

Family Involvement on Teams

Families come to Transition Teams with a variety of unique skills and experiences. Their perspective and input can prove invaluable in the work of a team. It is important to utilize their perspective appropriately and consider their unique backgrounds.

Orientation

When families and new members join teams it may be appropriate to provide an opportunity for some orientation to the team to support their integration into it. Orientation can take place prior to or shortly after a family's first participation in a team meeting and can be facilitated by any veteran member of the team. If other parents are currently serving on teams this may provide an opportunity to create mentoring relationships; alternatively, a team member with a pre-existing relationship with the family might support the orientation to the team.

Orientation may include:

- A overview of team structure and logistics including binders, past minutes and meeting schedules
- Information on current plans and work projects of the team
- Introductions and explanations as to the professional roles that team members hold and how they relate to the work of the transition team

On Going Support

The team member who assists the family in orientating to the work of the team may take the lead in offering ongoing support to the family. However, all team members will have a role in this support

Ongoing support may include:

- Willingness to answer family questions both within team meeting and outside
- Commitment to involve families in subcommittees or other work of team
- Commitment to ensure that language and jargon used in meeting and other team communication is universally known

Family Members as Decision Makers

The work and efforts of Transition Teams are ultimately focused on ensuring the children and families experience smooth, successful transitions. The family voice on teams can be one of the greatest assets in maintaining this focus. It is vital that all members of teams feel valued as key decision makers. Professional titles and responsibilities, while important connections to our work on teams, can not override the need of all stakeholders in decision making. It is vital that teams continually assess that their work and actions represent the needs of the communities we are serving. When any team member is less active or involved it may be helpful to consider various strategies to support their role:

- Increase the representation of families bringing a variety of families perspectives can only strengthen the work of teams
- Use facilitation and idea generating that is anonymous and provides equal value to all ideas and perspectives