

**Tips for Building, Engaging, & Supporting Diverse Parent Leadership**

**“Recruitment”**

* Identifying potential diverse parent leaders *is the responsibility of everyone*
	+ Family organizations
	+ State agencies & their grantees
	+ Disability organizations
	+ Community-based, immigrant, & other organizations who work with underserved families even if their focus is not families of CSHCN
	+ Other partners
* Identifying/recruiting potential diverse parent leaders *happens all the time*
	+ Multiple strategies for identification & recruitment
		- Media
			* Social media such as e-newsletters, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, websites
			* Community media
		- “On the ground” sharing of information about availability of leadership development & leadership practice opportunities by:
			* Professionals (medical homes, FQHCs, social service agencies, immigrant organizations, organizations that serve underserved families even if they are not in the CSHCN world, etc.) (Note: This requires developed relationships with these entities and organizations so that trust is developed and the organization is willing to use its social capital to encourage underserved families to seek to participate).
			* Family organization staff
			* Other parent leaders from diverse communities
		- Encouragement of diverse parents participating in:
			* Support groups
			* Workshops
			* Other events
* Mechanisms exist to “receive” and respond to diverse parents who express interest in leadership development throughout the year
	+ Interested parents have a culturally-trusted source/sources of information about timing and content of leadership development & leadership “practice” opportunities
	+ Information about diverse parents interested in leadership development & leadership “practice” is collected & maintained for outreach when leadership development &/or leadership “practice” opportunities become available
* Targeted efforts are made to recruit families from communities underrepresented in leadership
	+ 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 recruitment strategies

**Leadership Development**

* Diverse families & “cultural brokers” are engaged in identifying the range of content knowledge & skills that are critical to effectively prepare them for engagement in leadership opportunities
* A *menu* of leadership development “curricula” covers key content knowledge & skills:
	+ Content
		- Laws & regulations
		- How institutions work (modified as needed for parents with greater or lesser knowledge of US & state/local institutions; for example, immigrant families may need information on rights to language access, which services they have the right to access, expectations about active family engagement in decision-making for their children, etc.)
		- Key decision-makers
		- Formal & informal decision-making
		- Facts; current status of system outcomes
		- Barriers & solutions
		- Qualities of effective systems
		- Existing resources
	+ Skills
		- Effective communication
			* Active listening
			* Oral & written communication skills
		- Parent-professional collaboration strategies
		- Skills to support other families, such as:
			* Parent to parent orientation
			* Medical home parent partner
			* Volunteer parent support skills
		- Serving on committees/work groups, etc. (see [www.servingongroups.org](http://www.servingongroups.org))
			* Types of groups & opportunities for engagement
			* How groups work
			* Tools groups use
			* Lingo groups use
			* Understanding data
			* Creating agreement/preventing & addressing conflict
		- Facilitating a meeting (advanced training)
		- Forming/facilitating a support group
		- Telling your story for a public policy purpose
* Needed supports are offered for parent participants in leadership development
* Capacity & willingness to:
	+ Translate leadership development materials
	+ Modify/adapt leadership development materials for diverse audiences
* Multiple types of leadership development for families are offered as frequently as possible
	+ Example:
		- SPAN Resource Parent Training (8 parent series) that provides leadership development in content knowledge and skills in education & health for families of children with disabilities or special healthcare needs is offered three times a year, at least once a year in a language other than English, in 3 locations around the state; includes parent to parent orientation & medical home parent partners as components (75 parents/year)
		- Peer to Peer Leadership Development for diverse women of child-bearing age (5 sessions) is offered at least annually (10-20 participants/year)
		- Early childhood parent leadership development for families on County Councils for Young Children (see [www.servingongroups.org](http://www.servingongroups.org))
		- Parents as Champions for School Health (3 full day sessions) offered in different underserved districts in different parts of the state several times a year
		- Public policy advocacy (full day or two half-day sessions) is available periodically throughout the year in multiple locations (builds on knowledge & skills development from SRP & Peer to Peer sessions)
	+ Information about “graduates” and interest(s) in serving in leadership roles (issues of interest, types of leadership opportunities parents are interested in pursuing, etc.) is maintained & easily accessible when leadership opportunities arise
	+ Ongoing development is made available for “graduates” via refresher courses, advanced training, connection to on-line resources, etc.
* The need for dual capacity building (i.e., preparing professionals to partner with parent leaders) is recognized, & relevant professional development occurs periodically

**Leadership Engagement**

* Culturally responsive pathways to leadership are provided
* Critical supports are provided:
	+ ***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, relationship with respected & trusted person who provides feedback & support, contact with other parents in leadership roles)
	+ ***Environmental*** (training, equality with service providers, and full inclusion in activities)
* Other critical components of leadership engagement:
	+ Multiple opportunities for participation, opportunities to take on leadership roles, however small, & safe settings to practice them
	+ 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, & have an impact
	+ Families do not experience retribution as a result of their participation
	+ Family participation is consciously & visibly appreciated

**“Leaderful” Organizations**

* Clear & compelling mission & vision “set the stage” for an organization that values parent leadership
	+ 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 plan provides 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:
	+ To what extent do your 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?
* Financial support 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?
* Staff & Board/advisory committee recruitment
	+ 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?