



September 2017

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am delighted to share with you what I have learned about family involvement and parent-professional partnerships in my journey both as a parent and as the Founder and Executive Director of Family Involvement Center. I have had the pleasure of helping develop infrastructure in Arizona that supports the involvement of and partnership with parents in our children's System of Care, from committees where decisions are made about policies that impact services to the evaluation of services being delivered.

My first role in this work was as a parent. I shared my story and the challenges I faced raising my own children – what worked and didn't work and what was missing – all in an effort to improve outcomes for children and their families, while helping to pave an easier road for other parents and their children. I joined with other parents who had a similar vision. We partnered with professionals, representing the voice of families so that services and supports could be designed to reduce barriers and to reflect what parents and their children need.

My efforts led not only to the creation of Family Involvement Center, but also to the involvement of parents at every level of our Children's System in Arizona. Parent-professional partnerships are an essential element of any System of Care. Each organization, state and System of Care is unique. So, while I cannot prescribe a model that will fit for all, I can share that involving parents in every possible nook and cranny of your system will offer you a critical resource. The insight parents bring will help you develop services and supports that will make a difference in the lives of the children you are serving and that will increase family resilience. Both in the long term and in the short term this means cost savings and healthier communities.

As you build parent and family involvement in your own system, it is important to continue to evaluate how well you are doing this. It is vital that you assess how well parents are integrated into meaningful roles and if system partners are sharing the responsibility of building a foundation for sustainability. One tool we have used at Family Involvement Center and that I recommend is Exercise 5 in the Quick Guide to Self-Assessment of Family-Run Organizations in Systems of Care. The checklist in that exercise was created to help assess where partnership with parents, or Family Involvement, is strong, needs improvement or is absent in a System of Care. This tool, which can be found in the link below on page 8, is a great way to assess and reassess how well you are involving parents in your system.

<http://www.coloradofederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/4-Quick-Guide-for-Self-Assessment-of-Family-Run-Organizations-in-System-of-Care.pdf>

I wish you all luck in your work strengthening Family Voice in your organization, state or System of Care. I would be happy to hear from anyone who would like additional insight or information about what we have learned here in Arizona.

Yours respectfully,

Jane Kallal
Parent, Founder and Executive Director
Family Involvement Center