

Growing and Engaging Parent Group Membership



1. Create and Sustain Relationships

- Be accessible when support is needed, i.e. new placement, a crisis, stressful evening, runaway, school behavior reports etc.
- Phone, email, or snail mail each family at least one time per month (one family per day will cover 30 families per month)
- Create a “Warm Line”
- Post “Warm Line” number on all flyers, business cards, emails
- Promptly send out “Thank You Notes” via email after meetings
- Be considerate of a family’s need to have time and space to themselves following a crisis, placement or adoption (Don’t take distance personally)
- Recognize a family’s need to have more intensive one on one time than the group allows and offer to meet them separately (avoid one person monopolizing the group time)

2. Focus Topics

- Survey families to find focus group
- Listen for concerns i.e. children’s behaviors, parent stress, advocacy skills, need for respite, departmental policy information etc.

3. Empower Parents

- Training opportunities i.e. conferences, agency in-services, guest speakers, college and local workshops, online foster/adoption trainings
- Pre-plan and if possible attend team and school meetings to model foster/adoption/kinship competent advocacy skills
- Don’t treat parents as if they were troubled dysfunctional families (Before a difficult placement they were capable and they will be again with the right tools in their parenting toolbox)
- Provide up to date foster/adoption/kinship information from a variety of sources at each meeting i.e. www.NYSCCC.org, www.NACAC.org and Fostering Families Today magazine
- Ask parents to share with snacks, stories, resources and information

4. Discover Group Friendly Meeting Sites and Times

- Be flexible and creative with time and place i.e. state parks, local zoo, public beach, local fire hall, schools, churches, corporate store meeting rooms, non-profit agency meeting rooms, family homes
- Consider meeting site needs of all group members, especially rural families
- Consider telephone conferencing if distance, childcare or weather are issues

5. Create Eye Catching Advertisement

- Produce flyers and distribute to mental health clinics, private practice therapists, child serving agencies, schools, churches, team meetings, CSE meetings
- Distribute to foster/adoptive/kinship families via email or hard copy

6. RELAX & LAUGH OFTEN

“A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead

