

## Family-Centered Supports

Family-centeredness is defined by CSHCN (the Center for Children with Special Health Care Needs) as “*care that ensures the health and well-being of children and their families through a respectful family-professional partnership that includes shared decision-making. It honors the strengths, cultures, traditions and expertise that everyone brings to this relationship*”.

### Quality in Practice

#### Core concepts of family-centeredness:

- **Dignity and Respect.** Providers listen to and honor perspectives and choices. Family knowledge, values, beliefs and cultural backgrounds are incorporated into the planning and delivery of services.
- **Information Sharing.** Providers communicate and share complete and unbiased information in ways that everyone can understand and before any decisions are made.
- **Participation.** Families are encouraged and supported to participate in decision-making at the level they choose.
- **Collaboration.** Families are also included on an institution-wide basis in policy and program development, implementation and evaluation; in facility design; and in professional education, as well as in the delivery of services.

#### Assumptions of family-centered approaches:

- Families want to raise their own children.
- Families make good partners with all professionals and para-professionals – teachers, aides, therapists, doctors, etc.
- Families are worth fighting for because having people who care and are not paid to be in your life is best.
- Families can understand – it depends on how the information is shared, not on the information itself.

#### The following steps can help set a service provider on its journey toward family-centered supports.

- Implement a process for all senior leaders to learn about family-centered supports.
- Include people supported, families, and staff from all disciplines in this process.
- Appoint a family-centered steering committee comprised of people supported along with families and formal and informal leaders of the organization.
- Assess the extent to which the concepts and principles of family-centered supports are currently implemented within your system. On the basis of the assessment, set priorities and develop an action plan for establishing family-centered supports at your organization.
- Using the action plan as a guide, begin to incorporate family-centered concepts and strategies into the organization’s strategic priorities. Make sure that these concepts are integrated into your organization’s mission, philosophy, and definition of quality.
- Invite people supported and families to serve as advisors in a variety of ways. Appoint some of these individuals to key committees and task forces.
- Provide education and support to people supported, families, and staff on family-centered supports and on how to collaborate effectively in quality improvement. For example, provide opportunities for administrators and clinical staff to hear family members share stories of their experiences with the organization during orientation and continuing education programs.
- Monitor changes made, evaluate processes, measure the impact, continue to advance practice, and celebrate and recognize success.