

# Engaging Families & Family Organizations in Evaluation



*National Federation of Families  
for Children's Mental Health*



Family Voice  
Should be  
Included in  
**EVERY**  
Component  
of Evaluation

---

**Proposal Development**

---

**Research Design**

---

**Instrument Design**

---

**Data Collection**

---

**Data Analysis**

---

**Dissemination**

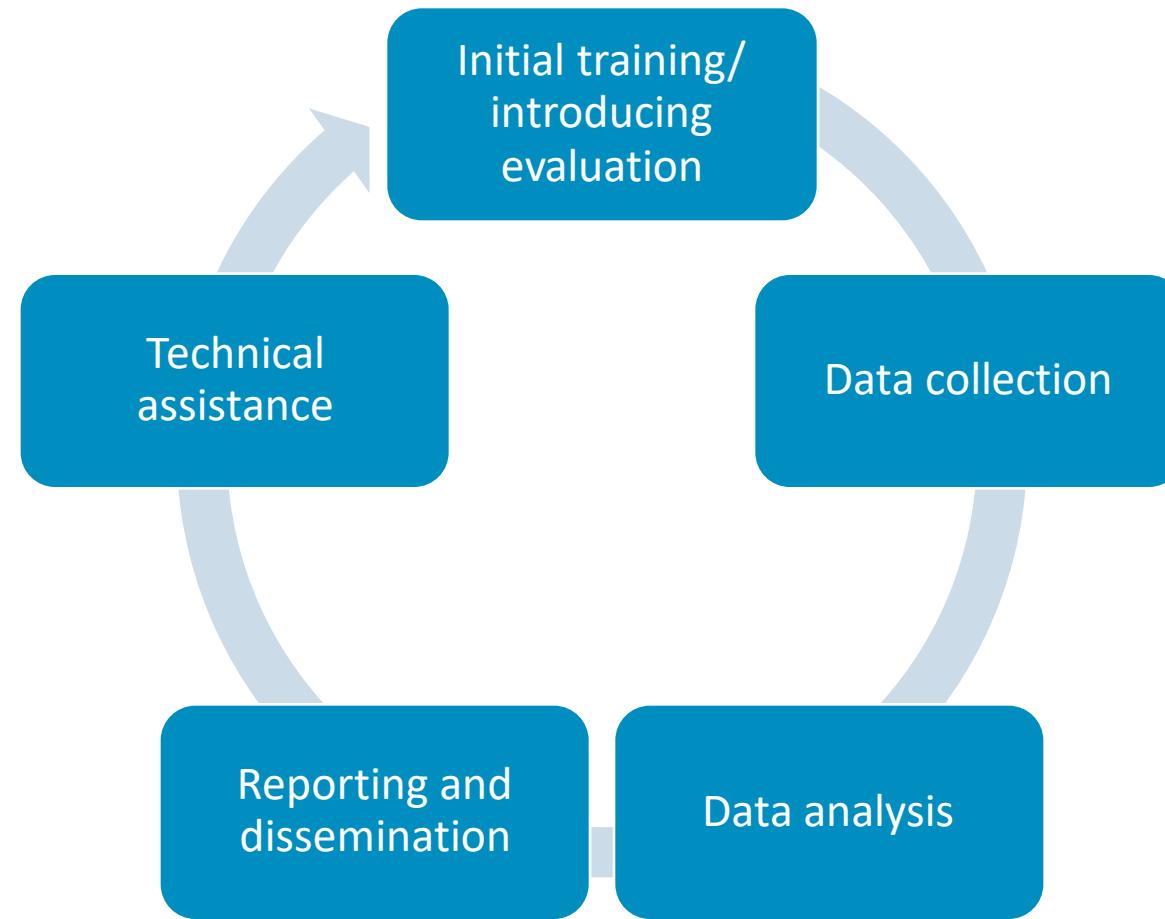
---

# Family/Family Organization Engagement in Evaluation

**Families & family-led organizations can be involved in all aspects of evaluation:**

- Collaboration in design of data collection instruments
- Collaboration in piloting of data collection instruments
- Initial or baseline and ongoing data collection
- Data entry, accuracy and maintenance
- Follow-up or longitudinal data collection
- Retention in evaluation

# Phases of Data Collection and Evaluation



# How Does the Family Voice Contribute to Development of Data Collection Tools?

1

Families contribute an authentic perspective regarding the value and relevance of the protocols, processes, and instruments being considered

2

Families bring a unique perspective on navigating and understanding service delivery systems

3

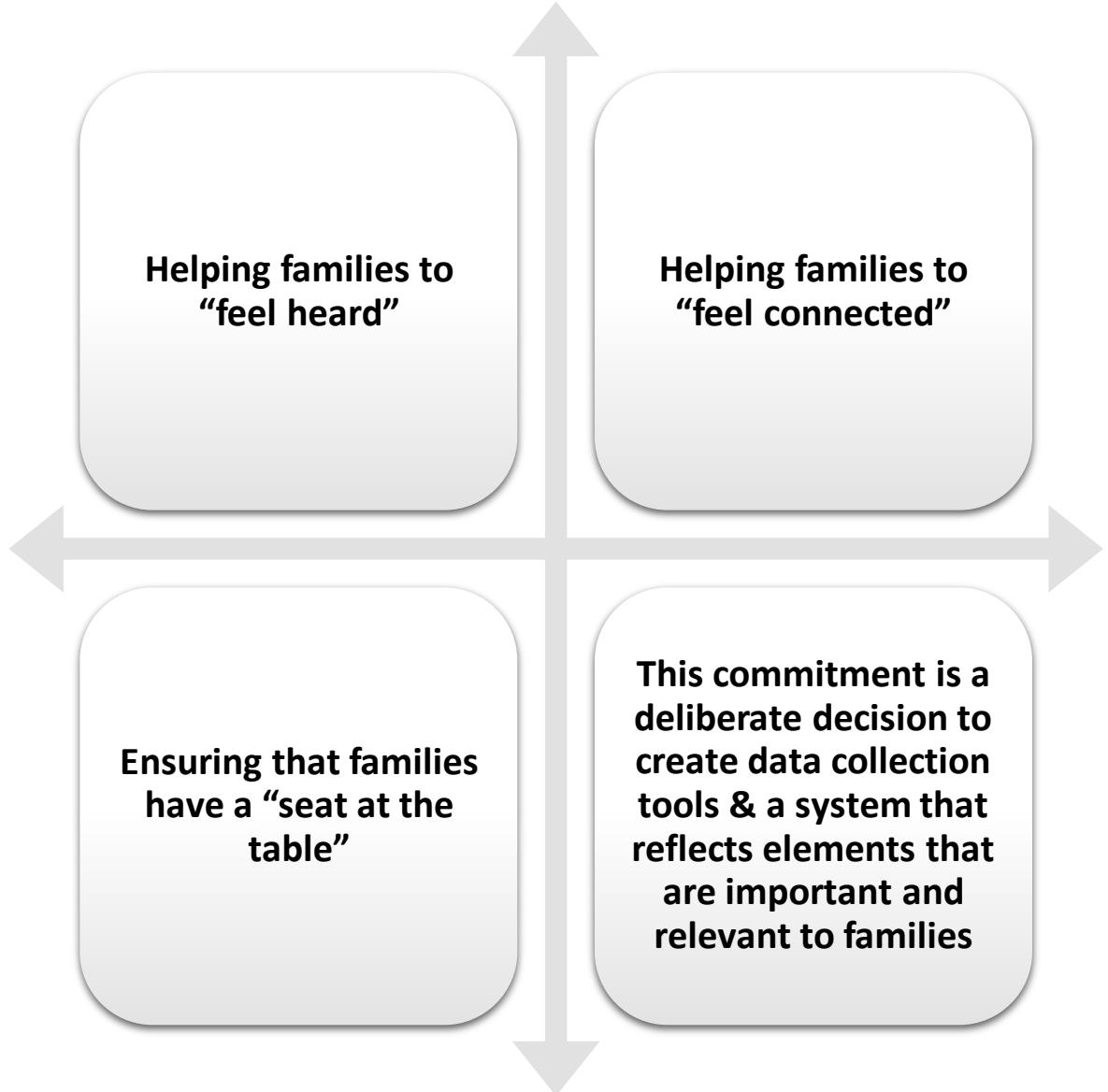
Help avoid “blind spots” in the data collection & evaluation process



Requires Commitment

---

This  
Commitment  
Isn't about  
Getting family  
“buy in” but....



**To ensure authentic family voice, the optimal approach is to have families and family-led organizations included throughout the process.**

**Designing an evaluation process and then asking for feedback may lead to frustration for all parties if significant design flaws are identified.**

- Does the data being collected measure issues/items important for families?
- Is the format easy for families/family orgs. to use?
- Can the terminology used be understood by diverse families?

Wouldn't It Be Easier to Design the Data Collection Tool and Ask for Feedback?

# Why Families (and Even Family Organizations!) May Be Hesitant To Engage

**Feelings of blame and disrespect**

**Feelings of isolation due to lack of information**

**Feelings of intimidation**

**Feelings of being outnumbered**

**Feelings of incompetence due to not knowing the jargon, the ins and outs of systems, or what they can contribute**

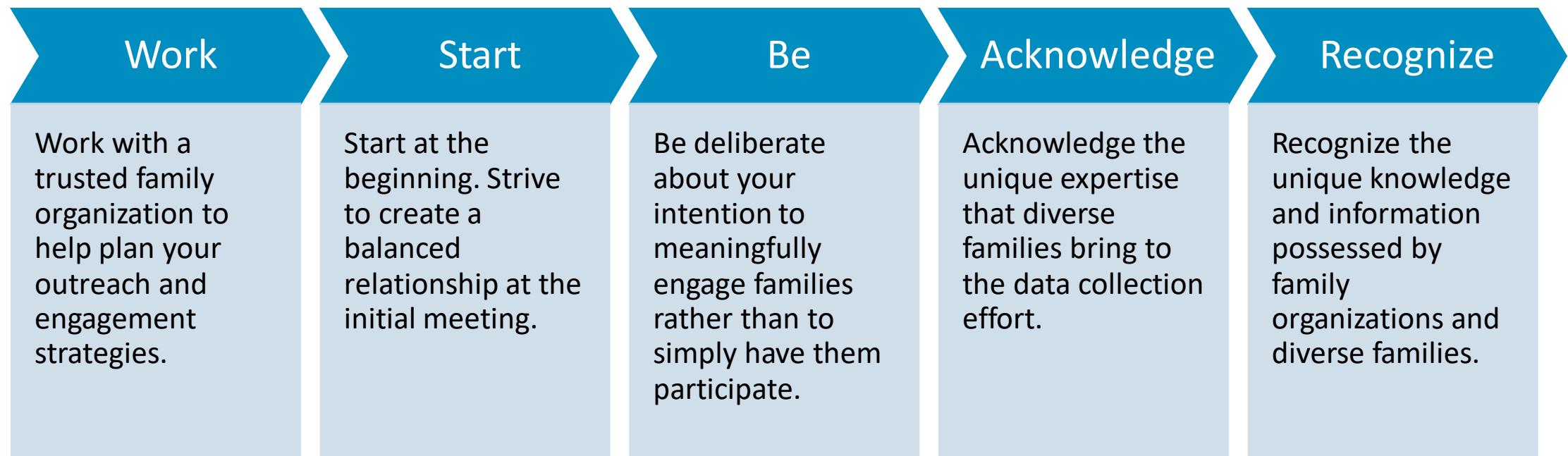
# Families Trust Peers

- **Family-led, family-staffed organizations have a built-in advantage**
  - They've walked in the same shoes
  - They've faced similar challenges
  - They've navigated the same supports, services and systems
  - They have experienced the same emotions
  - They have a story that resonates
  - They combine the expertise of lived experience with the expertise of working at systems levels

# Addressing the Barriers: Building the Capacity of Stakeholder Teams

Identify	Identify base level knowledge of family organizations and family participants (and other stakeholders!) on data and evaluation.
Work	Work with a team representing stakeholders to identify parent/professional development needs and strategies/resources to address those needs and build capacity.
Implement	Implement the strategy!

# How Do We Engage Families?



# For Families Evaluation is an ADVOCACY Tool

1

Data or evidence based advocacy strengthens our personal stories.

2

Good research validates and helps us make sense of our collective experiences.

3

Good research provides information that strengthens our advocacy work - especially when challenging other's theories.

# What Creates Credibility with Families

- Is the evaluation respectful to families?
- Is it real life - does it validate what they have experienced?
- Does it promote the reduction of stigma?

# Establish Ground Rules

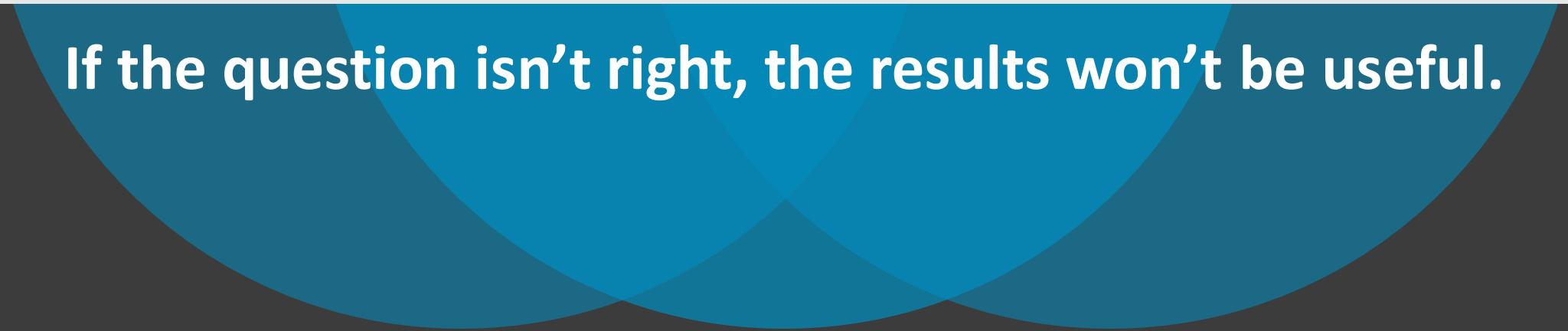
**Now that you have family participation, be sure that everyone involved is on the same page.**

**Consider:**

- Everyone brings expertise to the table and will be treated with respect
- Meeting times must be flexible to meet everyone's schedule
- Data (instrument design, collection, evaluation, dissemination of results) is a team effort and everyone is on the same team



## Importance of Using Family Voice In Evaluation:



**If the question isn't right, the results won't be useful.**

# Family Voice in the Design Phase

This is one of the most important places for families to leverage their influence and ensure the integrity of the design. BE ASSERTIVE HERE.

Is there anything in this design that is (or could be considered) offensive to a specific group of subjects?

Is the design likely to make people feel comfortable enough to get the desired response from the individuals being studied? For example, will teens simply zone out or give answers they think are expected?

# Using Your Family Voice: In Design

- **Make sure we do no harm!**
- **Do we *really* need to know this?**
- **Will the effort required to implement the design yield sufficient information to have a positive impact on children, youth, and families?**

# Using Your Family Voice: Data Collection

Families ensure the data collection is respectful.

**Visible family participation in the entire evaluation process influences the degree to which data collection will be complete, reliable, valid, and accepted.**

# Using Your Family Voice: In Instrumentation

Keep

Keep the team honest and grounded in cultural respectfulness and family values.

Remain

Remain focused on the question(s).

Reflect

Reflect on how families and youth really feel about the instruments selected.



keep  
learning.

Celebrate Success and Continue to Learn

---