

Breakout: Advocacy and Parent Peer Support on Committees: Why You Want Us at the Table

Introduction

CST is intended to be a process that is driven by the ideas and perspectives of youth and family members. This extends to involvement with the Coordinating Committee. This session will be an open discussion for participants and presenters on meaningful involvement of youth/young adults and family members in coordinating committee meetings. The young adults and family members presenting will provide reflections, ideas, and resources for partnership and support based on their experiences and current best practice findings.

Why involvement is important

Engagement increases when people feel they have voice and choice. People with higher self-efficacy/self-determination tend to:

- be more optimistic and hopeful, persist in face of obstacles
- have better mental health, cope better and avoid depression
- adopt healthy habits and maintain behavior change
- youth do better after high school

Best practices for supporting participation includes:

• Organizational support

- ✓ Allow staff the time, training, and support to carry out activities that encourage participation for youth and/or parents
- ✓ Ensure youth and parents are prepared for the meeting before the meeting, such as knowing their roles in the meeting and how the meeting works
- ✓ Adequate preparation is provided so youth and/or parents have an opportunity to be supported through a process of thinking about what and how he or she wants to contribute to the topics on the agenda
- ✓ Preparation includes an opportunity for a youth and/or parent to formulate goals
- ✓ A youth and/or parent are helped to plan to contribute to the meeting in whatever manner feels comfortable to him or her
- ✓ A youth and/or parent is supported in planning specific strategies he or she might use during the meeting to help stay calm and/or focused
- ✓ Someone is available for the youth and/or parent to figure out who can support him or her during the meeting and prepares that “support person” for this role
- ✓ The youth and/or parent know what’s going to happen and there are no surprises during the committee meeting
- ✓ Youth and parents are provided the option to handle uncomfortable topics outside the meeting
- ✓ Youth and parents are allowed to challenge structures, procedures, and policies

• Strong Facilitation during the Meeting

- ✓ An agenda is followed during the meeting
- ✓ Running the meeting in a way that it feels safe to participate, including respectful interactions, remaining strength-based, and speaking in clear and simple language
- ✓ Youth and parents are supported to participate during the meeting
- ✓ Work with a young person to come up with activities where they can take the lead
- ✓ New, unexpected issues may be sent to a “parking lot”

- ✓ Begin with activities related to goals that originate with the youth
 - ✓ Model and coach how collaboration works and exploring different perspectives
 - ✓ Interrupt dynamics that undercut respect or participation
 - ✓ Keep the meeting focused and efficient and ensure the agenda is followed
 - ✓ Allow a time to express questions and concerns
 - ✓ Ensure clarity regarding responsibility and accountability
- **Accountability**
 - ✓ Realize that the work is done by trusting each other
 - ✓ Make sure that appropriate follow-up occurs that is discussed
 - ✓ Record decisions and in subsequent meetings, follow up on who did what
 - ✓ Provide youth and parent with a record of commitments/action steps
 - ✓ Once decisions are made, the decisions should not be changed later without further youth and/or parent participation
 - ✓ Important information should not be shared when youth and/or parents are absent
 - ✓ Check in with both the youth and parents after the meeting regarding their satisfaction
 - ✓ Measure participation and empowerment as part of outcomes