

# Family Engagement Through Family-led Roundtables

Rochester City School District SS/HS Initiative

In partnership with Office of Mental Health System of  
Care Initiative



# Sharing Our Stories and Learning On...

- Purpose of Family Roundtables (FRT)
- Elements of Family Roundtables
- Why Implement a Family Roundtable
- Popular FRT topics (as chosen by parents)
- Issues and themes identified through the FRT and solutions derived from them
- Community school based Roundtables
- How to replicate a FRT in your community



# Purpose of Family Roundtables (FRTs)

- Provides support to families and caregivers of children and youth experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges through:
  - A forum for family voice
  - Opportunities for parent education
  - Peer to peer support for families
  - Tools to assist parents to be more effective partners in their child's education
  - Forum for eliciting family input to other child-serving systems (in our case, education, mental health and child welfare)
- Vehicle for focused outreach, engagement, and partnership
- Vehicle for convening families around a particular learning or change



# History of Monroe County's FRT

- Began in 2006 as a “family council”
- Had 15 standing members
- Disbanded “family council” format (for 3 months)
- During hiatus held one-on-ones with family members
- Re-introduced as the family roundtable
- Currently have 35+ active members in original FRT
- Expanded:
  - 2 county-wide FRTs
  - 2 suburban in development
  - 1 city geographic-based in development



# Lessons Learned

- Integrated core values and principles of family engagement
- Removed chairperson/leadership roles
- Removed requirements around consistency of attendance for parents
- Meeting format altered – meetings were created to be “independent” meetings and not necessarily part of a series



# Benefits to Parents

- Creates a forum and a support system for families
- Provides a vehicle for parent empowerment
- Provides a vehicle for developing parent leaders
- Creates an effective body for parent advocacy



# Benefits to Schools, CBO's & Systems

- Creates stronger more engaged families in their students' education
- Reaches parents who might not otherwise attend PTA meetings or other traditional school activities
- Complements the efforts of a PTA/PTO
- Continuous quality improvement opportunity



# Essential Values & Principles

- Family driven
- Family-led
- Family oriented
- Culturally sensitive
- Relationship-based
- Building trust
- Create a “safe” space





# Expanding to School/Community-based Roundtables

- Expand SS/HS and SOC/OMH partnership to include Rochester City School Office of Parent Engagement
- Selected SS/HS pilot site to present FRT opportunity
- Parent survey
- Pilot school suggests extending invitation to all parents residing in city Southwest quadrant
- In process with partners to convene meeting with principals and other administrators to:
  - Share information
  - Assess interest
  - Access to school parents

# How to Replicate a FRT in Your Community

- Identify potential partners
- Clarity and practice of values and principles
- Low-key facilitative staff
  - Commitment for long haul
  - Build parent confidence to lead the roundtable process
- Supports and incentives for initial parent engagement
- Start small
  - At least 6 different **families** (not individuals)



# Components of a FRT



Building trust and partnership with families

# Meeting Format

## Contributors to the Content

A 3-part Meeting Format:

- Parents learning from systems representatives
- Systems learning from parents
- Parents learning from parents



# Parents Learning from Systems

- Diagnosis and Medications
- IEPs and 504 plans
- Emotional Health in children and adolescents (signs & symptoms)
- Post-partum Depression
- Breakdown of the mental health system
- Analysis of community available resources and how to access them
- Signs of parent/caregiver stress



# Systems Learning from Parents

- Promotional/Collateral Material
  - “Adult Guide to Youth Services “
- Training
  - “Emotional Health in Children and Adolescents”
  - “Join Me On My Journey”
- Program creation
  - Community Care
- Service Delivery
  - Outpatient Services



# Logistical Considerations

- Registration
- Consistent time and (accessible) location
- Low-key staffing support
- Utilizing parent volunteers
- Childcare
- Transportation
- Incentive (ie, door prizes)
- Food (light fare ranging to dinner)





# Promoting Your FRT

- Email flyer invitation to:
  - Parents
  - Providers
  - Teachers
- Cards to Parents via US Mail
- Parent-written invitation letters to providers who pass them on to parents





# Questions?



Building trust and partnership with families



Every child is a work of art.  
Create a masterpiece.