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| <b>Policy Section</b>                          | <b>Policy Number</b> |
| <b>Policy Name</b><br><b>Family Engagement</b> |                      |

## **Policy Statement**

This policy sets out a framework based on a range of levels and types of family engagement, for the purpose of partnering with families throughout the Network. The ultimate goal of this policy is to empower families in the care of their children and youth with multiple special needs.

The family engagement policy will ensure that:

- Families have opportunities to be deeply engaged in all aspects of the Network, according to the framework described in this policy, including participation in planning, service delivery, evaluation and quality improvement
- A range of family support programs and activities are provided, with the focus on family-to-family supports
- There is an effective communication strategy for families
- Families are satisfied with the Network's services and supports
- The leadership, structures and supports are in place for successful family engagement according to family preference.

## **Context**

Children's Treatment Network (CTN) is committed to engaging parents and families throughout the Network to deepen and sustain a culture of family-centredness. Parents play a significant role in setting the direction for CTN. Their input is sought in strategic planning initiatives and one-third of CTN's Board are family members of children with multiple special needs. Beyond the opportunity to participate in strategic and operational planning and service delivery, families indicated, through CTN's strategic planning consultation, that they highly value opportunities to connect with other families for information-sharing and support that is particularly meaningful when based on lived experience of parents.

## **Scope**

The Network is committed to the participation of families in all aspects of the Network, including governance and operations, and the planning and delivery of services and supports for kids and families. This policy focuses on family engagement in operations and the planning and delivery of services and supports, including family-to-family supports. Family representation in Network governance is in CTN Governance Policies.

## **Parent/Family Engagement**

For the purposes of this policy, parent/family engagement is defined as follows: Recognizing that parents/families are essential to the successful outcome of their children's plan of care, parents and family members are welcome partners in the planning and delivery of CTN services, including the development of future plans and directions of the Network.

Families are:

- Welcomed, respected and valued as partners in their children's learning/treatment
- Provided with opportunities to be involved, with a full range of choices about how to be involved
- Engaged through ongoing communication and dialogue
- Supported with the information and tools necessary to participate to their preferred type or level of participation

(Adapted from Parents in Partnership, A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010)

Please refer to **Appendix A** for definitions related to family engagement, including advocacy, mentoring.

## **Principles**

Family-centredness is one of the Network's nine guiding principles, respecting families, children and youth as integral partners in achieving flexible, holistic and responsive services. The principles also speak to ensuring inclusion and equity, considered key for family engagement.

We work in the best interests of children, youth and families with multiple special needs through:

- **Potential & strengths**  
Believing every person has a purpose, potential and worth, and by focusing on their strengths and abilities
- **Dignity and Respect**  
Treating every person as an individual and with dignity, and deserving of our respect as a basis to develop positive relationships
- **Being Inclusive**  
Accepting each child and youth, ensuring equity no matter their life experiences, background or challenges.
- **Family-Centred**  
Respecting parents, children and youth as integral partners in achieving flexible, holistic and responsive services
- **Shared Responsibility & commitment**  
A partnership model where members value each other, accept shared responsibility and commit to support the Network

- **Leadership**  
Being leaders and advocates for the people and communities served
- **Evidence-informed & Excellence**  
Developing a professional practice and network build upon best practices, being evidence-informed and achieving quality and excellence in all we do.
- **Innovation & Learning**  
Fostering a Network culture that embraces innovation, continuous improvement and learning, and team approaches.
- **Accountability**  
Being accountable for the use of the resources provided, the decisions made and acting with integrity and transparency.

## Framework

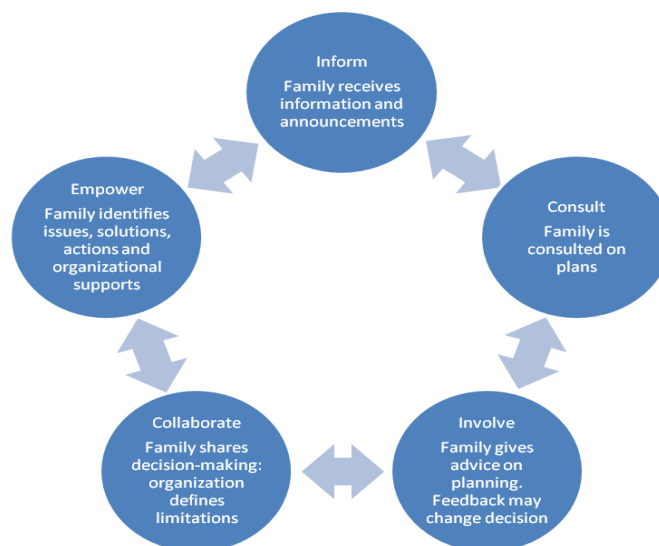
### Levels of Engagement

CTN, as a multi-sector network of over 50 partners, draws from approaches to family engagement in health, education and social services. Many current approaches, such as the Local health Integration Network (LHIN) Community Engagement Spectrum, are based on a spectrum of engagement that ranges from informing families, to engaging families in co-designing services.

This spectrum also represents the historical evolution that families have experienced from the service system doing ‘to’ families, or doing ‘for’ them, to the level of engagement where the system is working ‘with’ and empowering families. For a description of this historical evolution in family engagement, please see **Appendix B**.

### Levels of Family Engagement

Source: Adapted from Barbara Balik, June 2011, and OHA, February 2012



## Family and youth experience and family and youth influence

*Increasing level of impact*



| Inform   | Consult   | Involve   | Collaborate  | Empower   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Objective</b>   |   |   |  |   |
| To provide families with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, solutions, choices & opportunities.   | To obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.  | To work directly with families throughout the process to ensure that concerns are consistently understood and considered.   | To partner with families in each aspect of decision making, <i>incl</i> development of alternatives and identification of preferred solutions. | To ensure decisions are made as partners and families are involved in directing the final outcome.  |
| <b>Examples of relevant tools</b>  |   |   |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meetings</li> <li>- Public notices</li> <li>- Website</li> <li>- Brochures and printed material</li> <li>- Open house</li> <li>- FAQs</li> <li>- Newspaper/media ads</li> <li>- Interactive web site</li> <li>- Newsletters</li> <li>- Fact Sheets</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus groups</li> <li>- Family comments</li> <li>- Facilitated conversations</li> <li>- Family panel</li> <li>- Surveys</li> <li>- Public hearings</li> <li>- Family needs analysis</li> <li>- Online dialogues</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open house</li> <li>- Facilitated discussions</li> <li>- Focus meeting for planning</li> <li>- Family Advisory</li> <li>- Committee or Council or reference groups or standing committee</li> <li>- Workshops</li> <li>- Open space</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advisory Committee</li> <li>- Participatory decision-making</li> <li>- Consensus Building</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint ventures</li> <li>- Advisory Committees</li> <li>- Facilitated conversations</li> <li>- Delegated decisions</li> </ul> |

Adapted from work of Barbara Balik

## **Types of Engagement**

Children's Treatment Network will engage families through these six types of engagement, described in the work of Joyce Epstein, Ph.D. in sociology from Johns Hopkins University, Director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), Principal Research Scientist, and Research Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University.

This framework, **Joyce Epstein's Six Keys to Engagement**, was developed to engage families and communities in enhancing student learning. It has been successfully adapted for many other environments and school communities, providing a framework for family engagement planning, activity and evaluation.

### **1. Parent Education**

CTN believes in assisting families with parenting skills, home conditions, and enabling access to information they need to make informed choices. CTN also committed to assisting clinicians to better understand families' needs.

### **2. Communication**

CTN believes in facilitating effective communications between parents and the network - across all partners and settings, and in parent-to-parent information-sharing, such as in social media online communities.

### **3. Volunteering**

CTN believes in recruiting and organizing volunteers to support family engagement goals and activities such as family support and mentoring.

### **4. Participation**

CTN believes in providing opportunities for families to be involved and engaged as an equal partner in their child and family team and single plan of care, and to participate in events and forums, committees, support groups according to their needs and preferences.

### **5. Decision-making**

CTN believes that families are the primary decision maker in their child's life and their plan of care, with the information they need from their child and family team, and as appropriate to the age and competence of the child or youth as he/she matures. Families are also included as participants in network decision-making representing the interests of all families. CTN believes in developing family leaders.

### **6. Collaborating with broader community**

CTN believes in coordinating resources and services from the community for families, and participating with the broader community to expand knowledge, awareness and capacity for children with special needs

## Evaluation

CTN undertakes evaluation of family engagement strategies related to the framework, and measures results based on the following indicators:

- Family satisfaction with family-centred care
- Family access to information and supports/communication/education
- Network decisions influenced by family engagement
- Family Leadership/volunteers recruited and trained
- Child and Family Outcomes

Evaluation results are used by the Family Engagement Council to focus and refine activities, set priorities and mitigate risk.

## Administration and Sustainability

CTN is committed to engaging and supporting families in enriching their lives at whatever level of engagement is preferred.

Family engagement goals and strategies are co-constructed and implemented annually in partnership with a **Family Engagement Council**. The Family Engagement Council's Terms of Reference are appended to the policy as **Appendix C**.

The Family Engagement Council develops an annual workplan and budget for approval as part of the annual operating plan/budget process.

A member of the Management Team is designated by the CEO as support for family engagement.

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### Related Reference and Links:

- Family Relations Policy (Complaints & Compliments)
- Single Plan of Care Parent Manual
- Social Media Policy

**Appendix A: Background and Definitions**

**Appendix B: Evolution of Family Engagement**

**Appendix C: Family Engagement Council Terms of Reference**

**Appendix D: Procedures (under development)**

Date Created: March - June 2012  
Date approved by CTN: Sept. 13, 2012  
Last Revision Date:

## Appendix A: Background and Definitions

CTN's Strategic Plan, Future Directions 2012-2016, included a strategic direction to focus on family and community engagement to improve access to information, services and supports for families.

“To increase parent and community understanding of and engagement in their child and youth needs, the services available, their roles and responsibilities and related capacity building initiatives, and providing parent support forums and other tools, led by parents where possible.”

This direction is supported by CTN's vision and mission, as well as a growing body of evidence in the health, education and community service sectors that family engagement, and/or family-to-family supports are valuable at the client, service and system level. The evidence, which links family engagement with improved outcomes for their children, increased satisfaction, improved safety, and increased access to services, among other benefits is referenced in the following documents, and the evidence-based family engagement work by network partner, Kinark Child & Family Services:

- The Ontario Ministry of Education released Parents in Partnership, A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010, in use by Simcoe and York school boards
- The Institute for Patient and Family-Centred Care set the stage for significant investment in family engagement by many hospitals and health sector programs across North America, including Holland Bloorview Children's Rehab Hospital.
- A literature review (October 2011) by Kinark Child and Family Services and Parents for Children's Mental Health, resulted in funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to develop a Made in Ontario Model of Family Support Provision. A pilot is currently underway.

### Definitions

#### Family

A family consists of two or more people, whether living together or apart, related by blood, marriage, adoption or commitment to care for one another". (Children's Mental Health Ontario)

#### Family-Centred Care

Family-centred care focuses on meeting the needs of both clients and families, where the family is seen as the unit of attention. It recognizes that families are experts on their child's needs; parents and providers are partners in the **child and family team**; and the family's role as the primary decision-maker for their child.

Family-centred care is often described as working *with* clients and families, rather than just doing *to* or *for* them. (*Institute for Patient and Family-Centred Care*). Core concepts of family-centred care include: Respect, Information Sharing, Participation, and Collaboration.

### **Advocacy**

Advocacy can be understood as the involvement in the life of another person to assist in securing rights. There are three primary types of advocacy – systemic, instructed and self-advocacy.

### **Co-Construction/Co-Design**

This concept relates to partnering with families, and can be defined as: Developing a common ground of caring, respect, flexibility, and an orientation towards action that is based on shared knowledge and collaborative solutions; using narrative and self-reflection to support communication and restorative practices that challenge notions of power and pathology to create new ways of thinking and acting.

Power-sharing is the deconstruction of hierarchy using principles of collaboration and empowerment that recognize participants as contributors and not as subjects/objects; the belief that power is achieved when it is carried by the many.

### **Mentor**

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines mentor as a trusted guide, counselor, tutor, coach; to mentor is to give advice and instruction regarding the course or process to be followed.

Mentors may be parents or primary caregivers of children or adults with special health, developmental, behaviour, physical and/or emotional needs, who provide peer support and information to an assigned parent, based on their personal experience. The role is based on an understanding of the basic need to share concerns with another parent with lived experience and provide a different perspective from professional workers.

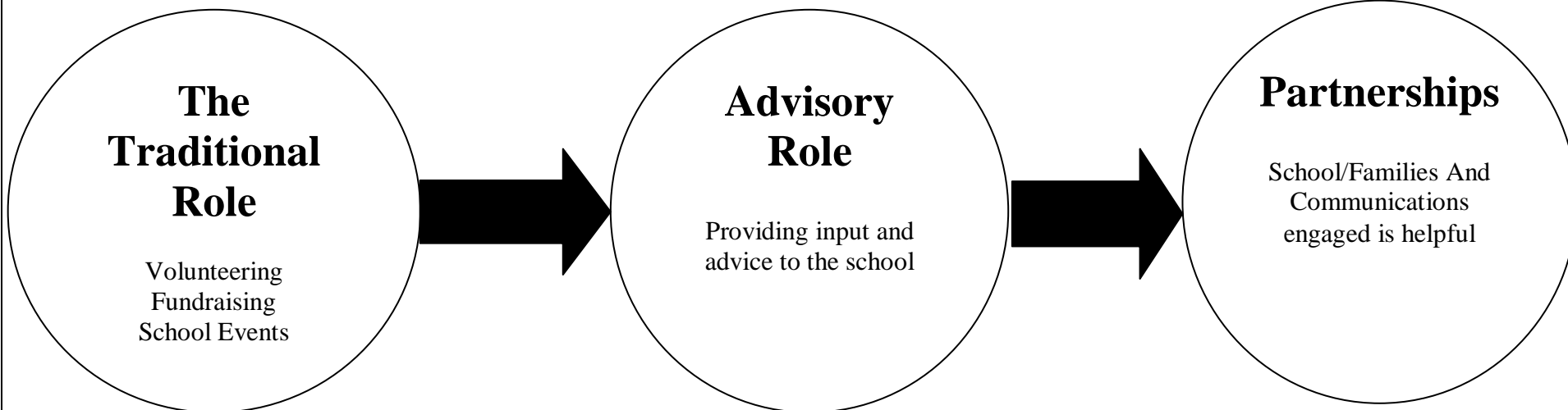


# The Evolving Role of Parents in Education

50's, 60's, 70's, 80's

90's

21<sup>st</sup> Century



Volunteering  
Fundraising  
Attending school events

Learning  
Struggling  
Change

Narrowly defined advisory role

Learning  
Struggling  
Change

Recognized all forms of helpful involvement  
Joint efforts of educators and parents

Examples of Family Experiences along the spectrum of engagement, moving towards partnership in family-centred care

| Doing 'to'                                       | Doing 'for'                       | Doing 'with'                         |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Provider makes the rules, controls the schedules | Families have some input          | Family as source of control          |
| Information is not shared                        | Some transparency and public data | Shared knowledge and decision-making |
| "I talk – you listen"                            | "We help you"                     | "We walk together"                   |
| Compliance focus                                 | Improvement focus                 | Co-design focus                      |
| Unilateral                                       | Benevolent                        | Partnership                          |

## Family Engagement Council Terms of Reference

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### CONTEXT

Children's Treatment Network is committed to a child and family centred approach to planning and delivering multi-disciplinary, multi-sector care to children with multiple special needs. A key component of family centred care is ensuring there are opportunities for families to be actively engaged in their child's care and in ongoing development of the Network.

Recognizing that family engagement contributes to positive outcomes for their children and the Network, CTN sees family engagement as encompassing a broad range of strategies and activities that:

- welcomes, respects and values parents/families as partners in their child's care and treatment
- creates opportunities for parents/families to be involved at all levels of the Network, with a range of choices about how, when and where to be involved
- engages parents/families through ongoing communication and dialogue
- supports parents/families with the information and tools they need to make informed choices and be engaged in their child's care, and if they choose, to support other parents, or to participate in shaping the network

As a first step, a Family Engagement Working Group was established in January 2012 under the leadership of Lynn Ziraldo, Executive Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of York Region, to draft a framework, policy and workplan. One of the working group's recommendations was to establish a Family Engagement Council, to be lead by families, and to share the responsibility for implementation of the family engagement policy and plan.

The Family Engagement Policy, including the Terms of Reference for this Council, was approved by the Board of Directors on \_\_\_\_\_.

## **MANDATE**

The Family Engagement Council will provide advice and guidance to Children's Treatment Network on policies, planning, implementation and evaluation of family engagement strategies and activities. The Committee may play an active role in coordinating and providing oversight to family engagement activities.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To recommend an annual family engagement workplan guided by the six types of engagement: Parent Education; Communication; Volunteering; Participation; Decision-making; Collaborating with Broader Community
- To review policies, initiatives and procedures with respect to how they relate to family engagement, training needs and curricula
- To provide guidance and coordination for family engagement activities related to advocacy, networking/mentoring/coaching, committee participation or other parent-related activities (e.g. training, communication)
- To develop/maintain linkages to family groups and councils such as the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services (OACRS), CAPHC's Canadian Family Advisory Network (CFAN), Special Education Advisory Committees and Network partner family groups as appropriate
- To collaborate with the Social Media Working Group, sharing information and coordinating activities as appropriate
- To assist with evaluation and continuous quality improvement related to family engagement, and programs and services

## **ACCOUNTABILITY and SUSTAINABILITY**

The Family Engagement Council will provide guidance on family engagement to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who will report to the Board on a monthly basis, or as needed.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The maximum size of the Family Engagement Council will be 12. The majority of members are families, including diverse representation from both Simcoe and York, with children/youth from various age groups and needs/diagnoses. The Council will also include representation from

- CTN staff, who will facilitate input from and reporting to Clinical and Local Team staff with respect to the work of the Council
- Network Partner Staff

The group may, from time to time, develop other mechanisms to gather input from a wider range of families.

### Term of membership

The Council will establish rotating membership based on a 3 year term, and a selection process to ensure the desired diversity of representation. The term will be renewable for an additional 3 years.

### Support

The CEO will designate a Director to provide support to the Family Engagement Council.

### Role of the Chair

The Family Engagement Council will be chaired or co-chaired by a family member(s) with some experience in family engagement and meeting facilitation. The chair will work closely with the CTN Director appointed by the CEO, and the chair of the Social Media working group to coordinate planning and communication, and to ensure effective alignment of strategies to engage families.

The role of the chair is to facilitate the work and meetings of the group effectively, to achieve the responsibilities identified in the terms of reference, and to bring recommendations forward to the CEO.

### **FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS**

The Family Engagement Council will meet monthly September through June, or as needed. Meeting frequency will be reviewed annually.

**Appendix D: Procedures (Under Development)**