

# THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT

Los Angeles County - Department of Mental Health  
Children's Systems of Care - Family and Child Partnership

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## GOALS

- ▶ Increase understanding of the importance of engaging with families, youth and children receiving mental health services.
- ▶ Increase understanding of the role engagement plays in the process of positive outcomes.

## OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Define the process of engagement.
- ▶ Address positive and successful ways to engage families.
- ▶ Explore how to use engagement to move the families toward wellness and success.
- ▶ Explore how to engage families who have experienced trauma, guilt and/or shame due to a mental health diagnosis or/and emotional behaviors.
- ▶ Identify barriers and learn to manage obstacles encountered when providing services.

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## WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

Ongoing communication that creates a positive, trustful and effective working relationship with families in order to help them learn how to become full partners in the services they receive.



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## ENGAGEMENT IS FOUND WITHIN MENTAL HEALTH PRINCIPLES

- ▶ Family voice & choice
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Strength Based
- ▶ Team Based
- ▶ Natural Supports and Resources
- ▶ Community Based
- ▶ Culturally Competent
- ▶ Individualized
- ▶ Persistent
- ▶ Outcome based around the family needs

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## THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGING FAMILIES

- ▶ Supports the family's goals.
- ▶ Increases family participation.
- ▶ Increases the family's willingness to continue to work even when faced with challenges.
- ▶ Increases the family's willingness to change and improve.



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## BENEFITS CONTINUED

- ▶ Families become empowered to address their problems and ask for what they need to succeed.
- ▶ Builds TRUST.



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## ENGAGEMENT TIPS

- ▶ Clearly identify your role.
- ▶ Address each person with the name they are most comfortable with.
- ▶ Use ice breakers to get to know the family and help open the discussion. How to use your story to engage to open the lines of communication with the family
- ▶ Speak in a language that families understand.
- ▶ Recognize the family's strengths and experiences.

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## ENGAGEMENT TIPS CONTINUED

- ▶ Be attentive and present.
- ▶ Validate their feelings, thoughts and concerns.
- ▶ Be mindful that your personal beliefs and values may not be the same as the family's.
- ▶ Be mindful of your body language, tone of voice and eye contact.
- ▶ Be compassionate with words and actions.

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## ENGAGEMENT TIPS CONTINUED

- ▶ Be warm, honest and genuine.
- ▶ Be willing to learn from the child/youth and parent(s)/caregiver(s).
- ▶ Use humor (when appropriate).
- ▶ Have a genuine/real interest.



## ACTIVE LISTENING

**LISTENING = LEARNING**

Guiding Points:

- Stop talking.
- Let the other person talk.
- Show that you are willing to listen.
- Eliminate distraction.
- Put yourself in their shoes.

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## ACTIVE LISTENING CONTINUED

- Be patient.
- Be aware of your emotions and triggers.
- Listen with sensitivity.
- **DO NOT JUDGE OR CRITIZE.**



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## MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Motivational interviewing is used to assist people with accepting change. These skills include the following:

- The ability to ask open ended questions.
- The ability to provide affirmations (confirmation).
- The ability to use reflective listening .
- The ability to periodically provide an oral summary and upon request written updates in the parents/youth/caregivers language.

GET INFORMED  
ALWAYS ASK QUESTIONS

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## MAINTAINING AND MANAGING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP

- Approach all interactions with openness, actively listen and communicate in a nonjudgmental manner.
- Communicate honestly and respectfully.
- Get to the know family by continuously learning their culture and dynamics of their relationships.
- Address and attempt to understand concerns/ worries and the family's underlying needs.

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## THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN ENGAGEMENT IS NOT HAPPENING

- ▶ Family Culture
- ▶ How the family functions
- ▶ How the family members support each other
- ▶ Possible history of trauma
- ▶ Grieving a loss
- ▶ Incompatibility

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## THINGS TO CONSIDER CONTINUED

- ▶ Not explaining the program, the purpose of the program, or the role of the people that will be working with the family.
- ▶ Too much focus on paperwork.
- ▶ Coming in with an agenda that differs from that of the family.
- ▶ Not speaking the parent(s)/ caregiver(s) language.
- ▶ Not addressing problems due to fear of upsetting the family.



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## ROLE PLAY EXERCISE & DISCUSSION

### THE RELUCTANT PARENT/CAREGIVER



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## PARENT PARTNER/ADVOCATE

Who we are?

- ▶ Parents who have children who are currently or who have previously received mental health services.

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## ROLE OF PARENT PARTNERS/ADVOCATES

- ▶ Connect parent(s)/caregiver(s) to those who can help them.
- ▶ Help providers of services understand what parent(s)/caregiver(s) may be going through.
- ▶ Advocate, mentor and support parent(s)/caregiver(s).

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## ROLE CONTINUED

### Positive:

- ▶ Help in stabilize the family.
- ▶ Provide guidance and mentoring to the family.
- ▶ A confident someone to trust.

### Potentially Negative:

- ▶ Mandated reporter.
- ▶ Part of the system that is hurting their family.
- ▶ Possibly creating more problems.
- ▶ May be perceived as telling parents what to do.

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## BENEFITS OF SHARING YOUR STORY

- ▶ Help with engagement.
- ▶ Helps parent(s)/caregiver(s) know that this happens to many people, not just them, and there is a light at the end of the tunnel.
- ▶ Builds the parent/caregiver's confidence.
- ▶ Creates a bond with the parent(s)/caregiver(s).

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## Guest Panel Q&A

- ▶ What helped you to engage with your team?
- ▶ How did the team help you realize that you are not alone in this situation?
- ▶ How did your team build your confidence?
- ▶ Did the team give you hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel?

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## STRESS CHARTS

▶ PARENT

▶ YOUTH

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## DISCUSSION: HOW DO WE ENGAGE THE FAMILY?

**What you see:** You are meeting a family for the first time. Parents are quiet and not talking. You notice the family is in an uproar and the parents are just sitting quietly. You wonder if the parents are not doing their job as parents because they allow their children to run amuck. You think they need parenting classes and need to be reported to protective services. They are defiant and do not need to have their children at this time.



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## RECONNECTING AFTER A DISCONNECT

- ▶ Acknowledge the disconnect, disagreement, misunderstanding.
- ▶ Talk about the emotions and distrust that the disconnect may have caused.
- ▶ Discuss ways to resolve the issues.

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## WORKING WITH TRAUMATIZED FAMILIES

- ▶ Trauma is an "extreme distressing & disturbing experience".
- ▶ Being aware of the trauma helps you know how to support your parent(s)/caregiver(s).
- ▶ Trauma may result in:
  - Emotional Pain
  - Behavior problems
  - Change in character
  - Physical pain



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## HELPING FAMILIES MANAGE LIFE EXPERIENCES

- ▶ **Forgiveness**
  - Help parents forgive themselves.
- ▶ **Empowerment**
  - Teach and mentor the parents to advocate for themselves and their families.
- ▶ **Guilt**
  - Support parents in having compassion for themselves.
- ▶ **Shame**
  - Letting them know that this happens to many people, not just them, and there is a light at the end of the tunnel.



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## REMINDERS

- ▶ Engagement does not end, but needs to be adjusted as time goes by.
- ▶ Empower the families and nurture hope.
- ▶ Don't give up, regardless of how guarded a parent can be.

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## HOW TO REACH US



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**Questions**

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