

Together, We Can Move Mountains



Parents as Leaders in Improving Systems
for Children & Families

Making Change



- Do we care enough to do something about it?

Making Change



- Effective strategies:
 - Ongoing:
 - Planning
 - Implementation
 - Evaluation
 - Revision of plan
- Persistent focus on key systems & central issues
- Understand specific changes needed

Making Change

Persistence, people, creativity, hands-on knowledge, emotional pull



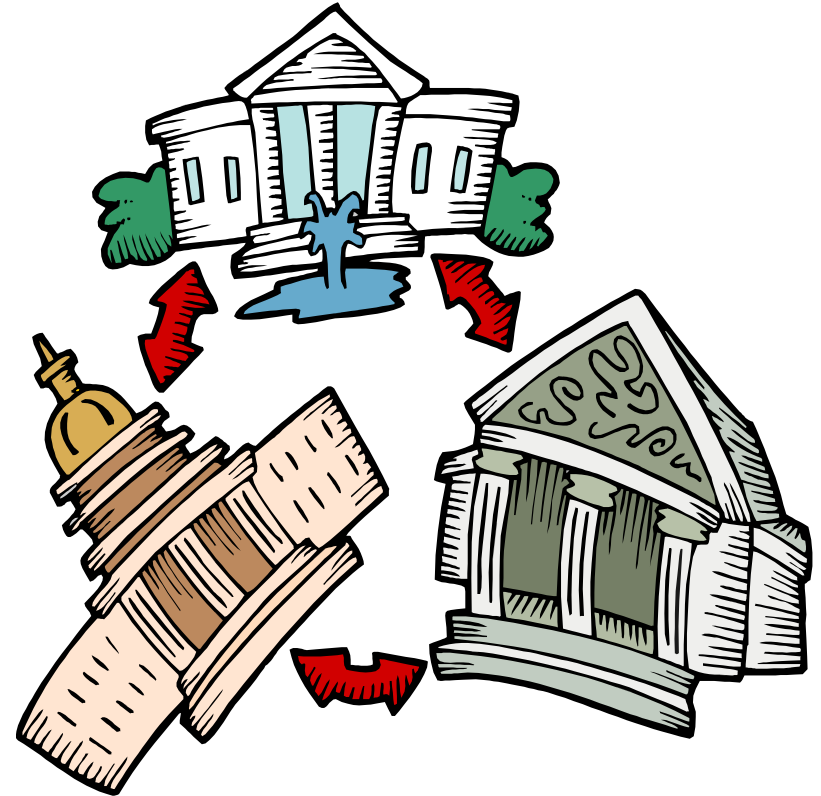
Experiences as a Parent Leader

- Discuss a positive & negative experience you have had as a parent leader in trying to improve services &/or systems



What is Systems Change

Making positive changes by changing laws, policies, procedures, & attitudes that impact many children & families



Public Policy Advocacy for Social Change

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed [people] can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



What do they mean?

- Brainstorm what each of these words means:
 - “Involvement”
 - “Advocacy”
 - “Leadership”
 - “Empowerment”
- Are there differences/similarities based on your perspective?

What is Parent Leadership?



- Speaking, writing, or acting in support of a cause
- Using a variety of organized tactics to achieve a public policy goal
- Demanding a change to benefit the lives of many

Social Justice Advocacy



- Challenging power
- Assuming risks
- Telling stories
- Involving those affected
- Offering alternatives
- Principles vs. compromise
- Balancing the scales of justice and equity
- Holding ourselves accountable

Leaders & Agents for Change



- Advocate on an individual basis
- Act as a catalyst for new ideas
- Think about how systems fit together
- Help others understand how change happens
- Coordinate activities aimed at making change
- Help others work as a team
- Facilitate info sharing with decision-makers

Engaging Families

- Involve those most affected
- Reflect the society we are working for
- Draw strength from/ be accountable to
- Gain access & voice
- Model collaboration
- Hold selves to high standards



How Change Happens

“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will.”



-Frederick Douglas

Stages of Change



- Denial of the need for change
- Resistance to change
- Exploration of the change
- Managing the change
- Collaboration
- Compromise
- Maintaining momentum

Strategic Plan Process



- Broad involvement of stakeholders
- Honesty & trust
- Long-term as well as short-term thinking
- Consideration of various processes
- Facilitation if needed

Strategic Plan Format



- What do we want?
- Who can deliver it?
 - Audiences
 - Formal targets
- What do they need to hear?
 - Self interest
 - Public interest
- Who do they need to hear it from?
 - Expert voices
 - Authentic voices

Strategic Plan Format

- How do we get them to hear it?
 - Persuasion
 - Pressure
- What do we have to build on?
 - Leadership
 - Supporters
 - Information
 - Resources
 - Tools
 - Access
 - Messages



Strategic Plan Format



- What do we need to develop?
- How do we begin?
 - Small enough to achieve
 - Big enough to matter
- How do we know it's working?
 - Engagement
 - Policy changes
- Where do we go from here?

Getting & Keeping Involvement

- We believe the issue is important to us and our family/community
- We believe we have something to contribute
- We believe that we will be listened to and our contributions respected
- We believe that our participation will make a difference



Opportunities to Participate

- Tell story verbally to an advocate & give permission to share
- Tell story verbally within a small group (focus group)
- Tell story verbally to policymakers (at public hearing, meeting with monitors, at school or district forum, etc.)



Participation Opportunities

- Share story in writing through:
 - Letter to the state
 - Letter to the editor
 - Letter to the monitors
 - Letter to an advocate with permission to disclose



Reaching Families

- Go to where parents go
- Use media families read/see
- Disseminate info through mediating institutions
- Speak at forums



Mobilization

- Moving from spectators to participants
- Turning opinions into actions
 - Making a phone call
 - Sending a fax or e-mail
 - Writing a letter
 - Visiting a policymaker
 - Demonstration, march, sit-in
- Being culturally competent



Building New Leadership

- Nurture it
- Have a plan to:
 - Identify potential leaders
 - Build capacity
- Allow mistakes
- Make the space
- Provide support
- Listen, respond



Key Leadership Qualities

- Challenge the process
- Inspire shared vision
- Enable others to act
- Model the way
- Encourage the heart



Key Leadership Qualities

- Communicators
- Team players
- Problem solvers
- Self Aware



Leaders Know Themselves



- Who am I?
- What am I doing here
- What are my:
 - Goals, purposes
 - Expectations
 - Motivations?
- What strengths & challenges do I bring?
- How can I best use my leadership skills?
- How can I make space for others?

Leadership Development

- Individual advocacy



- Peer advocacy



- Public policy advocacy



Advocacy Leadership Knowledge



- Laws & regulations
- How institutions work
- Key decision-makers
- Formal & informal decision-making
- Facts; current status
- Barriers & solutions
- Qualities of effective systems
- Existing resources

Moving Forward

- Individual & organizational self-assessment
- Developing an Action Plan
- Who can help?



Democracy is *not* a spectator sport!



- Empowering families to participate in advocacy for our children, our community, the larger society, is its own victory, regardless of the specific outcome of any particular effort.

A circle of hands will receive us...

