

Youth and Parent Partnership

Application Expectations

Each Local Implementation Site (LIS) is expected to meaningfully engage youth and parents with lived experience in their planning, implementation, institutional analysis, and evaluation processes. Your application should demonstrate that youth and parents are in roles which have decision making capacity, share mutual accountability and responsibility across the team, and have leadership opportunities throughout the life of the project. This level of partnership requires parents and youth in roles with clearly defined responsibilities. Your application must reflect your organization's capacity to fully support youth and parents with lived experience in these new roles. These youth and parents should be co-designers of your proposal.

Youth and parents must be identified in your proposal organizational chart.

In this initiative, consider the following definitions of youth, parents, and foster parents.

- **Children and Youth:** References to children and youth in this application refer to the life span infancy through young adulthood while still in the care of a child welfare agency.
- **Parent(s):** For the purpose of this application and project, parent(s) are the individuals who are often birth parents with guardianship of their child(ren) prior to removal. Others, such as kin relations who are parenting and have guardianship of the child(ren) at the time of removal, are also included in this definition.
- **Lived Experience:** Knowledge and expertise gained from personal experiences. In this application and project, parents with lived experience include those who have directly interacted with, or been impacted by, the child welfare system. These parents may have had their child removed from their custody or experienced connections to the system more broadly. Youth with lived experience have directly interacted with the child welfare system and specifically foster care. Parents and youth with lived experience have gained valuable insights and expertise in the child welfare system based on their personal experiences. Foster parents have gained unique knowledge and expertise from personal experiences and are important partners in your work. Their lived experience should be considered unique from the experience of a biological family.

Consider each of these stakeholders as having unique expertise to offer to the initiative. Youth and parents must be engaged and, the valuable addition of foster families should be considered in your implementation plans as well. Please make sure to engage each of these stakeholders as their perspectives are unique and valuable and you need youth, parents, and foster families to ensure the success of your work.

**Note: if a proposed intervention focuses on early childhood populations, youth partnership may look different but is still an important and expected part of the initiative. Consider engaging parenting teens or siblings as you review the following information.*

Leadership Roles

When identifying parent and youth for leadership roles in your initiative, it is important that these individuals mirror the population of youth and families your intervention(s) are intended to serve.

- Form** meaningful partnership of at least one, if not two, birth families or families of origin and, at least one, if not two, youth with experience in the foster care system, in a leadership role as part of the local quality improvement expert team. Recruitment of youth and families for these positions should ideally be legacy parents who have lived experience. These parents may have previously received child welfare services or may currently be receiving child welfare services themselves.
- Develop** a Youth and/or Parent Advisory Board to guide the efforts of this initiative (or that of your overall agency.) If a youth or parent advisory board already exists within your agency or the community, invite this advisory board to consider guiding the efforts of this initiative.
- Establish** a formalized/documented partnership with a local family-run, youth-run organization or local community agency that reflects the diversity of the community receiving services and infuse their lived experience in all initiative efforts.
- Identify** youth and/or parent leaders to serve as consultants to specific components of your initiative
- Employ** a full time Parent/Youth Peer Support Partner preferably with child welfare experience to develop meaningful connections with birth families, families of origin, and foster parents by providing authentic and intentional parent peer support with the primary goal of family reunification
- Create** an advisor or consultant role(s) for current foster families to advise on the unique and important role of foster families in reunification models

Meaningful Participation

Youth and Parents should engage in the LIS work of:

- Creating and reviewing marketing materials to ensure they are written in family friendly language and embrace the concept of family centered care
- Selecting a proposed model(s) to be implemented
- Reviewing policies and procedures to ensure they embody the value of meaningful youth and family involvement and youth and family professional partnerships at every level of the QIC-R project

- ❑ Developing the evaluation plan and the CQI evaluation process
 - ❑ Examples of participation may include: developing potential interview questions in collaboration with the QIC-R evaluation team, conducting telephonic surveys or face-to-face interviews with youth and families receiving services, participating in documentation reviews, and assisting in the development and review of the evaluation report
- ❑ Participating in the development of community partnerships to strengthen the proposed model and to disseminate findings

Best Practices to Support Success

- ❑ **Pay youth and parents.** Payment can be in the form of allocated FTE, stipends, or gift cards. If families are on public assistance, they may prefer to receive gift cards for things like gas or food to compensate them for their time. Keep in mind that the more standardized their compensation (i.e., budgeted FTE), the more likely they are to be able to participate in consistent and meaningful ways
- ❑ **Follow trauma informed practices when partnering with youth and parents.** For example, partners with lived experience may not want to meet at CPS for their meetings or they may need to debrief with someone after conversations around their lived experience
- ❑ **Practice cultural humility** when partnering with youth and parents
- ❑ Investigate whether your county or state has a **local family run or youth run organization**; if so reach out to agency leadership to discuss partnership with the organization in which they identify and recruit youth and/or legacy family members to participate in various roles; reach out to state and community foster parent organizations to connect with their networks and develop partnerships
- ❑ **Seek out opportunities** from the QIC-R to support your agency in developing onboarding and education practices that include leadership development, strategic sharing of their lived experience and learning how to interpret data

Parent and youth partnerships must continue throughout the QIC-R project (4+ years). It is appropriate, and may best fit your implementation plan, to partner in a variety of ways at different times.

Consider the level of engagement that would be most beneficial to the implementation stage of your initiative. Consulting may be useful during early planning stages for recruitment of youth and families into a new intervention. If so, have them participate in a discussion with your Youth and Parent Advisory board to provide feedback on recruitment language and materials. In later implementation stages it may be beneficial to engage a foster care alumnus as a paid Youth Peer to actively promote your intervention in the community.