

## **KEY COMPONENTS OF PARENT LEADERSHIP**

### **Identifying Parent Leaders**

Parent leaders connect with and support other parents. They encourage parents to connect with each other and create networks and organizations.

Parent leaders actively promote family and individual choice as critical element to system change and better futures for their families.

Parent leaders can identify issues and concerns that are important to families. They help craft strategies for discussion of these concerns, get in touch with decision makers and develop strategies for change.

Parent leaders take the long view. Many families struggle with the huge contrast between the immediacy of the day-to-day crises they deal with at home and the long term planning required by strategic planning and committee work. Parent leaders have successfully constructed a vision for the greater good.

Parent leaders are willing to say "this isn't right" and want to know how to make it right. They are the ones who are willing to do something about it.

Parent leaders know how to put their personal agenda aside but also keep it nearby. While each parent carries his or her own history and story inside, a parent leader carries the stories of many others.

Parent leaders understand that all collaborations are political. Each participant brings his or her agenda to the table.

Parent leaders display courage. They outline problems in ways that align with family experiences, even when this view is not what is popularly accepted. They are willing to point out when the "emperor is not wearing clothes."

Parent leaders need to feel they are making a difference. They have a desire to finish the unfinished task, to keep going until the mission is completed.

### **Strengthening Parent Leaders**

Mentoring is essential to developing and strengthening parent leaders. Parent leaders need to connect with people already in this role. A mentor has to have patience, acceptance and forgive lapses.

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Modeling is an important tool for creating leaders. Many parents feel they are creating a new path and observing another parent leader provides possibilities and helps develop new skills . Each parent leader sets an example for other parents.

Parent leaders are ALWAYS advocates.

Nurture the passion. Parents have interests in diverse areas such as juvenile justice, education, medications, data collection, etc. Let their interest help provide a match to the area in which they would like to participate.

Credibility is a key ingredient that parent leaders bring to the table. Life experiences dictate what they value and parent leaders value experience over theory . When their credibility is respected and acknowledged, it helps keep the passion going.

Parent leadership creates parent involvement. Without strong parent leadership, parent involvement dwindles over time.

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