
- Training in CLAS standards of cultural competence.

# Sustained Professional Relationship in Vermont:

**Professional Relationships;  
A mature partnership**

## Vermont Strategies:

- Opportunities for parent growth and development. Confidence increases.
- Growing network of parent mentors (increase knowledge, confidence, support for families)
- Seasoned staff and procedures creates more efficient flow.
- Seeking and engaging in crossover activities and systems.
- Connect families to networks: Leadership opportunities, VFN Matching, Family Faculty

*“Interacting with others broadened my perspective beyond my own situations, spurred idea sharing and team building, and inspired me. I am not alone on this journey, and my voice matters.”*

*“It’s given me the tools to be a much more clear advocate. I love the people I’ve met and learned so much by getting to know them.”*

*“I am so grateful and honored to be part of this amazing inspirational group. I look forward to enhancing my knowledge! This truly made me feel like part of a community when generally life can feel isolating.”*



*“I am reminded that I am not alone on this journey and that a broader support network is hopeful.”*

*“I feel empowered when solutions, even partial solutions, are achieved for the issues in which I devote my time.”*

*“I am feeling grateful to be part of a broad based caring community that I can turn to when needed.”*

*“The nature of the work draws you closer together.”*



# Who has questions?





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