

Volunteer!

Parental Involvement: The Key to Your Organization's Success

Successful organizations that serve families know the importance of strong parent involvement within their agency. The best way to engage parents is to make them feel welcome. Take a look around. When parents walk in do they feel comfortable?

Parents must also feel respected and connected. Clear communication is key. Are parents kept informed about important issues and activities? Do they feel their input is valued? Are parent leadership opportunities provided?

Here are some steps to take to make sure your organization is perceived as being parent-friendly:

- ***Develop positive relationships.***
- ***Create a family-friendly atmosphere.***
- ***Provide opportunities for volunteering.***
- ***Respect their time.***
- ***Remove obstacles to participation that involve money.***
- ***Ensure parents with disabilities can participate in meetings and other activities.***
- ***Connect parents to community resources outside your organization if needed.***
- ***Develop parent leadership opportunities. Share leadership with parents.***
- ***Learn and respect cultural differences.***
- ***Listen to the “parent voice,” as that person may be an expert on what help families need most.***

Involved parents, especially those in leadership roles within their home and the community, can help improve programs and services by offering fresh perspectives. Parents can increase the visibility of an organization and a community's respect for it. Remember, organizations that embrace parents as leaders and partners may better meet the needs of families, and in doing so may prevent the abuse and neglect of children.

