Parents as Change-Makers
Advocacy 101

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Children Need Amazing Parents

CHAMPS
children need amazing parents

CHAMPS is a national campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality parenting.

Policy Priorities
1. Support relationships between birth and foster families
2. Implement data-driven recruitment and retention practices
3. Engage foster parents in decision making
4. Provide timely access to trusted, dedicated staff and peer support to foster parents
5. Prioritize placements with family members and other family connections
6. Ensure timely access to physical and mental health services

Engage Foster Parents in Decision Making

OVERVIEW
- Foster parents have valuable information about the child that no one else has.
- Information foster parents have is valuable to courts and agencies and can assist with case planning, permanency planning, educational decisions, and health care.
- Foster parent involvement in case planning is linked to increased foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

Aims to spur policy reforms in 20 to 25 states over five years to:
- Prioritize quality foster parenting
- Ensure that foster parents are equipped with the training and support they need to help children heal, grow, and flourish.
Provide Timely Access to Trusted Staff and Peer Support

OVERVIEW

- Foster parents commonly report that the single most important factor in their ability to care for children is the ability to connect with someone they trust to discuss how best to meet the needs of children in their care.
- Research has also shown that support to foster parents is associated with improved foster parent retention and decreased placement failure.
- Policy should provide that every foster parent has access to someone who can provide needed support and advice in a timely way. The people who can best fill that role are often other experienced, successful foster parents.

What Is Advocacy?

- Think about a time when you were nervous to make a request but you got what you were requesting.
- What made your request successful?

Advocacy 101

- Your voice matters!
- You can make a big difference
- To make a difference you have to advocate
- Stories and sharing experiences are the best advocacy tools
- Policymakers can’t fix what they don’t know about and they don’t know about it if they don’t hear about it, from you.

Poll: What Is Advocacy?

Poll: Your Top Issue

Questions?
What Are the Steps?

- Step up as leader(s)
- Identify the issue – develop the ask
- Determine where you need to advocate
- Collect data
- Identify partners and gather support
- Develop recommendations and strategy
- Evaluate, celebrate, recalibrate, sustain

Developing the Ask

- First…you must have one!
- ALWAYS from a child’s point of view
- Easily understood language – avoid jargon, initials, insider phrases
- Put the audience in the issue – “What would you want for your child or a child you love?”
- Solutions-focused

Developing the Ask

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Determine Where to Advocate

- Congress
- Federal executive branch agencies
- State legislature
- State executive branch agencies (i.e., DCF)
- Private foster care agencies
- Court
- Local agency offices
- Individual workers

Collect Data

- Research media, journals, and others who have published data
- Contact state or local agency who may have data
- Conduct a survey to gather data
- Conduct listening sessions or focus groups to collect anecdotal data

Partners = Strength in Numbers

- Who else is working on this?
- Who should be brought in?
  - Both usual and unusual suspects
  - What emerging leaders do you want to recognize, elevate, and engage?
- Give to get
- Outreach efforts
- Wide cross section of supporters

Poll: Your Best Partner
Develop Recommendations

- Whom will it affect?
- How much will it cost?
- To implement
- If not implemented
- Logic model builder: https://toolkit.childwelfare.gov/toolkit/
- SMART goals
  - Specific
  - Measurable
  - Achievable
  - Realistic
  - Time-bound

Power Mapping

Evaluate, Celebrate, Recalibrate, Sustain

Evaluate
- What progress have you made?
- What is going well?
- What could you improve?

Celebrate
- Take time to celebrate even small victories
- Share successes with partners, supporters, public

Evaluate, Celebrate, Recalibrate, Sustain

Recalibrate
- Tweak or change strategies
- Cultivate new partnerships
- Update data
- Revise messaging

Sustain
- Don’t give up!
- This is a marathon, not a sprint

Data and resources

- Members of Congress Look-Up: https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members
- State Legislators Look-Up: https://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/

Questions?
ADVOCACY WITH SPECIFIC AUDIENCES

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Legislative Advocacy

- Study your issue
  - Know your system or find allies who can show you the ropes
- Find your audience
- Consider your timing
- Identify your allies
- Plan for your interaction
  - Schedule meeting
  - Follow-Up

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Executive Branch Officials

- Know your audience
- Study agency policies and your issue
- Learn opportunities for involvement
  - Advisory boards, committees, work groups
  - Schedule a meeting with decision makers

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Working with the Media

- Print Media
  - Op-Eds
  - Interviews
- Television
  - Interviews
  - Feature Stories
- Website and Blogs
  - Bloggers and Online Magazines
  - Start a Column
- Radio
  - Public Service Announcements
  - Interviews

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Educating vs. Lobbying

- Educating:
  - Define what success looks like
  - Identify need for services
  - Identify demand for needed services
  - Personal connection to the issue

- Lobbying:
  - Define what success looks like
  - Identify need for services
  - Identify demand for needed services
  - Personal connection to the issue
  - Promote specific bill or legislative language
  - Request or promote specific funding or program
  - Attempt to influence directly or have public call for action

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Direct v. Grassroots Lobbying

- Direct lobbying
  - Is a communication
  - With a legislator or their staff (in some states can also be an administrator)
  - That expresses a view on specific legislation (current or to be proposed)

- Grassroots lobbying
  - Is a communication
  - With members of the public
  - That has a call to action to contact their legislators to take action is support of or in opposition to specific legislation

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The Power of a Personal Story

- There is a power in a personal story:
  - A story paints a picture and makes something real to others
  - A story enables people to establish a connection
  - For advocacy, it's great to combine stories with data and numbers to show how many have similar experiences or who can be helped

Establish Your Goals

- Identify your goal(s)
- Decide what messages relate well to that goal
- Develop rough talking points
- For example, if you're highlighting the need for support services for older children or those with more challenges, talking points might be:
  - Children who face a variety of challenges are being raised in families.
  - Families are the best place for all children and youth.
  - There's a family for every child.
  - Families need training and support to help ensure they can meet the needs of children and youth.

Identifying Your Storytellers

- Brainstorm who might be the best messengers
  - Types of families
  - Young people who have experienced foster care or adoption
  - Solicit stories
  - Find constituents of the policymakers you're seeking to influence
  - Ask others for recommendations
  - Seek diversity of story and storytellers
- Choose the one or few people whose stories best convey your messages and show the diversity of the issues (don’t have three people tell the same story)

Questions?

For More Information...

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