

Planning for a Parent Coalition

The following guide brings you through a series of steps to help you plan how to develop and recruit families for a parent coalition. The guide is broken into three sections: 1) identifying and maximizing benefits; 2) identifying contributions; and 3) identifying costs and supports to engagement.

IDENTIFYING AND MAXIMIZING BENEFITS

Individuals are more likely to join or be active when they believe their needs and desires will get met. Effective engagement efforts understand and promote the benefits of family involvement.

Communities are more successful at **RECRUITING FAMILIES** when they:

- Take the time to understand what families value, what they care about, and what experiences they hope to have.
- Share with families how local efforts, program/services will help them meet these desires or address these needs.

Communities are also more successful at **SUSTAINING** and **GROWING** family involvement when they work to ensure that families gain the benefits they desire from their involvement.

Researchers have found that participants often seek three types of benefits when they become engaged in a group or effort:

Personal Benefits

- Skills building, leadership opportunities, job opportunities

Social Benefits

- Meeting others with similar experiences, developing personal and professional networks

Pruposive Benefits

- Addressing issues that concern them

Below we describe how to understand and maximize the benefits families experience throughout your engagement efforts.

Assess Families' Needs and Aspirations

Use the below worksheet as you recruit families to identify their needs and aspirations and what benefits the family coalition would need to provide to meet these needs. You can also use it with families who are already engaged in the parent coalition. Refer to this information in the ongoing planning of the parent coalition's goals and activities. Think about how these activities can help meet families' desires and motivations.

General Benefits
Overall, if you were to join the parent coalition, what you want to get out of it?
Purposive Benefits
What are your dreams or aspirations for your family and kids? For this community?
If you would participate in the parent coalition, what would you want this effort to accomplish to feel like it was worth your time?
Social Benefits
Would you like the parent coalition to provide opportunities for families to socialize with each other?
For you to develop any other types of connections – such as professional, build friendships?
Any ideas about how to organize the parent coalition meetings to create those kinds of relationships/connections?

Practical Benefits

What skills or knowledge or information would you want to gain through your involvement in the parent coalition?

What are the best ways to help you develop these skills/knowledge? What works best for you?

How are you hoping to grow personally or professionally as a result of participating in the parent coalition?

What would need to happen for you to work towards this goal or goals?

Other

What are some other reasons why you would want to join the parent coalition? What are some other ways the parent coalition can help you achieve these goals?

IDENTIFYING CONTRIBUTIONS

Individuals are more likely to join or be active when they believe they have the skills and knowledge they need to participate, and that their involvement will make a difference. Effective engagement efforts understand and ensure families can effectively contribute.

Communities are more successful at **RECRUITING FAMILIES** when they:

- Help families see what skills and knowledge they have
- Highlight importance of their knowledge/skills base
- Explain opportunities for skill building

Communities are also more successful at **SUSTAINING** and **GROWING** family involvement when they:

- Continually assess how individuals would like to contribute and their satisfaction with current opportunities. Adjust these opportunities if necessary.
- Provide skill building, mentoring, and leadership opportunities
- Identify & tap into unique skills of members
- Provide diversity of roles and responsibilities for individuals to choose from

Key family contributions could include:

Skills

Knowledge of the community

Experience in the service delivery system

Knowledge of their children

Specific expertise

Below we describe how to understand and maximize the benefits families experience throughout your engagement efforts.

Assess Families' Contributions

Use this worksheet as you recruit families to help them identify and express what skills, knowledge, and expertise they bring - and what skills and knowledge they'd like to learn from others. You can also use it with families who are already engaged in the parent coalition. Refer to this information in the ongoing planning of the parent coalition's goals and activities. Think about how these activities can provide opportunities for families to contribute to the parent coalition.

Brainstorming Your Skills, Knowledge And Expertise.

People develop skills, knowledge and expertise not just through jobs and education but through *all* aspects of their life. Take a few minutes and brainstorm around the skills and knowledge you've acquired in your life.

Skills and knowledge I've gained through hobbies or personal interests

Skills and knowledge I've gained through my roles (as parent, volunteer, etc.)

Skills and knowledge I've gained through "walking in my shoes"

Skills and knowledge I've gained through education or employment

IDENTIFYING COSTS AND SUPPORTS TO ENGAGEMENT

Individuals are more likely to join or be active when they face fewer obstacles to participation. Effective engagement efforts identify potential obstacles to family engagement and take efforts to remove them.

Communities are more successful at **RECRUITING FAMILIES** when they:

- Listen to families concerns and obstacles to participating
- Describe how supports and strategies will be designed to meet their needs
- Engage families in identifying supports and strategies that could be useful

Communities are also more successful at **SUSTAINING** and **GROWING** family involvement when they:

- Regularly assess barriers families are experiencing
- Assess success and fit of strategies and supports and redesign if needed
- Develop natural support systems and linkages across participants and members
- Meet families in their space, on their time, in their ways

Common obstacles to family engagement include:

Work demands

Meeting time conflicts with other obligations

Lack of child care/transportation

Lack of family/peer support

Financial cost of participation

Below we describe how to understand and maximize the benefits families experience throughout your engagement efforts.

Assess Families' Costs and Supports to Engagement

Use this worksheet as you recruit families to help them identify and express what barriers get in the way of their participation and what supports are needed to help them actively participate. You can also use it with families who are already engaged in the coalition. Refer to this information in the ongoing planning of the parent coalition's goals and activities.

To what extent is each of the following an issue or barrier for your participation in the family coalition?

	Never a barrier for me	Sometimes a barrier for me	Usually a barrier for me	Always a barrier for me
Transportation to and from meetings or events	0	1	2	3
The need for child care or respite care while I attend meetings or events	0	1	2	3
The financial costs of attending meetings or events	0	1	2	3
The time that attending meetings or events takes away from my job	0	1	2	3
The time that attending meetings or events takes away from my family or other interests	0	1	2	3
Scheduling conflicts with my other meetings and responsibilities	0	1	2	3
The location of meetings or events, or the accessibility of the space where meetings or events are held	0	1	2	3
Meetings or events are held in a language that is not my native tongue	0	1	2	3
Meeting or event handouts and written reports are inaccessible to me	0	1	2	3
The meeting or event setting is awkward or uncomfortable	0	1	2	3
It is difficult for me to express my ideas or opinions in the meeting or event environment	0	1	2	3

Are there other barriers that get in the way of your participation in the family coalition?
What are they?

What supports could we help identify or provide that would help you overcome these barriers to participation?

What would help you to be an active participant in the family coalition?

Adapted from Collaborative Capacity Inventory and Worksheet materials by Shelby Berkowitz & Pennie Foster-Fishman, Michigan State University

DEVELOPING A RECRUITMENT PLAN

Use this worksheet to make a concrete action plan to help you plan out specific recruitment strategies to connect with new stakeholders

Strategy	✓ (If you would like to use this strategy)	Action Steps When should we do this? Which groups should we target? How should we get this done?	Who will take these steps? Which members will be responsible?
Present at meetings of other organizations or groups			
Hold community conversations			
Visit neighborhood activities			
Hold social event (e.g. block party, luncheon, kickoff)			
Advertise in the community			
Use social media			
Have a local newspaper write a feature about your efforts			

Conduct one-on-one conversations in a targeted neighborhood			
Ask staff who meet regularly with families to talk about engagement opportunities with the families they serve			
Others			

Adapted from the Collaborative Capacity Worksheet by Shelby Berkowitz & Pennie Foster-Fishman, Michigan State University

Scripting Your “Sales Pitch”

Use this worksheet to help you “sell” the family coalition to potential members by using multiple reasons for joining.

- Make a copy of this worksheet and complete it for every person you are planning to recruit. Remember - every person is unique. Although parts of your sales pitch might be the same across recruits, you want to tailor your presentation to each person’s motivations and desires.
- Pay close attention to how they respond
- Don’t worry about making all of your points in the order listed – let the conversation flow naturally.

Name of Potential Recruit:	Phone # Email
Benefits	
1. We’d really like YOU to participate in the family coalition. Let me tell you a little bit more about the coalition...	Describe the major goals of the family coalition. Highlight those that most connect with the interests/needs of this recruit:
2. Joining the family coalition is a great way to help make our community a better place for children and their families...	In the conversation, ask them: What issues are <i>you</i> most concerned about in the lives of local children and families? Talk to them about how they could work on those issues with the family coalition, and what the effort is doing that could promote those goals.
3. I think that you and your family might find some benefit in joining the family coalition.	Personal benefits you think they could gain: Family benefits you think they could gain:

Contributions	
4. We would love you to participate because...	Identify the skills and expertise you think they could bring: Did someone recommend them? Mention who:
5. The family coalition is also a great way to connect with other families and organizations in the community.	Individuals or organizations you think they would want to have contact with:
Costs	
6. What concerns do you have about participating? What supports would you need to participate?	Identify ways in which families are supported (and barriers to participation are removed) in the family coalition.
Next Steps	
7. Depending on their response above, you can encourage them to participate.	Describe specific ways they can get involved, and the next steps they can take right away

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