

## Parent Participation

*Bringing the  
Parent Perspective  
into the Discussion*



**NH Family Voices**  
Family to Family Health Information  
and Education Center

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## *After The Meeting*

- ♥ Encourage parents to take leadership roles.
- ♥ Team veteran parents with new parents.
- ♥ Allow parents to take a leave of absence if their family situation requires it. It's also important that they not feel guilty about missing meetings.
- ♥ If families have to take a break, ask them if they want to be kept informed and how.
- ♥ Value all contributions and recognize success!

♥ Have FUN! ♥



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## Bringing the Parent Perspective into the Discussion

When working on a program or project parent participation will bring a new depth and enrichment to the process. To make this partnership work though, you and your staff must have a strong conviction about the value of that parent participation.

The following are some ways to reach out to parents and the supports they may need to feel valued as well as participate.

### Pre-Meetings

- ♥ When possible, approach each parent personally and ask them to participate. Show excitement about what you believe they can contribute to your program.
- ♥ Please don't assume a parent can't participate based on your knowledge of the family, i.e. to many children, already over-whelmed... allow the parent to decide for themselves if they are able.
- ♥ Remember Dad's. Don't just ask Mom's, fathers also take care of their child's needs and have important suggestions and ideas as well.
- ♥ Ensure diverse representation by asking parents from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- ♥ Provide clear information about the goals of the project and convey upfront the expectation of time commitment.
- ♥ Ask the parent what training, reading material and supports they may need before attending.
- ♥ Be sensitive to the reading and language needs of parents. They may read better in their primary language such as Spanish or have low literacy and need some assistance understanding the literature.
- ♥ When scheduling a meeting check the calendar for cultural holidays and or school schedules that may exclude families from participating.
- ♥ Allow for other methods (i.e. review materials, teleconference) for parents to participate if they cannot physically attend a meeting.
- ♥ Provide sufficient notice regarding meeting times and date so they can arrange childcare or after school care.
- ♥ Offer a sufficient stipend to cover the cost of travel and childcare, remembering that CSHCN often require more expensive childcare.

### Meetings

- ♥ Remember a parents time is as precious as yours so begin and end meetings on time. Set the agenda ahead and follow it.
- ♥ As with colleagues, a productive meeting will encourage a parent to return.
- ♥ Provide refreshments to help everyone relax. Be as informal as possible.
- ♥ Either agree not to use acronyms or to explain them. Some families like to learn what they mean while others find it overwhelming, be sensitive to the differences.
- ♥ Have parents provide input into the agenda for follow-up meetings if there will be any.
- ♥ Remember that parents are some times sharing very private and deeply emotional information with others who may be little more than strangers. Respect their willingness to share and don't judge. ♥

