

Topic 4 – Parent Engagement and Mentoring

Examples of success in engaging parents and/or providing parent mentoring

- White Earth has a grant for parent mentoring, a project to help get kids ready for school and connect families to resources.
- White Earth creates multi-faceted events with activities for kids, parents, food, and provides transportation. Example – the Festival of Fathers.
- Offering a community-led family language nest versus having expert speakers.
- Have listening sessions for families to guide development of opportunities. For example, Cherokee Nation held focus groups with parents to help with strategies to increase parent engagement. Created parent councils in each tribal district where parents set their own priorities, needs, and training. This empowered parents to take the lead and be invested.
- Bring families to events with fun, food, cultural activities, and offer prizes, child care, and gift cards to encourage participation. Then engage them on academic issues.
- Offer community bucks program for families to earn points for doing activities; families can then redeem their community bucks for goods sold in the community.
- Offer family conferences with hands-on activities.
- Canoe building event for families.
- Provide events in conjunction with other programs, like a program for fathers.
- San Felipe Pueblo's integrated care model (includes interagency collaboration). Program collaborates on family engagement activities monthly. They videotape the event and place it on YouTube for others to watch.

Barriers to engaging parents and/or providing parent mentoring

- Only some segments of community "buy in" to traditional lifestyles and practices.
- Colonization, historical trauma, boarding schools, drug addiction, and violence – some parents don't feel safe leaving their homes to participate in activities. They fear their home will be burglarized while away.
- Some parents in recovery from drug addiction feel judged, so they don't go to activities.
- Families in crisis.
- Transportation.
- Fear of child protection getting involved with their family.
- Working parents are overextended and don't have enough time to participate in activities.
- Not knowing how to measure/evaluate long-term impact, and not having funding for evaluation.

How communities can address these barriers

Key ideas: Strategies to engage parents: 1) Go to where parents are instead of requiring parents to come to particular events and meetings. This could be accomplished through home visiting or conducting events at a location where parents are already gathered. 2) Provide incentives for parents to attend events and meetings, such as gas cards or providing transportation. 3) Try holding activities at different times of day. One community offers activities during the day instead of evenings.

- Engage parents' supportive extended family.
- Help families connect with cultural practices. This may include teaching parents about cultural practices in a way that parents feel safe; some have not learned about them.
- Incorporate parent mentoring into the [Tribal Healing to Wellness Court](#) systems.
- Need to measure whether parent engagement is leading to desired impact.
- Provide incentives to participate to promote stress reduction and access to services. Make the activity a break from life's chaos.
- For families fearing the security of the home while away, have someone watch their house.
- Create a give back component where parents and families can contribute.