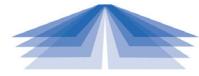


Pathways to Partnership



Tips for Developing an Effective Advisory Board

From the Partnering with Youth and Families Committee
National Child Traumatic Stress Network

The Role of Advisory Boards

Advisory Boards typically are developed for program and/or organization-specific reasons. They may be composed of consumers, community members, service providers, or a combination of stakeholders. A well constructed board can serve as an invaluable resource by:

- Providing culturally relevant feedback about the services provided by the organization
- Evaluating the organization's and/or the program's goals
- Promoting communication between families, youth and staff
- Supporting outreach or fundraising efforts
- Engaging in community and political advocacy
- Assisting with program and administrative changes
- Providing families and youth with an opportunity to “give back” to the organization

Before establishing a board, it can be helpful to consider what your program or organization hopes to accomplish. Defining the purpose of your advisory board will help to determine the composition and focus of the board, and will also help determine the agenda of advisory board meetings.

Establishing an Advisory Board

When recruiting an advisory board, it is important to involve members who represent the population you serve. Because board members may come and go, it is also important to have an ongoing recruitment plan. These recruitment efforts may include:

- Staff recommendations and referrals
- Outreach to peer support groups or referral organizations in the community
- Community forums, mailings, e-mail blasts, fliers
- Invitations at the end of client satisfaction surveys (both satisfied and dissatisfied consumers can be useful on advisory boards)
- Providing current and former clients with a menu of ways they can be involved
- Involving current clients. Many clients go through phases with their treatment, coming into and out of service as needed. Active clients can bring a unique and important perspective to the advisory board, but also need to be assured that their treatment won't be compromised

Whenever possible, staff should meet with potential board members individually to explain the responsibilities, time commitments, and benefits of being on the board. To encourage participation:

- Provide an orientation to the group through an active member
- Offer compensation for missed work or transportation assistance to get to meetings
- Offer child care during meetings and have snacks or food
- Make sure that the advisory board gets feedback on the outcome of its work

Preparing for Advisory Board Meetings

Once a board has been established, it is important to assess the resources needed to accomplish the desired goals, including financial and staff requirements. When planning advisory board meetings:

- Be specific about the purpose and plan of each meeting
- Be sensitive to board members' time constraints (child care, work schedules, etc.) when scheduling
- Have support systems available for board members who may be triggered or need assistance during or after a meeting. Make sure everyone is prepared, and have safety plans in place

Case Example: La Rabida Chicago Child Trauma Center (LRCH-CCTC)

In an effort to increase the cultural relevance of our work and to improve retention after the referral, the La Rabida staff developed a consumer satisfaction survey for former and current clients. The survey included questions about what families wanted changed and what had worked when they had received services. The survey was followed by a separate letter (with a self-addressed stamped envelope) outlining how volunteers could become part of the LRCH-CCTC Constituency Advisory Panel. Our staff contacted all the respondents to determine their interests and to discuss the plan for upcoming meetings.

We initially held quarterly meetings, but the panel members wanted to meet more often. Meetings were scheduled based on the times and days that worked best for most of the families and individuals involved, and that would ensure the broadest representation. Child care and snacks were provided at every meeting. The agenda for the early meetings was based on the results of the consumer satisfaction surveys.

To date, the panel has helped to develop a Welcome Packet for those on the program waiting list, a "Messages of Hope" brochure, a "Survivor Wall," and a peer-to-peer support line for families who are beginning services. In addition, panel members have received training on intervention implementation, co-presented with staff at national conferences, and participated in statewide and local meetings.

For assistance with your advisory board, contact the Partnering with Youth and Families Committee at youthandfamilies@nctsn.org

In 2008, the NCTSN released *Pathways to Partnerships with Youth and Families* to provide trauma-treating entities with a method for considering the role of youth and families in their organizations. Many sites have requested more technical assistance to begin their efforts. This tip sheet was designed as a starting place for organizations seeking to develop an advisory board.

Suggested Citation: National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Partnering with Youth and Families Committee. (2009). *Pathways to Partnership: Tips for Developing an Effective Advisory Board*. Los Angeles, CA & Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

