



Session 2: Preparing to Engage TANF Participants in Program Decisions

From the TANF and Child Support Moving Forward:
Further Incorporating Family Input Project

July 9th, 2024





What do we hope to accomplish during this session?

- Describe the ways programs may seek family input to inform program improvement
- Discuss the benefits of family input in program improvement efforts
- Discuss the role trust plays in gathering family input
- Help you feel more confident engaging families





Why does family input matter?

Grounds program improvement in the needs of families you serve

Staff may find it rewarding to interact with families in this new way

Can help programs save time and avoid costly missteps

Can help families build confidence, develop social capital, and access professional development opportunities





Think, Pair, Share

Why else might it matter to give families voice in how to improve TANF programs?





What does it mean to collect and use family input?

- Includes both the process of gathering and the process of using the ideas and feedback that families share
- Includes individuals who are, were, or could be directly served by programs





How can engagement vary to meet program goals?



Depth of engagement



Scale of engagement



Time commitment of engagement





Building trust can maximize impact of family input

- Increasing honest feedback about families' experiences in programs
- Increasing the pool of families who are prepared and willing to provide input and feedback in the future





Setting the foundation for trust

Acknowledge and
address harm

Understand the
cultures & contexts
of families you
serve

Engage families
early

Adapt practices
and commit
resources to
prepare

Set and
communicate clear
expectations for
engagement

Approach families
with humility

Commit to closing
the feedback loop

Align your words
and actions





Readiness for gathering and using family input

Building trust with families

- Important for ensuring honest feedback and engagement in the process
- Critically reflect on current level of trust and take proactive steps to build trust

Preparing for organizational change

- Effectively gathering and using family input may require culture and process changes for your organization
- Assess readiness for change and build buy-in at all levels





Think, Pair, Share

Reflect on the degree of trust families have in your program. What steps might you need to take to build trust?





What can gathering and using family input look like?

Inform

Consult

Involve

Collaborate

Empower





What does **consulting** with families look like?

One-way communication of feedback using:

- Surveys
- Individual or family interviews
- Focus groups/group interviews
- Listening sessions
- Direct feedback/advocacy to decision makers
- Visual or other nonwritten feedback





Consulting with families in practice

Heidi Widmer (Kansas DCF) gathered feedback from participants about the orientation day





Think, Pair, Share

Which of the consulting techniques have you or your program used with participants to gather their feedback?





What does **involving** families look like?

Two-way communication of feedback where families are asked for feedback and can share their ideas and feedback about proposed changes. This often happens in the context of:

- Workgroups or committees
- Advisory councils





Think, Pair, Share

How has your program practiced two-way communication with participants?





What does **collaborating** look like?

Engagement with families where power is shared, including:

- Jointly identifying the areas of inquiry; families may also guide areas for improvement
- Families lead discussions
- Co-creating terms of interaction
- Responsive to families' needs
- Directly influences program improvement decision-making





Collaborating with families in practice

Program highlight: Colorado Family Voice Council





Think, Pair, Share

What aspect of your program would benefit from increased family input?





Group Activity

Work together to identify next steps for your family input scenario!





Share about your family input scenario

What did you learn about planning for
gathering and using family input?





Access the toolkit!



Elevating Family Input in TANF and Child Support Programs: Resources for Program Staff, Leaders, and Families

FINAL PRE-PILOT VERSION

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