

Discovering Your Family's Strengths: A Five-Part Webinar Series



PART 3

Enriching Families' Community Connections

A Two-Way Street

THE AMERICAN Family Assets STUDY

- 1,511 families
 - One parenting adult
 - One 10 – 15 year old
- Oversampled
 - African Americans
 - Latino/Latina
 - Asian Americans
- Weighed to U. S. Census



Syvertsen, A. K., Roehlkepartain, E. C., & Scales, P. C. (2012). *The American family assets study*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute. Download from: www.search-institute.org/research/family-strengths



Key Findings from the Study

- 21 family strengths (Family Assets) identified
- Average family scores 47 out of 100 on an overall Family Assets Index
- Overall levels of family assets vary little, if at all, across different types of families
- Family assets are associated with a range of measures of youth and family well-being

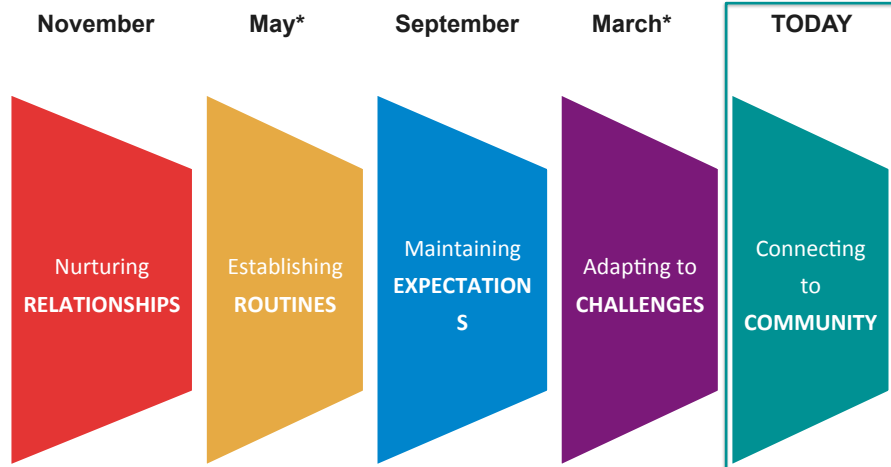
OVERVIEW PRESENTATIONS

- www.parentfurther.com/webinars/family-assets
- disneydiscovertogether.com



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Family Assets Webinar Series



* Archive: www.parentfurther.com/webinars/family-strengths



Session Overview



- Why Connect?
- Current Patterns
- Barriers & Challenges
- Reframing the Opportunity
- Starting Points for Action



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Why Connect Families and Communities?



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POLL: As a Parent

Why is it important for your family to connect the people/organizations of your community?

- a. It makes our family better
- b. We can access activities and services
- c. Expose kids to different ideas, people
- d. We want to make a difference for others
- e. Other (please write your thoughts in the chat box)

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POLL: As a Family Ally

Why is it important for your organization to connect with families?

- a. A requirement of the funder or program
- b. Get more support or volunteers
- c. Improve young people's outcomes
- d. Strengthen families
- e. Other (please write your thoughts in the chat box)

* **Family Allies**—Includes family-serving professionals, parent educators, parent involvement coordinators, and others who work with or advocate for families.

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Why Connect: Families' Perspectives

- Friendship and support
- Access opportunities, support
- Live out values and priorities
- Help their kids
- Protect your family
- Make the community a better place

It contributes to your family's strength and resilience



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Why Connect: Organizations' Perspectives

What happens in families is consistently a powerful factor in youth learning, well-being, and development.

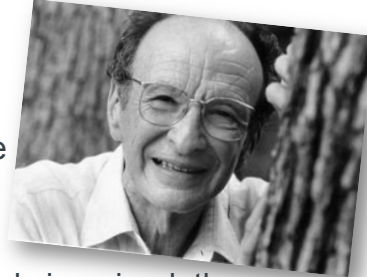
For Better: Families Offer	For Worse: Families Undermine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm, caring relationships • Deep, mutual affection, care • Predictable routines, rituals • Consistent expectations • Strong networks of support in the community • Sustain commitment to each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse and neglect • Dysfunctional relationships • Family conflict • Substance abuse • Harsh, inflexible, inconsistent discipline • Chaotic, unpredictable



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Family & Community: Mutual Interest

“It is the family that determines our capacity to function effectively and to profit from later experiences in the other contexts in which human beings live and grow. . . . To a far greater extent than we have previously imagined, the capacity of a family to function effectively, to create and sustain competent and compassionate human beings, depends on the support of other, larger contexts.”



— Urie Bronfenbrenner

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Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

ParentFurther
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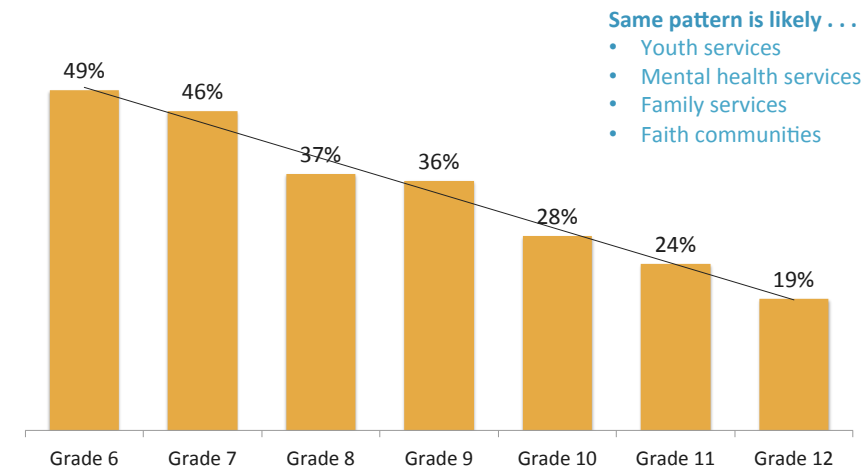
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Current Patterns of Family-Community Connections



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Parent Involvement in School



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A Fragile Foundation, 2011

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“Social Poverty” and Isolation

“Social poverty—social isolation and a lack of easy access to help—had become rampant, regardless of families’ socioeconomic status. To a large extent, help had become a commodity that people buy, not what they do.”

— Gary Melton (2010)

Adding to the Challenge

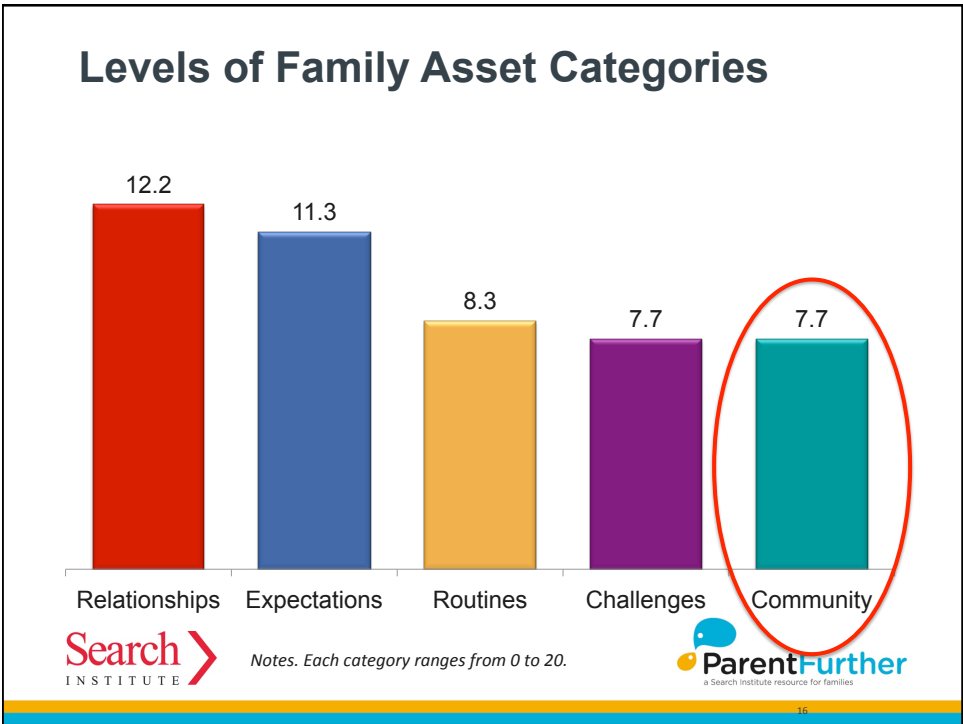
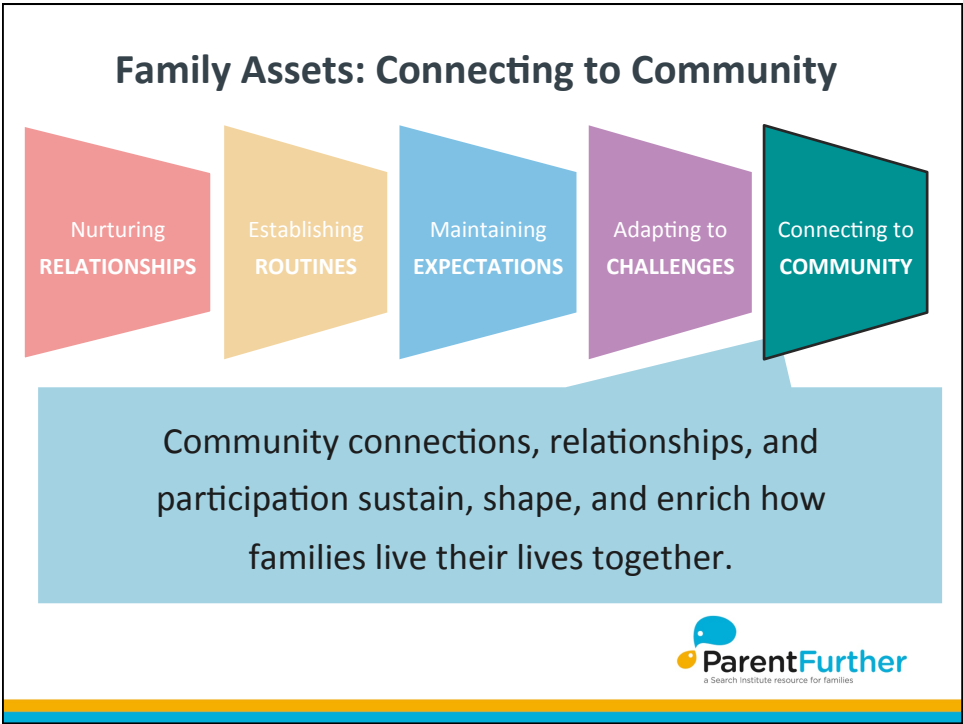
- Low-income single mothers tend to have weaker social networks.
- Those with the weakest social networks are the least likely to seek professional help.

—Attree, 2005

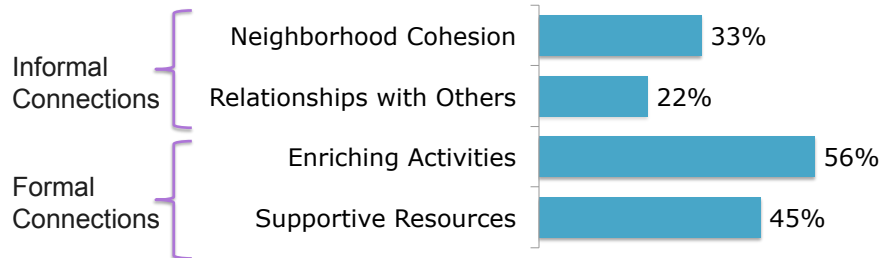
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Connecting to Community



PLUS: Civic Contributions of Family



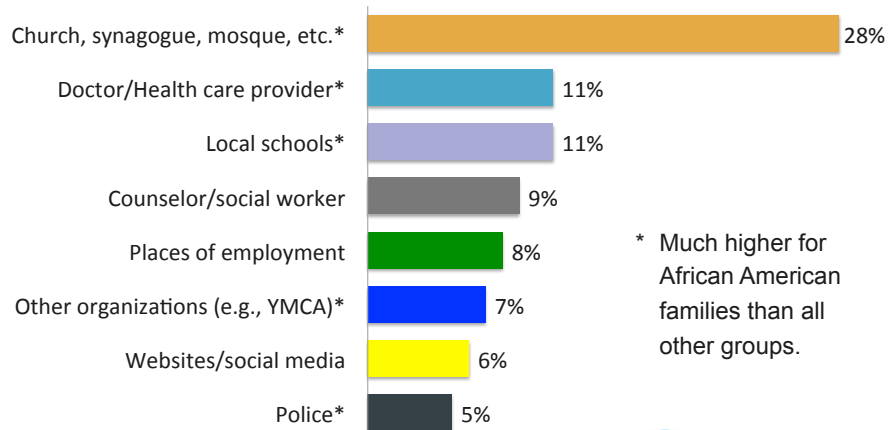
Enriching Activities

At least 1 hour/week	Parenting Adults	Youth
Recreational clubs, teams, organizations	38%	59%
Performing, practicing art, music, drama	24%	49%
Programs, activities in a spiritual/religious place	51%	56%



Supportive Resources

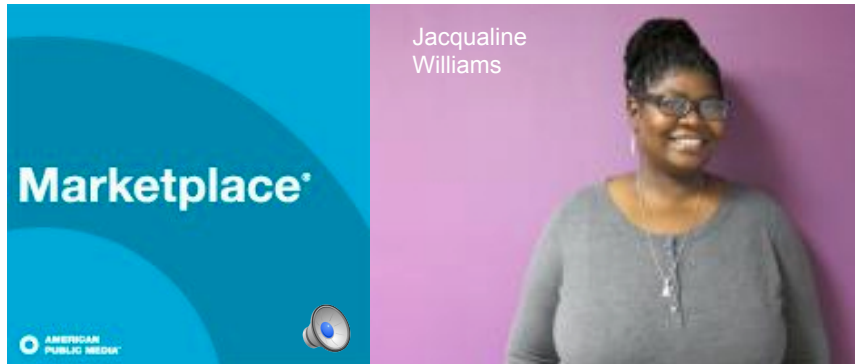
Has helped "a lot" strengthening family



Neighborhood Cohesion

Mostly/Completely True	Parenting Adults	Youth
Good friends in neighborhood	51%	56%
Good friends who support parent	73%	—
Neighbors look out for kids	55%	49%
Parent looks out for other kids	79%	—
Parent knows my friends' parents	—	69%
Neighbors care about me	—	55%

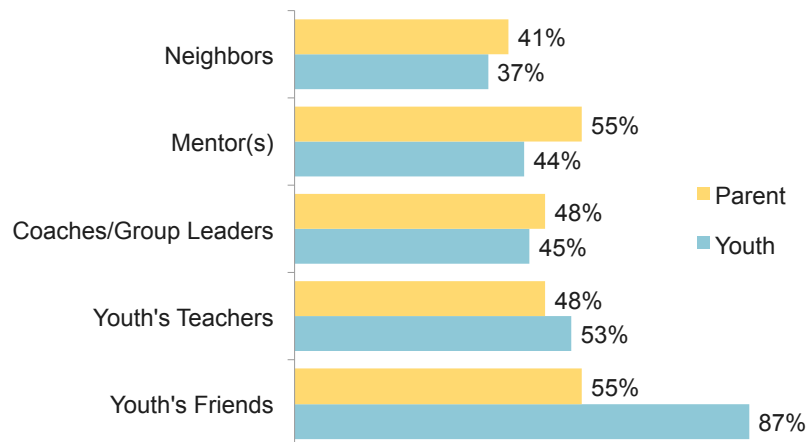
Chicago's Gautreaux Project



SOURCE: Clark, K. (2013, March 1). Moving 'up' isn't as easy as you might think. *Marketplace Money*, American Public Media. www.marketplace.org/topics/wealth-poverty/moving-isnt-easy-you-might-think



Relationships with Others



Feel "close" or "very close" to each



Civic Contributions & Commitments

Agree or Strongly Agree	Parenting Adults	Youth
Spend time on projects helping others	51%	54%
Important to change unfair things in society	90%	89%
Have done things to help people in my neighborhood	82%	72%
I can make a difference in community	81%	78%
Youth suggests things to help others	57%	58%
Family does things to help the environment	88%	88%



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POLL

Which one of these do you emphasize most in your family's participation or in the opportunities you offer to families?

- a. Informal supports for families (informal relationships, neighborhood cohesion)
- b. Formal supports for families (enriching activities, supportive resources)
- c. Civic contributions of families
- d. Other (please write your thoughts in the chat box)

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Relative Strength of Associations

Three types of family-community connections:

- Informal supports for families
- Formal supports for families
- Civic contributions of families

These are likely mutually reinforcing: Families with more informal supports also are more likely to seek services when needed (Attree, 2005)

Which matters most for youth well-being?

1. Civic Contributions

2. Informal Connections

3. Formal Connections

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Barriers and Challenges

Parents and families matter
for virtually every youth
outcome. Yet . . .

Brownsville, Texas (United Way)

- Population: 140,000
- 91% Hispanic
- 53% of children in poverty
- Per capita income of \$9,700
- 49% of population over 25 haven't graduated from high school



Talking Past Each Other

SCHOOLS SAY . . .

- Families don't care what happens at school.
- We communicate with families ALL THE TIME.
- Families don't take advantage of school-based services, like tutoring.
- Families won't return our phone calls.

PARENTS SAY . . .

- School doesn't care about families.
- School NEVER communicates.
- They have TUTORING?
- They've CALLED?



Brownsville, TX: Barriers Identified

- Families are really busy.
- Families haven't felt welcome in the past.
- Families are worried that they won't understand.
- Families think that their immigration status might be questioned.
- Families believe that everything's okay because they haven't heard otherwise.
- But mostly—**families did not believe they could do anything to make a difference.**



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Why It Can Be Hard to Engage

(From the family services field)

- Practical: Time, schedule, transportation, language
- Attitudes & expectations
 - Perceived stigma or prejudice: Being judged, labeled, diagnosed
 - Blame: Kids' problems are their parents' fault
 - Loss of privacy
 - Fear of consequences
 - Embarrassment, sense of failure, competition
 - A sense of obligation to reciprocate



Attree, P. (2005). Parenting support in the context of poverty: A meta-synthesis of the qualitative evidence. *Health & social care in the community*, 13(4), 330–337.



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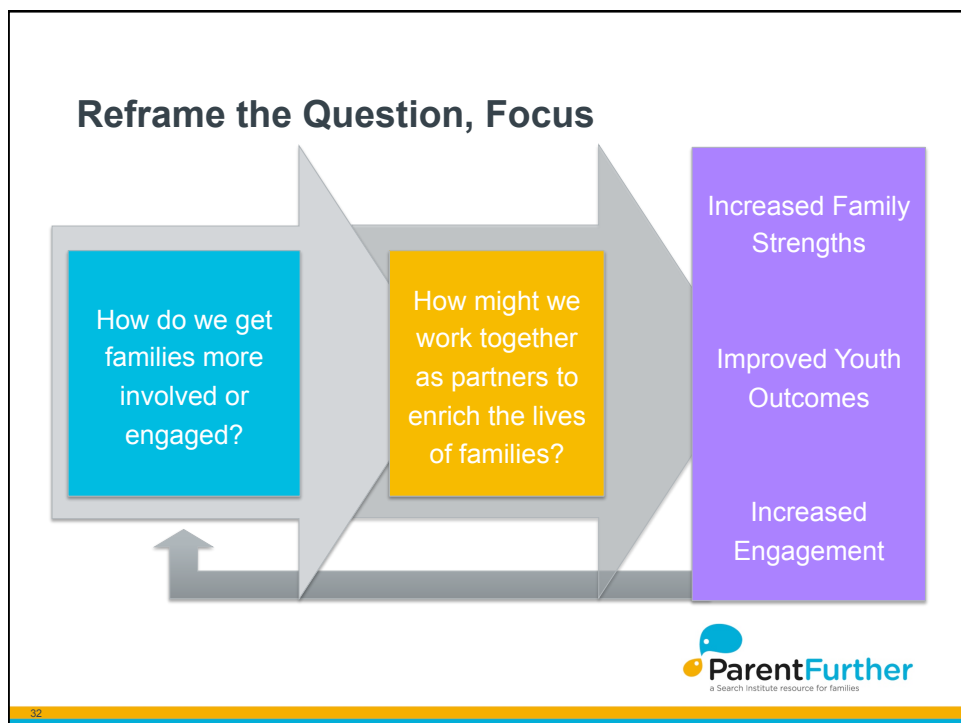


Reframing the Opportunity

Toward Family-Centered Engagement
for Transformation



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Family-Centered Engagement

Shift Emphasis from . . . Organization-Centered

- Activity based
- Parents as individuals
- Parents follow the organization's agenda
- Workshops that provide information
- Organization to parent communication

Toward . . . Family-Centered

- Relationship based
- Parents as members of the community, networks
- Parents as collaborators in setting the agenda
- Build capacity for growth and leadership
- Mutual exchange of relational power

Adapted from: Warren, M., Hong, S., Rubin, C., & Uy, P. (2009). Beyond the bake sale: A community-based relational approach to parent engagement in schools. *Teachers College Record*, 111(9), 2209–2254.



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Starting Points for Strengthening Connections

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Starting Points for Families (summary)

- Build relationships
- Align with your passions, values
- Take advantage of transitions

(All webinar participants will receive a PDF with additional slides offering more detail)



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Build Relationships

- Who do you trust, enjoy in your community?
How can you deepen or enrich those ties?
- Take small steps to get to know your neighbors—and help them get to know each other.
- Connect across differences that expand horizons and build mutual concern.



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Align with Your Passions, Values

- What's really important you and your family?
 - Spending time together as a family
 - Supporting family members around a particular issue
 - Being with people with shared beliefs and values
 - Expanding your family's horizons
 - Making a difference for others or for a cause
- Resist “volunteering” for things that aren't important to you.



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Take Advantage of Transitions

Triggers to try something new

- A move: Intentional meet the neighbors (or greet people who move in)
- New school year: Establish new routines that include community connections
- Change within the family: Reassess what matters now
- New life stage: What opportunities open up?



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Starting Points for Family Allies (summary)

- Start with building relationships, trust
- Tap families' interests, priorities, dreams, strengths
- Walk alongside families, when needed
- Give voice and support action for change

(More details are available on additional slides. Everyone who attends will receive a link to download the complete deck with "bonus" slides.)



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Start with Building Relationships, Trust

What Influences Parents to Seek Help

Practitioners who . . .

- Gave enough time to talk it out
- Had a trusting relationship with parent
- Validated parents' concerns
- Showed interest in the family's situation

Sayal, K., Tischler, V., Coope, C., Robotham, S. Ashworth, M., Day, C., Tylee, A., & Simonoff, E. (2010). Parental help-seeking in primary care for child and adolescent mental health concerns: Qualitative study. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 197, 476–481.



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What Families Are Looking for . . .

Low-income parents valued professionals and programs who . . .

- Took them seriously
- Did not judge them
- Treated them with respect
- Offered practical parenting help

Low-income parents were less likely to seek support from agencies when they . . .

- Were not aware of what was available
- Were afraid of being labeled as “inadequate” parents
- Were afraid of outside interference in family life
- Had a sense that the services available did not meet the family’s needs

Attree, P. (2005). Parenting support in the context of poverty: A meta-synthesis of the qualitative evidence. *Health & social care in the community*, 13(4), 330–337.



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Tap Parents’ Motivations, Interests

Questions parents ask before participating

- Perception of the **benefits**: Is it important to me and my family? Will it really help? It is worth it (cost, barriers)?
- What would **other parents** like me do in this situation? What will they think if I do it?
- How will I be **treated**?
- Do I have the skills, knowledge, and resources to **be successful if I do something**?

Adapted from: Olin, S. S., Hoagwood, K. E., Rodriguez, J., Ramos, B., Burton, G., Penn, M., et al. (2009). The application of behavior change theory to family-based services: improving parent empowerment in children’s mental health. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19(4), 462–470.



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Tap Sparks, Dreams, & Strengths

- Assume families have strengths and want the best for their kids.
- Normalize the challenges. All families have them.
- Encourage families to look within themselves for wisdom, knowledge, and solutions to their challenges.
- Listen for and tap the sparks (passions) of both parents and kids.



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Walk Alongside

- Help to set me up for success
- Go with me:
 - Help me navigate the systems
 - Mentor me
 - Connect me with others
 - Help with cultural translation
 - Encourage me
 - Rebuild my hope and self-efficacy



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Give Voice. Empower for Change

- What changes do parents want to see in their schools, communities? How can they be a voice for change? How can you guide them?
- The most powerful community connections come through action not receiving services

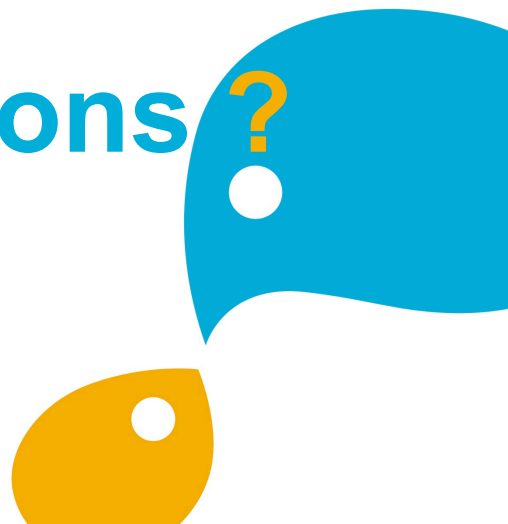
An Approach: Doherty, W. J., Jacob, J., & Cutting, B. (2009). Community engaged parent education: Strengthening civic engagement among parents and parent educators. *Family Relations*, 58(3), 303–315.



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Questions?



Parenting Resources



Available at:
www.searchinstitute.org



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NEW Search Institute Workshops

Discovering Your Family's Strengths

A workshop for parenting adults

Engaging the New American Family

Relationship-based strategies for nurturing families' strengths

More Info on these and other workshops:

CALL: *Mary Shrader*: (800) 888-7828 ex. 526

VISIT: www.search-institute.org/presentations-workshops



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