



Conclusion

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The LINKS Family and Youth Involvement leadership team and local experts have contributed to, revised, reviewed, and thoroughly vetted this workbook to guide committees, boards, and other work groups to be able to adapt policies and procedures to create and sustain family and youth board members.

Family members say the culture often does not seem friendly and that it is hard to know all the jargon. Professionals find it difficult to keep and/or engage family members and youth, or they see the same family members and youth on each board.

This workbook is applicable for:

- Any youth and family service system;
- The public sector;
- The private sector; and
- All government sectors.

The tools and other resources in this workbook will improve your board's ability to establish a board culture of inclusion and policies to back it up.

In her primer *Building Systems of Care*, Sheila Pires says that the primer is "intended to be modified as knowledge grows and as new players join the system building effort." This sense of humility and openness to learning is an ideal approach with which to enhance the developing skill set of Colorado stakeholders working to improve partnerships with youth and families. Colorado has made significant gains in this area to date.

At the 2008 LINKS BIG Meeting, the national speaker, Dr. Janice Cooper, with the *National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University*, said that states across the country are grappling with ways to effectively partner with families and youth.

Colorado's Judge KJ Moore, with the *1st Judicial District*, and other Colorado speakers, addressed the need to improve our partnerships with families. Judge Moore described the benefits she has seen in her courtroom when families and youth are able to effectively partner with system professionals.

The LINKS BIG Meetings engage over 100 state, local, non-profit, private, and family and youth stakeholders in a full-day conversation that includes learning about state policy and brainstorming solutions to barriers. This year, representatives of the Colorado Judicial, Executive, and Legislative branches, local leaders, system employees, families and youth, and family advocates addressed the subject of sustaining integration. Meeting participants recognized an improvement in our partnership abilities; however, barriers to family and youth involvement noted were:

- Lack of access to the information professionals receive;
- Lack of support, as the token family member;
- Resistance from board members to including families and youth;
- Lack of board strategies for actively engaging new families in conversations that have been going on for a long time; and
- Lack of flexibility in board meeting times and locations.

Families and professionals have champions who have brought Colorado to the forefront in family and youth inclusion in the development of policies that affect them. But there is more work to be done, and the “usual suspects” cannot do this alone. Now is the time to help your board take a lead, involve families and youth, and create the best policies for them that you can. Be that leader.

This workbook is your board’s toolkit. With it, you can:

- USE the tips to change your bi-laws and institutionalize new family and youth inclusion policies;
- TRY the strategies to recruit local family members;
- CREATE a mentor program;
- CONTACT the resources listed for training and consultation;
- UTILIZE the references found in each chapter for increased learning; and
- ADAPT the tools and create orientation materials for new members.

The professionals, families, and youth who worked on this workbook strongly encourage you to recruit, sustain, and support youth and family on your board.

This workbook is set up for your board to charge ahead, regardless of your level of readiness and need.

Ready...

Set...

Get going already!

“... Youth didn’t have a way to give input, especially those who couldn’t vote. So, it’s important because now there’s a way to get our voice out there on the issues and policies affecting us. It just makes sense.”
Laura Nass, 18, Durango Colorado

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Lazear, 2004

Study conducted by Shepherd Zeldin, Annette Mc Daniel, Dimitri Topitzes & Mary Beth Lorens, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Lorenzen, 2006

National Institutes of Health, 2007

Additional Resources

Congratulations you're a Leader: Youth Leader's Guide Book. Bridging the Gap

Family Support Through Family Advocacy 101 Training Manual. (1996). Bone Deep, Colorado

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) website, University of Wisconsin: Milwaukee.

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