

Tips For Engaging Families in Mental Health and Disability Services

Suggestions For Agencies Across Systems of Care

1 Acknowledge Families As The Experts

- Take time to listen to and gather information from families
- Utilize family members' expertise to form goals and action plans, emphasizing strengths over deficits
- Treat families as partners in implementing common goals

2 Make Participation Easy

- Provide opportunities and appropriate spaces for families to safely share their perspectives
- Be clear about meeting goals in advance
- Value transparency; make all relevant information accessible to families
- Anticipate and carefully address any potentially triggering information that needs to be shared

3 Recognize The Positives

- Acknowledge all contributions to the conversation and give credit where it is due
- Celebrate successes; confidence increases when families know they've made progress
- Recognize diversity as a strength

4 Honor Each Family's Culture

- Recognize personal assumptions before meeting with a family; encourage families to share about their culture and how it impacts service needs
- Inquire about the cultural needs of the family, including document translation and interpreters
- Allow the youth to help define who is 'family', encouraging family members in all roles to engage

5 Offer Additional Support



- Offer respite and child care for meetings
- Honor family contributions of time and talent; recognize volunteers
- Share information, resources and services with families to build skills and increase engagement
- Create procedures to limit the need for family members to retell potentially traumatizing information about their situation



Looking to increase family voice and participation? NVFN is your first stop for connecting to families, children and youth impacted by disabilities, mental health conditions and other unique needs.

Contact us at NVFNetwork@gmail.com to learn how we can help you!



NORTHERN VIRGINIA FAMILY NETWORK

NVFN is a network of nonprofit organizations serving Northern Virginia families and children. Our mission is to elevate the voices of families to improve outcomes for children, youth and young adults across systems of care.



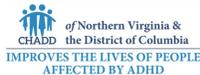
The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

thearcofnova.org



The Autism Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) builds community for over 5,000 individuals and families affected by autism through education, advocacy and support.

asn timer.org



CHADD is a nonprofit organization that provides information and support to parents of children with attention deficit disorders, adults with attention deficit disorders, and others dealing with people affected by attention deficit disorders.

meetup.com/novachadd



The mission of this organization shall be to ensure that all individuals with Down syndrome and their families receive the support necessary to participate in, contribute to and achieve fulfillment of life in their community.

dsanv.org



Formed Families Forward is a resource center focused on supporting foster, kinship, and adoptive families of children and youth with disabilities and other special needs.

formedfamiliesforward.org



NAMI Northern Virginia and its volunteers work together to raise awareness and provide education, advocacy, and support programs for people living with mental illness, families, students, educators, law enforcement, and the public throughout our neighborhoods.

nami-northernvirginia.org



Parents Of Autistic Children of Northern Virginia (POAC-NoVA) and its predecessor organization has worked for more than two decades to improve the quality and quantity of education for students with autism in Northern Virginia.

poac-nova.org



PEATC is Virginia's Parent Training and Information Center serving families of children with disabilities or suspected disabilities from birth through age 26 and the professionals who work with them.

peatc.org



The Regratifying Foundation's mission is to encourage foster care youth to continue their education, learn about and consider professional careers and to set future personal and career goals before they age out or emancipate from foster care.

regratifyingfoundation.org