Building a Family Advocate Network

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Today’s Discussion Roadmap

• Role & value of family advocates & networks

• Key network principles

• Building & maintaining a network

• Network examples

• Real world network realities

• Resources
Key Network Principles

- Collaborative partnership
- Family advocate-centered
- Inclusive

- Mutual trust
- Respect for diverse opinions and cultures
Family Advocates and Networks

The Role of Advocates

• **Compass** - Act as a guide for what is important and direct what needs to be done

• **Engines of Change** – Identify the issues, solutions, and course of action

• **Constituents** - Can connect with policymakers in ways that we cannot

• **Human Capital** – Recruit, motivate, and mobilize as well as support and mentor one another

• **Ensure Accountability** - Hold us and policymakers accountable

The Value of Networks

• **Bring Stories to Life** - Family stories help policymakers to visualize community issues

• **Energize Communities** - Diverse experiences spark enthusiasm

• **Create Sustainable Solutions** - Offer creative and practical solutions that will endure

• **Raise Awareness** – Share unified messages throughout the community about targeted issues

• **Ready to Mobilize** – Unified group of reliable advocates that are prepared to take action

• **Strength in Numbers** – Apply pressure where it counts.
Network Process

1. Create Awareness

2. Engage

3. Activate
Create Awareness

- Be intentional in your approach
- Employ grassroots & grass-tops advocacy
- Use a snowball recruitment strategy
  - Leverage other agencies
  - Family-to-family
The Snowball Effect
Create Awareness

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Strategies

✓ Community outreach

✓ Identify family leader standouts during events w/families

✓ Bolster family knowledge through committee service
Engage

- Equip advocates to share story with legislators, news outlets & other advocates
- Schedule regular communications
- Encourage family leadership
- Focus on relational connections

Strategies

- Host periodic in-person meetings
- Build opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement
- Initiate personal reach outs to less-engaged advocates
- Celebrate successes
Activate

• Perfect the elevator pitch (Problem – Opportunity - Solution)
• Equip advocates with research and data points
• Find and create opportunities to connect advocates with decision makers

Strategies

✔ Develop & use: e-Alert system, fact sheets, advocate profiles, 1-pagers
✔ Host a Statehouse early learning day
✔ Assist with testimony preparation
✔ Leverage media and digital platforms
Case Example: Kansas

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Create Awareness</th>
<th>Engage</th>
<th>Activate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Outreach in places families frequent</td>
<td>• Parents appointed to BOD</td>
<td>• Testimony letter templates offered</td>
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<td>• Families engaged in a statewide early learning</td>
<td>• Families connected with other State agencies &amp; leaders</td>
<td>• Key point messaging developed for families to use &amp; share</td>
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<td>committee/advisory group</td>
<td>• Family-driven efforts for advocacy supported</td>
<td>• Easy input alternatives invoked: letter sign-on strategy</td>
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<td>• Peer-to-peer engagement via a social media-based group or group chat</td>
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Network Realities

- Building & maintaining a family advocate network is anything BUT easy
- Agency resources may be limited
- Agency turnover may be a barrier
- Families may have limited time for involvement/engagement
- Success is built on:
  - Tuning-in to families
  - Doing with, not for families
  - Supporting family causes
National Examples of Activation

Child Care Works Action Center: https://childcareworks.org/take-action/

Baby’s First Town Hall: https://childcareworks.org/about-us/babys-first-town-hall/

Family Voices: https://info.childcareaware.org/blog/tag/family-community-engagement
Discussion & Closing

What strategies do you look forward to trying? How can CCAoA support your efforts to build a Family Advocacy Network?

Thank you

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