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Section 3:
Marketing and
Recruiting

Marketing and Recruiting

Family and youth participation begins with identifying the right people to bring to the table to represent the important issues that a board is tackling. In addition, clarification for new members on the obligation of the board is crucial in assuring a good match between participants and mission. To recruit families and youth to participate on the board, a few first steps include:

1. Identifying the issues and/or population that need to be represented on the board;
2. Developing marketing materials that clearly define the board's purpose, the vacant position on the board and expectations for membership as well as the qualifications of a potential family or youth representative;
3. Including the availability of compensation and reimbursement, locations of meetings, timing of meetings, and other relevant information in the marketing materials;
4. Identifying venues where families and youth with the desired backgrounds can be accessed; and
5. Disseminating the marketing materials and an application in the identified venues.

Each step takes time and may include developing new materials for the board. Issues for a board to consider, content for marketing materials and applications, and example materials are included below.

Identifying the Perspectives to Recruit

There are many ways to define the population whose perspectives you wish to recruit. For example, you could seek a family member or youth with:

- Specific types of needs, such as substance abuse services or housing services;
- Experience in specific systems, such as juvenile justice, mental health, and TANF;
- Experience with service systems at a specific age, such as early childhood, transition age, or older adults;
- Experience with specific types of services or service delivery models, such as restorative justice or systems of care;

- Experience with specific agencies, such as the Division of Youth Corrections or a county child welfare department;
- Experience receiving services in a specific geographic area, such as the state, a county, or a school district;
- Specific demographic characteristics, such as a specific race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status; and
- Specific prior experience or training in family and youth advocacy, leadership, or board participation.

A board seeking to develop family and youth participation will want to consider what perspectives are most relevant to the mission of the board, the typical discussions and decisions made by the board, and the future goals and activities of the board.

Boards need to be realistic about the perspectives they can expect to have represented on their boards. If the desired perspective is too narrowly defined, it may be very difficult to recruit participants. If the desired perspective requires experiences that are heavily stigmatized, it may be difficult to recruit participants willing to disclose their qualification to represent the perspective.

Marketing Materials and Applications

After identifying the perspectives most relevant to the board's mission and activities, the next step is to create and disseminate marketing materials and an application form or process. Marketing materials could include:

- The board's name, mission, and other descriptive information about its activities;
- A job description, duties and qualification for the family or youth representative. This where the information about the perspective the board is seeking can be included;
- Information about where, when, and how frequently the board meets, so families and youth can determine if they are available for the meetings; and
- Information about consultation fees or reimbursement for mileage, child care, or other costs associated with participating on the board.

The application form or process can be a paper or electronic form submitted to a key contact on the board or a phone call interview with the contact on the board. The application process could include:

- Questions about the perspective that the family member or youth can represent;
- Questions about the experience of the family member or youth with participation in similar venues. Lack of experience as participants on boards is not a disqualifier, but it can be helpful when considering what orientation process will be needed;
- Collection of demographic information if relevant to the perspectives desired, including what city the family member or youth lives in or has recently lived in and their race, ethnicity, gender, etc.;
- Questions about their availability to participate in the meetings as currently scheduled; and
- A question on their preferred method of communication (telephone, email, or snail mail).

Depending on the advertisement strategy, the marketing materials and application may need to be hard copies, online documents, or both. Regardless, formatting them to be clear, concise, and easy to read can help increase the number of potential family and youth participants who will read the documents and apply for the position on the board. Flexibility in application completion is important, since everyone does not have access or familiarity with computers and recognition that English may not be a candidate's first language.

Advertising Venues and Strategies

When advertising for family and youth participants, the first step is to identify what venues, existing information dissemination tools, and individuals or organizations have access to families and youth who represent the perspectives the board has identified as important. Venues may include:

- Service delivery centers, such as local health clinics or mental health centers;
- Support groups related to the perspective that the board has identified;
- Drop in centers or other gathering places that cater to individuals with the perspective the board has identified; and
- Local grocery stores, laundry mats, churches, and recreation centers in geographic areas relevant to the perspective the board has identified.

Information dissemination tools may include:

- Neighborhood and minority newspapers;
- Family or youth support group newsletters;
- School and church newsletters for families or youth;
- Local radio and TV stations; and
- Community list-serve sites for parents/consumers.

Individuals and organizations with have access to families and youth may include:

- Family, consumer, or youth advocacy organizations;
- Family, consumer, or youth leadership academies;
- Other boards with active family, consumer, or youth involvement; and
- Board members individual contacts who they believe can help advertise through word of mouth.

Personal outreach is highly encouraged and can be very useful when recruiting families and youth. Asking direct care providers to talk with their clients about the opportunity or presenting the opportunity to participants in a focus group or individuals at a drop in center are all ways of personally engaging potential applicants for the position on the board.

If the board already knows of individuals interested in participating, it is a good idea for a board member to make a personal outreach to the person, such as meeting them in the community informally to discuss the job expectations, time commitment and share interests and motivations for participating.

By far the best way to engage families is personally. Your personal outreach and effort to meet with families at their gathering places, describe the need, and recruit for your board will be most productive.

Recruiting from Underserved Populations

Many boards make decisions on issues that directly and sometimes disproportionately have an impact on consumers from diverse backgrounds. Such boards may wish to recruit family and youth participation from underserved populations to increase their ability to make decisions that reflect the unique experiences of the consumers in their service delivery systems.

Underserved populations may include:

- Ethic or cultural minority groups;
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender populations;
- Rural consumers; and
- Transition age youth.

Opportunities to reach out to diverse populations:

- Partner with community leaders to recruit through trusted channels in diverse communities.
- Religious organizations;
- Neighborhood and community groups;
- Resource centers; and
- Service providers who specialize in meeting the needs of diverse populations may also be able to help recruit families and youth.

Suggestions and considerations:

- Advertise in languages other than English;
- Use You Tube, My Space and other social networking entities
- Provide for translation services (for meetings and materials) for recruited non-English speakers;
- Establish an advisory team of diverse consumers to provide guidance and participation on issues affecting diverse populations;
- Make efforts to meet in locations other than traditional service sites to minimize any potential location stigma on part of the participants; and
- Stress any effort to minimize tokenism by encouraging a partnership or more than one consumer on the board.

Materials and Examples

- ✓ Example Board Perspectives Checklist
- ✓ Example Recruitment Flyer
- ✓ Example Recruitment Letter
- ✓ Example Family and Youth Board Member Application

Please note: The resources provided in this workbook are in no way exhaustive.