

Discussion Guide for Family Involvement

In the Introduction of the Family and Youth Involvement Workbook, it is noted that families applying for positions on your board will come with various experiences. Similarly, your board members are likely to have mixed reactions to the idea of inviting former consumers or parents of consumers to be voting members of the board.

Discussion Starters

1. If your board is in “pre-implementation mode” and wants to move the idea of family involvement from conversation to reality, you might refer to the “Common Misconceptions about Family and Youth Involvement” chart in the introduction of this workbook as a place to begin a discussion. You might review the Common Misconceptions chart, and then ask board members to raise and discuss any *other* questions and concerns about inviting family members and/or youth to join the board. Examples might include:

- Questions about HIPAA and privacy rules.
- Impact on growing the board by adding new members.
- What value does this board place on the availability of first hand experience gained by such representation?
- How do you find family members with interest and skills to invest?

Based on these discussions, you may identify areas where you need more information. Resources for these next steps can be found in the various sections in this workbook. Use it to cultivate new skills, identify needed resources, and create forward movement.

2. If your board is near to implementation, the Board Self-Assessment on Family and Youth Involvement (Introduction attachment) will guide discussion on next steps. The assessment questions are prompts for follow-up discussions, and the last page of the assessment can pinpoint sections of the workbook that will be of particular interest to your board. The board self-assessment can be conducted at a board meeting after all board members have agreed to take it. In raising the idea of doing the assessment, you can remind board members that:
- Participants may remain anonymous;
 - Results can be collected and assessed for individual and group preferences;
 - Results should be discussed openly with your board at a regular meeting or retreat. Making time in the agenda will ensure that the discussion occurs. Having the open discussion will create greater familiarity with the issue and help break down barriers or concerns other members may share;
 - The tool will provide a sense of where your board’s greatest opportunities for improvement may lie; and
 - The workbook will provide the additional information, skill building, and tools your board needs to bring the issue to action.
3. If your board is in implementation mode, the “Board Member Satisfaction Survey” (Section 8 Attachment) provides prompts for discussion among board members on how well your board is involving families and youth. The evaluation questions are intended to measure all board members’ perceptions of how well the inclusion of family and youth is working.

It is important to remember everyone has a role in problem solving. Family and youth partners should not necessarily have to propose the answers or be held accountable to make needed changes. In addition, open discussion is important for transparency in general, and needs to be approached with a problem solving attitude, as in “we’re all in this together.”