

A SPACE FOR FAMILIES IN YOUTH JUSTICE

HOW TO BUILD A JUVENILE JUSTICE FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCIL



Inside this guide:

- Assessing Agency Readiness
- Preparing for Partnership
- Strategies for Recruiting Family Council Members
- Setting Up the Family Council to Meet Goals

Justice For Families (J4F) is national network of family leaders, impacted by the justice system, working to end mass criminalization, particularly of youth and in communities of color. We are the only national juvenile justice reform organization that is founded and run by families who have been directly impacted by the child welfare, juvenile and/or criminal justice systems. We are working to advance systemic policy and practice change while also building a base of those directly impacted, so they can individually help other families, and collectively sustain the reforms needed at the national and local levels. J4F raises the visibility of meaningful family engagement and demonstrates the success and importance of constituent-led organizing strategies.

Our primary goals are to transform justice systems so that they are driven by the interests of youth and families, and to move resources away from incarceration based on failed “tough on crime” policies and towards direct investments in young people, their families and the communities. The organization relies on three inter-related core strategies to achieve our goals:

- . Leadership Development & Technical Assistance
- . Strategic Partnerships
- . Policy & Advocacy

J4F prides itself in its commitment to promote racial equity and the removal of barriers to access and opportunity for communities that have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by inequality. This commitment is most clearly seen through the composition of the agency’s staff and core training team, which is comprised wholly of individuals of color, hailing from communities impacted by mass incarceration and most of whom have personally felt the impact of juvenile/criminal justice, mental health and/or child welfare systems. The J4F network of experts includes bi-lingual, bi-cultural advocates and system professionals from diverse communities (urban, rural and suburban) across the nation, including Puerto Rico; and each year, the J4F team and the agency’s capacity to provide quality training and technical assistance (T/TA) to others grows through the planning, coordination, and facilitation of the Family Leadership Institute and Community Peer Navigator Training.

Over the organization’s history, J4F is proud to have published the Families Unlocking Futures report; created family engagement guidelines used in federal grants to state juvenile justice agencies, ensuring that more agencies seek authentic voices at decision-making junctures; provided trainings to over 7,000 juvenile justice practitioners and stakeholders resulting in policy and practice change in agencies nationwide; and supported a network of thousands of justice-involved individuals, system-impacted families, and organizations. J4F has worked with foundations, juvenile justice agencies, mental health and educational advocacy groups, and other child-serving organizations to support better outcomes for young people and their families by actively engaging families in the reform process and encouraging investments in those communities impacted most by incarceration. *This re-released manual is an example of our collaborative work with others in the field.*

Establishing and participating in family advisory councils is a great entryway into systems reform work but there are so many other ways that impacted family members can be authentically engaged. J4F’s network of former youth and family leaders, training team members and staff bring a broad wealth of experiences and expertise to our work. In addition to invaluable lived systems’ experience, several members are certified restorative justice circle facilitators, and many in-person offerings are facilitated utilizing the circle process, honoring our indigenous and African ancestors, while working to repair past harms, build authentic partnerships, share information and resources, and strategize the implementation of community action plans. J4F trainers also have extensive experience in developing and implementing positive youth development, parent support, and alternatives to detention/incarceration programming and authentically engaging youth and adult community members as partners in the design and service delivery process.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, J4F launched an initiative to link local families with much needed resources and established its national office as a New York-based neighborhood center. Since that time, the Bronx site has evolved into an intergenerational community hub that hosts peer-led workshops for neighborhood youth and families like, Know Your Rights When Dealing with the Police and Paint Your Emotions (an art-based workshop that helps participants identify, manage and express their feelings about various life situations). This “learning laboratory” is where much of J4F’s recent training and technical assistance materials, practice models, and curricula have been developed and field tested; and they are regularly shared with others on a national platform, both virtually and in person.

To be successful at challenging the deep systemic problems in the youth and adult justice systems, we believe that there must be a core constituency rooted in impacted communities that will advance reforms over the long haul. The amplification of our message and amount of success J4F achieves relies heavily on impacted family members, like you, who are determined to make a difference. We are a small, but growing, national non-profit committed to helping you, your family, and community. Get connected to the J4F family leadership network...we want to to work together.

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A SPACE FOR FAMILIES IN YOUTH JUSTICE: HOW TO BUILD A JUVENILE JUSTICE FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Introduction

This guide is a product of a partnership between Justice for Families (J4F) and the Vera Institute of Justice, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The guide reflects years of work in the field and it also draws specifically from field visits and interviews with Annie E. Casey's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) sites that have embraced family partnerships and operationalized key strategies of meaningful family partnerships. The Pierce County Juvenile Court Family Council (Washington), Ventura Youth Correctional Facility Ward Family Council (California), Sedgwick County Division of Juvenile Justice Family Council (Kansas), and Parents/Professionals Advocacy League (Massachusetts) gave generously of their time to share valuable insights and timesaving experience that will undoubtedly prove helpful to other sites as they develop family advisory councils.

In 2012, Justice for Families released a report, *Families Unlocking Futures: Solutions to the Crisis in Juvenile Justice*. The report was based on more than 1,000 surveys and 24 focus groups with parents and family members of system-involved youth and presented a body of data that had never been captured or examined before. It aimed to correct misperceptions about system-involved youth and their families; demonstrated the need for families' active participation in redesigning juvenile justice systems; and exposed glaring flaws in the system that burden, alienate and exclude families from every juncture in the juvenile justice system. Since the release, J4F has successfully used the report to help change policy and practice to reflect the critical need for meaningful and genuine family voice at all decision-making points in juvenile justice.

In 2015, The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Justice Strategy Group began a partnership with J4F to develop strategies, tools and guiding principles for family engagement and partnerships for juvenile justice agencies. The Foundation's devotion to strengthening families, building stronger communities and ensuring access to opportunity provided a rich trove of information to build upon. In addition to research, the Foundation's experience in more than 300 Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) sites ensured that the body of work would be informed by the realities of juvenile justice agencies and be able to meet the needs of the agencies. The Foundation also provided the funding for this guide.

The Vera Institute of Justice has worked to improve family partnership in juvenile justice agencies. For over a decade, Vera has also held a strong presence in the family partnership movement,

adding to the mounting research supporting the importance of family partnership in juvenile justice reform and partnering with juvenile justice agencies around the country to prepare and assist leadership and staff to effectively engage and partner with families.

Families are a youth's primary emotional, social, cultural and spiritual resource. Therefore, we cannot maximize youth success or achieve our public safety goals without meaningfully engaging their families. Meaningful and genuine engagement happens when families are truly valued, and when they are appreciated as experts and critical stakeholders in the shaping of positive outcomes. This is not limited to families as experts on their own children and the benefits to engaging them at the individual case-level; it also includes drawing on the experiences and expertise of families throughout all the stages of system reform. As discussed below, it is important to define family broadly and to provide the opportunity for families and youth to define "family" for themselves.

Family advisory councils, consisting of families with direct experience, offer systems an opportunity to learn from the unique perspectives and expertise of families that produce better outcomes for youth, their families, and agency staff while also contributing to meaningful and sustainable reforms. The movement to meaningfully and genuinely partner with families is building momentum and has started to garner national attention from juvenile justice agencies that are realizing the importance of partnering with families impacted by their systems. Agency leaders in the movement to engage and partner with impacted families have learned of both the rewards and challenges involved in developing effective family advisory councils, and those lessons inform the following guide to help future juvenile justice jurisdictions join the movement.

The Fundamentals of Family & Youth Engagement

As the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Justice Strategy Group designed the critical components of its "deep end" work (which focuses on reducing reliance on youth corrections and other out-of-home placements) they recognized that family engagement would need to play a prominent role but that embracing family partnerships would be "no small feat". Engaging and partnering with families is a relatively new idea in juvenile justice and, as with any new body of work, it will take time to become a part of the system's policy, practice and culture. To help agencies achieve the goals of eliminating racial disparities and unnecessary out-of-home placements, J4F and the Foundation developed the fundamental building blocks of family engagement and partnership.

Family advocacy experts define family engagement as "a meaningful partnership with families and youth at every level of the agency and system." It's important to note that meaningful engagement happens when families are truly valued and when they are appreciated as experts and critical stakeholders in the shaping of positive outcomes. Again, this is not limited to families as experts on their own children and the benefits to engaging them at the individual case-level; it also includes drawing on the experiences and expertise of families throughout all the stages of system reform.

Core Concepts

Family engagement is a mindset:

Family engagement begins with a fundamental belief that all families care for their children, have strengths that can be built upon, and can be engaged. Family engagement is not about one single policy or practice or program; rather it lives in the culture of an organization and its evidence is seen in how families are treated and partnered with at a systemic level.

Define family broadly: Narrow, traditional definitions of who "family" is will seriously undermine the ability of systems to achieve the best possible results for the youth they serve. Partnering with families cannot be limited to just parents and legal guardians. Instead, the definition of family should remain broad. This can include siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. An inclusive definition of family embraces those connected by biology, marriage, adoption, and can also include people who have such significant shared histories and experiences that they are considered to be family. It is not the role of the system to define who a family is. Families, and especially youth, should be given the opportunity to define this for themselves.

Culture and context must be valued: Every youth that comes to the attention of the juvenile justice system brings along with them a complex web of experiences and stories. Many of these stories sit within a rich familial and communal culture. System stakeholders will achieve better outcomes if their first instinct and motivation is to learn and understand. If done correctly and authentically, this approach can help to mitigate both implicit and explicit bias, which sometimes comes in the forms of judgment and making assumptions.

Self-examination and patience are key: True collaboration and partnership requires mutual trust and respect. Developing trust and respect among families that may come from different social, economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and cultures requires a deep level of openness for self-examination and exploration. We must be open to accepting that we naturally judge others who are different from us, but that a genuine interest in finding common ground is at the heart of building trusting and respectful relationships. Effective family engagement efforts are mindful of existing power dynamics and are intentional about sharing power and authority. Remember that true partnerships take time to build, and will require patience and perseverance.

Benefits of Engagement and Partnership

Other child serving-serving agencies have long recognized the benefits of engaging and partnering with the families of the youth they serve and offer juvenile justice agencies ample guidance for creating and maintaining successful vehicles for partnership. Their experiences also demonstrate the numerous advantages of successful partnerships with families.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s “JDAI/Deep End Resource Guide” also highlights the importance of the Cross-Cutting Value of Family Engagement and suggests a multi-level approach to partnering with families. On the policy level, family advisory councils aid in the development of “well-informed policies, practices and programs, bridge data and research with individual perspectives, and help catch blind spots” that otherwise might be overlooked. Partnership provides the space for “stereotypes and assumptions to be challenged, builds bridges between youth, families, practitioners and systems, enhances collaboration”, and a quality assurance component.

Benefits of Engagement

For Youth

- ✓ Reduces recidivism rates
- ✓ Decreases lengths of stay in detention
- ✓ Decreases behavior incidents during incarceration
- ✓ Improves school performance while incarcerated

For Youth and Families

- ✓ Increases safety, fairness, and stability for youth and families
- ✓ Promotes youth and family participation and buy-in
- ✓ Increases families' capacity to promote youth well-being
- ✓ Expands planning options

For the Juvenile Justice System

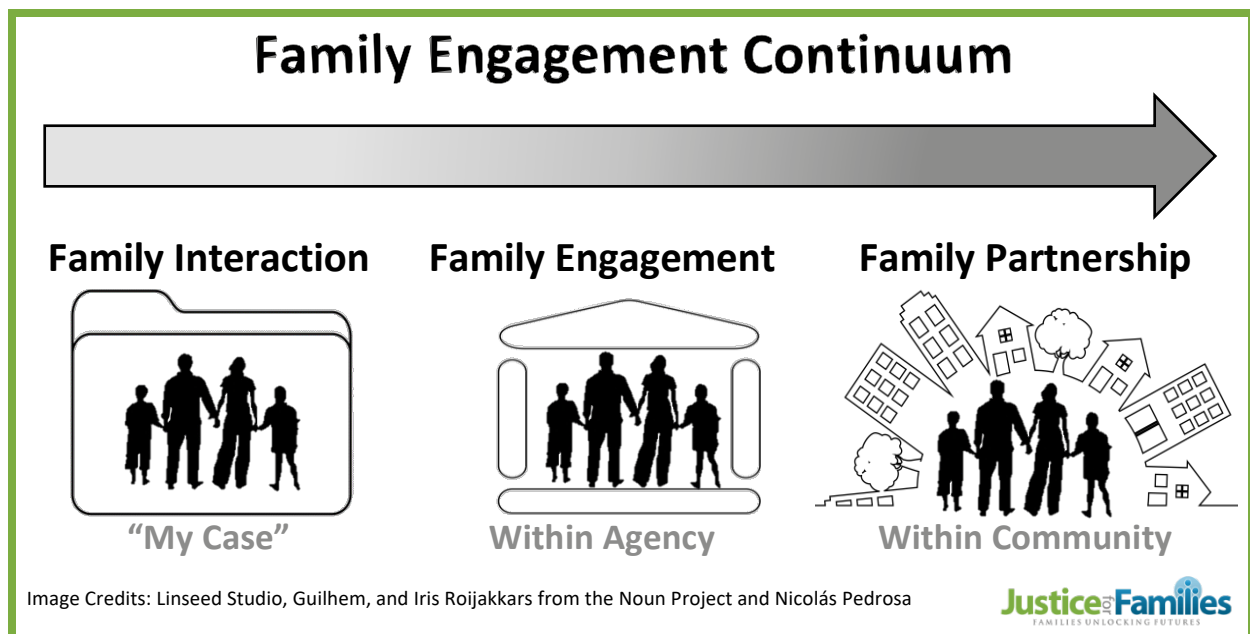
- ✓ Promotes positive relationships between the agency and other groups within the community
- ✓ Offers a more culturally relevant and appropriate service delivery system
- ✓ Improves workforce skills

Reference: The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention National Training and Technical Assistance Center, & National Center for Youth in Custody (2012). Engaging with Families in the Juvenile Justice System: An Overview from the National, State, and Local Perspective.

Family Engagement Continuum

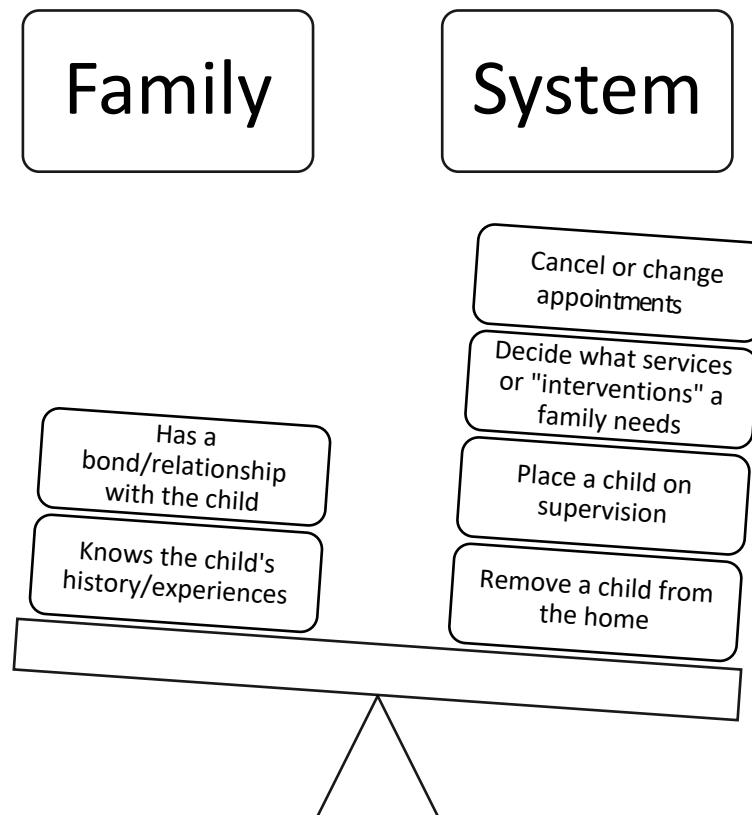
Justice For Families has developed the following Family Engagement Continuum to provide support and clarity to juvenile justice agencies and stakeholders.

- **Family Interaction:** It is essential that juvenile justice agencies develop policies and practices that treat families with dignity and respect from the moment their child comes in contact with the system. This very transactional stage includes everything from the way families are notified of a child's arrest, to how they are involved in case planning, to the visitation policies that are put in place for children who are detained or incarcerated. We call this stage in the continuum Family Interaction because, even at its best, it is never the same thing as family engagement. That said, true family engagement cannot take place unless this stage in the continuum is designed with families in mind.
- **Family Engagement:** During this stage, families are invited to engage with juvenile justice agencies beyond their child's case. This can include providing general feedback to the agency, reviewing agency policies, and even sitting on family advisory councils. During this stage in the continuum, family voice and input is strongly valued, but the power dynamics between the system and families are still very present.
- **Family Partnership:** The ultimate goal is to move towards true family partnership in which families and juvenile justice system stakeholders are working together, as peers, towards the betterment of the community they share.



Partnership Principles

- Power:** Although families are indisputably the experts on their children and on their experience with the system, they have little power when it comes to their relationship with the system itself. It is important to explore and acknowledge the power dynamics that are inherent between system stakeholders and family members, and to know that these carry over to the family advisory council experience. Justice For Families uses the following graphic to explore this with system staff and stakeholders in our five-day *Improving Outcomes by Partnering with Youth and Families* training:



- Patience:** Over and over again, when asked what piece of advice should be given to new jurisdictions interested in developing a family advisory council, the answer was “be patient and know that it’s a worthwhile process.” It takes time to build trusting relationships and even more time to help people feel comfortable sharing their experience with the goal of improving future experiences for those to follow. “There will be meetings where personal experience and emotions run high and dominate the entire meeting, but that’s ok. These are their lives. These are their children. There needs to be space for that.”

- Perspective:** Having a truly representative group of family participants on the council is particularly important when trying to bring genuine family voice into system decisions. Membership diversity in regards to race, age, gender, sexual orientation, family relationship, and socioeconomic status provide the family advisory council with a variety of experiences and perspectives from which to analyze impact and make quality recommendations to benefit all families and youth impacted by their juvenile justice system.

“THERE WILL BE MEETINGS WHERE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND EMOTIONS RUN HIGH AND DOMINATE THE ENTIRE MEETING, BUT THAT’S OK. THESE ARE THEIR LIVES. THESE ARE THEIR CHILDREN. THERE NEEDS TO BE SPACE FOR THAT.”

Representation

Family advisory councils should be representative of the youth involved in a jurisdiction’s juvenile justice system. We encourage specific outreach to families of:

- Racial and Ethnic Minorities:** The vast majority of youth involved in the juvenile justice system are youth of color. At every stage of the juvenile justice system—from schools, to arrest, to probation, to youth imprisonment—youth of color face unconscious bias on the part of the professionals in these systems. Family councils should be intentional about the inclusion of all families, especially families of color.
- Girls:** According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), girls made up nearly 30% of all youth arrests in 2015. The *Gender Injustice: System-Level Juvenile Justice Reforms for Girls*, authored by Francine T. Sherman and Annie Balck for The National Crittenden Foundation and the National Women’s Law Center, further explains that girls are often brought to the attention of law enforcement because of family conflict and crisis. With this in mind, it is particularly important to do targeted outreach to families of girls, to ensure that their voices and experiences are represented on the family advisory council.
- LGBTQ Youth:** According to the OJJDP, “available research has estimated that LGBT youths represent 5 percent to 7 percent of the nation’s overall youth population, but they compose 13 percent to 15 percent of those currently in the juvenile justice system”. Additionally, LGBTQ youth often experience rejection by parents/caregivers and identify friends and community allies as family. All jurisdictions have some LGBTQ youth in their systems, whether or not they have a way of tracking this. It is important to seek out family advisory council members who can speak to the experiences of LGBTQ youth and their families.

- **Non-citizen Youth and/or Youth from Immigrant Families:** Although it is not generally necessary or advisable for jurisdictions to track young people’s immigration status, we all acknowledge that there are non-citizen youth and/or youth from immigrant families in juvenile justice systems throughout the country. These youth and their families are often justifiably wary of engaging with law enforcement. It can be helpful for agencies to develop relationships with local organizations that are serving immigrant communities; have materials that are translated into relevant languages; and recruit staff that are members of local immigrant communities.
- **Crossover Youth:** The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform defines Crossover Youth broadly as, “youth who experience both maltreatment and delinquency—regardless of whether the maltreatment and/or delinquency becomes known to one or both systems. Dually-involved youth is a subset of crossover youth representing youth who are known to both systems, and dually-adjudicated youth is a subset of dually-involved youth who are court-involved in both systems”. Data from 96 counties in 21 states that implemented the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform’s Crossover Youth Practice Model, “found that 82% of the identified youth had some level of involvement with the child welfare system at the time of arrest”. With this in mind, we urge jurisdictions that are developing family advisory councils both to look beyond traditional, immediate families when recruiting family advisory council members.



Building a Juvenile Justice Family Advisory Council

Definition of a Family Advisory Council

A group of families that have direct experience with the juvenile justice system that advises, assesses, and supports the agencies programs, policies and procedures.

Step 1: Prepare for Partnership

The first step, regardless of where an agency is starting from, is to assess preparedness to create a family advisory council. Below are a few questions to assess whether your system is ready:

- **What resources do you have to dedicate to a family advisory council?**
 - **Staff commitments?**
 - Are there staff committed to consistently participate with and organize the council?
 - Are staff willing to work outside of “traditional work hours”?
 - Are staff willing to participate in additional training to prepare for family partnership?
 - Have staff received training on how to engage and partner with families?
 - **Resources and Compensation**
 - Is there a budget that provides some kind of compensation for family participation and time?
 - Is the system able to provide a space for council meetings?
 - Can the system provide meals or snacks for council meetings?
 - Is there funding to pay for a trained, neutral facilitator from an outside organization?
 - Can the system provide childcare?
- **What is the role of the family advisory council?**
 - Is the council expected to provide feedback on existing policies and practices? Will there be room for the council to suggest new policies and practices that they see a need for?
 - What amount of power and authority are you willing to share with the family advisory council?
- **Decision-making**
 - Are system leaders prepared to engage with the council in a meaningful way?
 - How will council decisions and feedback be shared with system leadership?

REMEMBER TO BE SENSITIVE TO DIETARY RESTRICTIONS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES WHEN SELECTING WHAT MEALS OR SNACKS TO SERVE AND COUNCIL MEETINGS.

CASH COMPENSATION MAY JEOPARDIZE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FUNDS OR SERVICES THAT SOME FAMILIES RECEIVE. FOR SOLUTIONS TO THIS AND OTHER ISSUES REGARDING COMPENSATION, PLEASE SEE “PATHWAYS TO PARTNERSHIP: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON COMPENSATION FOR FAMILY, YOUTH, AND CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT” IN THE RESOURCE SECTION OF THIS GUIDE.

Answers to these questions can help determine if an agency is well positioned to provide a meaningful family partnership experience. Without this foundation, several agencies around the country have exhausted time and energy trying to develop family advisory councils that fail to meet their goals. Across the sites interviewed for this guide, system stakeholders and family members alike reported that poor

planning and assessment in the beginning stages of council development lead to a series of frustrating growing pains and roadblocks that, for some, provided the space for restructure and realignment, and for others, revealed policies, practices and principles that did not align with strong family partnership and eventually led to the councils being dissolved.

It is also important to note that the role of the family advisory council should not be to provide direct peer-to-peer support to families that are currently impacted by the system. While there is great benefit to family navigator and peer-to-peer support programs, these kinds of programs require significant funding and resources to develop and implement and have a completely separate role and function from a family advisory council.

Step 2: Invite Family Input

Gathering family input to inform the development of the family advisory council is critical to ensure that the council is best constructed to encourage and support family participation and ensure long-term success. It is important that input be gathered from families who have lived experience with the juvenile justice system so that the input collected is relevant and reflective of that unique perspective.

There are a variety of different strategies to solicit family input. Two promising strategies include using surveys and focus groups facilitated by staff and/or an outside facilitator, or a series of community meetings to gather ideas. Taking the first step to gather family input before creating a family advisory council also serves as a solid foundation to spark interest for recruitment later on.

- **Surveys and focus groups.** Utilizing well-constructed surveys and/or focus groups is an efficient way to gather ideas and feedback about developing a family advisory council and inform families that the agency is looking to improve/strengthen its family engagement practices. Additionally, surveys and focus groups allow agencies to gather a representative sample of families. We strongly encourage any agency that is planning to hold a focus group with families to download a copy of Justice For Families' *Focus on Youth and Families: A Guide to Conducting Focus Groups with Youth and Families Impacted by the Juvenile Justice System*:
<https://www.justice4families.org/tools/guide-conducting-focus-groups/>
- **Family input meetings.** Host a large meeting for families to learn more about the agency's commitment to creating a family advisory council and gather ideas. Jurisdictions have utilized a variety of communication strategies to invite families to planning meetings, such as: flyers, conversations in treatment and other meetings with families, and having youth invite family members. Work done to better engage families in Virginia, revealed that having youth invite their family members yielded a much higher turnout than staff efforts alone.

Family feedback prior to recruitment for the council should focus on the following areas:

1. **Council meeting times and frequency:** Based on work in various jurisdictions, ideal meetings take place monthly for about 90 minutes to 2 hours.
2. **Compensation and compensation structure (per meeting, quarterly, per deliverable, etc.):** While most of the family advisory council stakeholders interviewed shared that they do not provide financial compensation for family participation, councils that experienced the most retention and productivity did provide family members with compensation for every meeting they attended.

3. **System stakeholder role in council:** For most family advisory councils, there are between one and three agency staff represented on the council, depending on the size of the council. Staff should never outnumber family members.
4. **Council objectives and potential activities** (based on family feedback).
5. **Number of ideal family members for council:** Family advisory councils typically range from 8-12 family members
6. **Term limits:** Council member terms varied from council to council. Based on our findings, the most effective term limits tend to be 18 months to two years, and provide for some overlap between new and experienced members. In Pierce County, members serve yearlong terms, with the option to reapply for a second term. The Massachusetts Parents/Professionals Advocacy League brings on new council members in cohorts, which helps with onboarding and with council cohesion. Additionally, it can be helpful to create formal ways for former council members to stay involved. One idea to consider is a “Historical committee” that can be involved in training new council members.
7. **Application process:** For councils that had consistent membership and terms, they required interested family members to complete a light application that described their interest in being a member of the council and information about their preferred method of communication and time available to commit. The agency should provide assistance to family members needing help filling out applications.

ONE OF THE DECISIONS FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCILS NEED TO MAKE IS WHETHER OR NOT TO INCLUDE PEOPLE WHOSE CHILDREN ARE CURRENTLY IN THE CUSTODY OF, BEING MONITORED BY AND/OR RECEIVING SERVICES FROM THE SYSTEM. THERE ARE PROS AND CONS EITHER WAY.

SOME COUNCILS HAVE CHOSEN TO INCLUDE MEMBERS WHOSE CHILDREN ARE CURRENTLY ENGAGED WITH THE SYSTEM BECAUSE THEY FIND THEIR PERSPECTIVES INVALUABLE; OTHER COUNCILS HAVE CHOSEN TO INCLUDE FAMILIES WHOSE CHILDREN ARE NOT CURRENTLY ENGAGED WITH THE SYSTEM, BUT HAVE VERY RECENT EXPERIENCE (WITHIN A YEAR OR TWO OF JOINING THE COUNCIL); OTHER COUNCILS HAVE CHOSEN TO OPEN MEMBERSHIP UP TO ANY FAMILIES THAT HAVE HAD PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THE SYSTEM, REGARDLESS OF WHEN.

THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWER HERE; IT IS SIMPLY A DECISION THAT EACH COUNCIL NEEDS TO MAKE FOR ITSELF.

The recruitment process can also serve to identify families that have an interest and/or gave the most feedback will make for easier recruitment than trying to enlist people for something developed behind closed doors. This step will also make it easier to develop some of the core elements needed prior to recruitment.

Step 3: Recruitment

For some agencies, the thought of recruiting families to participate in something like a family advisory council seems next to impossible because of what they perceive to be poor family participation in other system areas such as visitation, attendance at treatment meetings, etc. For other agencies, recruitment is an afterthought, leading to rushed and poorly planned efforts to bring families into the fold. Still others confuse effective recruitment with selecting those family members most uncritical of the system.

For the most effective recruitment efforts, family engagement best practices and lessons learned from jurisdictions reveal that there are a few promising strategies to encourage family participation.

- **Invite the broadest definition of family possible.** There is a growing movement in all child-serving systems to expand traditional definitions of family and allow youth to be connected to a broad range of family support while they navigate their time in the system. As things like visitation policies and people included in case planning expand to incorporate people beyond parents and legal guardians, it is important that all efforts aimed at improving family engagement operate under that same principle and offer opportunities for a diverse range of family and supportive people to participate on the family advisory council. In Pierce County, family council membership is open to anyone supportive of a young person in their system including people like neighbors, extended family and family friends. Their council membership currently consists of mothers, grandparents, and justice impacted youth.
- **Get the word out.** Families should have a variety of opportunities to hear and learn about the family advisory council. Creating flyers, including information in a family newsletter, and sending out emails and text messages are strong ways to get important information to a large number of families without a huge effort. While developing materials, choose images and language that will resonate with the families of young people in the system. This is also a crucial time to think about outreach to families of girls, LGBTQ youth, noncitizen youth and/or youth from immigrant families, and crossover youth. In discussions with justice-involved family members across the country, families have shared that the typical correspondence they receive from the justice system usually comes across as cold, impersonal and negative. According to a family representative from the Massachusetts based group Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL), “making sure that printed materials utilize family friendly language is extremely important.” Additionally, encouraging staff that interact with families and youth to share information about the family advisory council and recruitment is an extremely effective way to leverage staff relationships and provide a personalized invitation to join the council. However, recognizing the power dynamics between staff and families is critical and it is important that staff clearly communicate that joining the council is voluntary and there will be no negative consequences for not joining. Finally, if there is already a group of engaged family members, the best outreach strategy is to partner and encourage them to spread the word about the council opportunity to other families they may be connected to.
- **Utilize community partnerships.** Families are connected to a variety of community-based organizations such as religious institutions, schools, and local community centers. Developing relationships with organizations in the communities where the agency’s youth and families live is a powerful way to help share information about the family advisory council using folks outside of the system to communicate the opportunity. This is also a great strategy to help reach the families that aren’t immediately excited about the opportunity to work with the juvenile justice system.

In addition to recruiting family members to join the family advisory council, it is also important to recruit a committed staff person, or team of staff, to help facilitate the system's engagement with the council. While providing space for staff to volunteer to participate with the family advisory council is a good idea, it is also important to select staff that will work well with families and support the purpose of the council. During interviews, several family members made reference to the fact that they appreciated staff engagement with the council because it made them feel like the system was actually listening to them. Furthermore, families and staff alike noted that the most important lesson learned about staff engagement is that staff participation should not overpower or drown out the voices of the family. They also shared that the best staff members for a family advisory council have relatable lived experience with the justice system and do not have any negative history with families selected for the council.

Step 4: Train the Council

One of the strongest lessons learned was that providing training and foundational knowledge to members of the family advisory council is extremely important to ensure that every council member is operating from a common level of information. While making sure that family members are given important information that will prepare them to be effective members of council discussions and activities, it is similarly important that staff participating in the council are also trained on the most effective ways to engage with and support the families on the council, as well as understand their power and privilege on the council relative to the family members. For PPAL, starting each council cohort off with a two-day training retreat helped to solidify the group and help members gain a level of skill and expertise to provide meaningful engagement on the council moving forward.

Training for family members should cover:

- Juvenile Justice 101
- Introduction to relevant staff roles and agency departments
- A brief history of agency-specific and juvenile justice reform efforts
- Site data
- Role plays of potential situations that might arise on the council

Training for staff council members should cover:

- Power and privilege
- Strengths-based language
- Role plays of potential situations that might arise on the council.

JUSTICE FOR FAMILIES' FAMILY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE & NETWORK

In 2012, Justice For Families established the Family Leadership Institute (FLI). The Institute is a high impact leadership development and skill-building program that uses training, coaching and support. The Institute provides deeply impacted people with a unique opportunity to connect with others that share their determination and experiences; hear about victories, defeats and the lessons learned from those efforts; brainstorm ideas about their local work; share valuable connections and resources; and build strong peer-to-peer relationships that are relied upon for support, ideas and technical assistance.

The J4F Family Leadership Network is comprised of over 250 families all around the country! The experience they coalesce around at J4F is one that has been deeply traumatic for them and for their families and one that is often ongoing when they begin to engage in leadership activities. Our work and activities are designed with this in mind and are implemented to reflect J4F's organizational commitment to racial, economic and gender justice and healing.

Step 5: Establish Council Structure and Facilitation

Once all council members have been trained, the council should begin to organize how they would like to operate to accomplish their goals. This includes:

- **Create the Meeting Schedule.** Consistency is important. Councils usually chose a standard day each month, after traditional work hours like nights and weekends.
- **Identify Council Member Roles.** Clarifying and assigning necessary roles like who will take meeting notes, make meeting agendas, and send out meeting reminders are all important roles that should be agreed upon by council members.
- **Figure out Facilitation.** Appropriate and neutral facilitation of council meetings are vital to the efficiency and effectiveness of the council overall. For each family advisory council site interviewed, meeting facilitation came up as a key factor for council operations. Some sites utilized a staff facilitator to run council meetings, while other chose to utilize a co-leadership model that partnered a system staff member with a family member to co-facilitate council meetings. Overall, each of those strategies presented a power struggle that frustrated both family members and staff. To avoid these dynamics, council members agreed that utilizing a trained, neutral facilitator from an outside organization would be the most effective strategy to facilitate council meetings and help move them toward their shared goals.
- **Establish Group Guidelines.** Creating a space and group culture that values collaboration and respect is important in the development of any working group, but especially a family advisory council. Discussing issues related to the experiences of loved ones that are impacted by the justice system can be especially stressful and emotional. In order to promote an effective working partnership for families and staff on the family advisory council, it is important to develop a set of group guidelines that dictate how the group will work together, navigate conflict, make decisions and meet goals. Group guidelines should be created collaboratively and reviewed at the start of each meeting, with time for council members to add to them, as necessary. The process of creating group guidelines is, in part, about making the implicit explicit. For example, staff of the agency might assume that everyone will turn their phones off/to silent mode during meetings, but family members might need to keep their phones and ringers on in case a loved one who is incarcerated calls. The creation of group guidelines offers space to voice these assumptions and to agree to a statement like, “be mindful of technology” as a way of acknowledging the needs of the group. The following examples of things that might be included in group guidelines come from Justice For Families’ Group Guidelines/Agreements Samples document, which can be found in the Templates/Samples section of this guide:
 - **Respect for Everyone:** We all come from different experiences and walks of life. We all have our areas of knowledge and unawareness. Let’s respect the strengths and weaknesses of all for meaningful work to be done.
 - **Be Aware of Time:** There is always a lot to talk about and get done whenever we come together. If there are issues that come up that we don’t have time to talk about, we can always put them in the “Parking Lot” to talk about later. Let’s all be aware of time and try to monitor ourselves so that we can be sure to cover everything.

- **Default to Trust and Mine for Understanding:** If and when someone says something that offends you take the time to ask clarifying questions and trust that they meant no harm to you. Let's use these opportunities to help others grow as we all have.
- **Prioritize family time.** Family members and system staff all shared the importance of figuring out the right amount "family time" to allow family members on the council to share experiences and ideas amongst themselves *without staff present*. This could mean that staff participate in every other family advisory council meeting to allow families to discuss specific topics and then share their thoughts and feedback with staff at the next meeting. This could also mean that staff participate in the council "as needed" and that system staff agree to organize for the appropriate staff to participate in specific council meetings to discuss specific topics. For example, if family members express concerns about the food being served to youth in detention, system staff might arrange for the head of food services and any other appropriate agency staff/contractors to come to a meeting.

Step 6: Determine Goals and Deliverables

For an effective and efficient family advisory council, it is important that the group have clear goals and explicit deliverables to guide the work of the council. To the extent possible, these goals should be determined by the family members on the council, with feedback from the sponsoring agency. This is important because it allows the experiences of impacted families to guide the direction and activities of the council. While allowing families to direct the goals and activities of the council, that doesn't mean that agencies should be completely left out of the equation. Agency staff have an important role in sharing ideas, reform efforts, and other areas for which the agency is seeking family input and support. It is essential that agencies provide clarity and explanations for what level of influence the council can have and what segments of the system they are able to impact. Being very clear about these opportunities and limitations up front is a critical step in developing trust as well as respectfully managing expectations.

For example, in Pierce County, the family council ran into trouble as the families chose to focus on an area of system reform that the county had no control over. Because the issue was related to state legislation, the county leadership did not have any significant decision-making authority and, therefore, the council was not able to make any significant changes related to that issue. To address this, leadership brought in state-level stakeholders to talk more about the legislation, as well as connected members to advocacy organizations that were focused on state level reform efforts.

Moreover, establishing goals and deliverables should also consider the council structure, including meeting schedules and frequency, as well as membership requirements and terms. For example, if council members are not required to serve for a particular term or participate in an ongoing fashion, goals and deliverables that require a specific time commitment or require a consistent group of people to build on previous work to complete a task may not be the best suited for that particular family advisory council. It is also worth periodically revisiting the council's structure to ensure that it is not impeding the work of the council.

In Sedgwick County, KS, the agency is not able to provide financial compensation, so the family advisory council is more about providing a consistent space for families to come together and provide feedback and ideas for specific agency practice and policies that will best meet the needs of their children and their families and not necessarily focused on a consistent council membership for long-term projects.

Step 7: Develop System Support

It is important that family advisory councils have a clear pathway to communicate with agency leadership about the work they are doing. The easiest way to dishearten and derail a family advisory council is to have their work and feedback go unheard or ignored by people that are able to implement and enact change. To avoid that, ensuring the leadership is introduced early on to communicate their commitment to supporting the council is a great way to set the stage for partnership and have council members recognize that their efforts are worthwhile. Additionally, it is incredibly beneficial for council members to have access to and support from organizations outside of the agency, like Justice For Families, who can connect them to additional resources and/or to family council members doing like-minded work in other jurisdictions.

Step 8: Solicit On-going Feedback from Council Members

Once the family advisory council is up and running, and even as councils come to an end, it is important to have a process that allows for ongoing feedback between council members and system leadership to capture the experiences of families on the council, make corrective actions or improvements, and provide transparency. This could include pre-post surveys, allowing for check-ins and check-outs during each meeting to get a pulse on how things are going, and perhaps most important, exit interviews for council members as their terms come to an end. Having a trained, neutral facilitator from an outside organization can help the council and the agency to navigate these conversations.

Summary

Overall, despite challenges and rough patches, system stakeholders and family members alike shared that developing and participating in a family advisory council was “absolutely worth it.” Agency stakeholders shared that family advisory councils are a useful resource that help to identify issues and areas for improvement, as well as be an accessible body for system stakeholders to include family voice in their policy and practice decisions. Moreover, several interviews with agency stakeholders highlighted how participating on a family advisory council also has a strong impact on their beliefs and understanding of the families and youth they work with. A probation officer in Pierce County shared that his participation on the family council “makes him more open and willing to dig deeper to learn more about issues and why they’re [families] angry.” He also shared that he sees the families on the council as real partners.

For family members, council participation offered them a chance to gain a deeper understanding of the system their children were in and become more effective system navigators for themselves and their children. A parent from the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility Ward Family Council expressed that she joined her local family council because she was “tired of feeling helpless with no rights,” and later shared that although the working relationship with the system was rocky, she was able to “use the council to push for lots of great ideas on how to [engage] more families.” For families on the Pierce County Family Council, members shared that the council was a space where “the suit and ties come off” and “no one’s experience is held above others – system folks and families.”

Juvenile justice professionals around the country are joining the movement to include the voices of people impacted by their system as a primary staple of reform efforts. Reform efforts of the past have demonstrated that without these voices, our efforts to improve the experience and outcomes of the juvenile justice system will continue to fall short. Creating spaces like family advisory councils are an exemplary way to invite and sustain those voices at the table.

When done effectively, family advisory councils have produced amazing results. In Pierce County, the family council helped the probation department come up with and vet ideas for new programming and develop a strategy for helping new families navigate the court process. Sedgwick County learned from their family council that kids were not eating during their long days going from school directly to their probation meetings and programming that ran well into the evening. As a response, the system now creates sack-lunches to provide youth coming from school to meetings and programming. Moreover, the family council raised the issue of transportation for youth between school and programs, so field service staff have started stepping up and helping to provide transportation. The Ventura Family Council helped to create a newsletter and organize events for families to attend with their children in the facility. These are just a few examples, but they reveal the potential innovations that family councils can stimulate and unleash.

Conclusion

Family advisory councils are one tool in the family engagement toolbox. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Urban Institute, The Council of State Governments, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, as well as many others have developed a variety of tools. Agencies can find information on a wide range of topics on the web including, but not limited to, a readiness assessment checklist, a guide to conducting focus groups, family/youth compensation guidance, and best practices and operational strategies. Below, you will find a few links with multiple tools and information from various entities. The Justice For Families website is home to a host of tools, including those developed in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Justice For Families also offers an intensive, five-day *Improving Outcomes by Partnering with Youth and Families* training for juvenile justice stakeholders. The goal of the training is to assist and support systems and agencies seeking to improve opportunities and outcomes for children who encounter the youth or criminal justice system and their families. This training is designed to equip, prepare, challenge and support systems' professional leadership, supervisors and line-level staff by providing a robust framework and concrete skill-building tools for enhanced youth and family engagement designed to yield better outcomes not only for youth and families but also for systems and communities. Using a "three-prong" approach to educational enrichment, this curriculum provides:

1. A strengths-based, trauma-informed framework to help system leadership and staff to better understand the experiences, strengths, needs and challenges of youth who come into contact with the justice system and their families, as well as the roles of the agency and community partners;
2. Practical guidelines, tools, information and resources for professionals to employ in setting policy and budgets, hiring and supervising staff, designing and implementing programs and delivering services; and
3. Opportunities for participants to hear from and be influenced by authentic voices of youth and families who have been impacted by the justice system.



Additional Resources

Justice For Families. *Focus on Youth and Families: A Guide to Conducting Focus Groups with Youth and Families Impacted by the Juvenile Justice System*

<https://www.justice4families.org/tools/guide-conducting-focus-groups/>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Frequently Asked Questions on Compensation for Family, Youth, and Consumer Involvement

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/pathways-partnership-frequently-asked-questions-compensation-family-youth-and-consumer>

Family-Youth-Provider Partnerships

<https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/family-youth-provider-partnerships/nctsn-resources>

Pathways to Partnership with Youth & Families

https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//pathways_to_partnerships_with_youth_and_families.pdf

Pathways to Partnership, Tips for Developing an Effective Advisory Board

https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//pathways_tips_developing_effective_advisory_board.pdf

The Council of State Governments. *Juvenile Justice Research-to-Practice Implementation Resources: Family Engagement and Involvement*

<https://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/family-engagement-and-involvement/>

Children's Bureau. *Family Engagement Resources*

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/FEI/resources/>

National Research Council. *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach*

https://www.nap.edu/resource/14685/dbasse_073318.pdf

Institute for Patient – and Family – Centered Care (IPFCC). *Effective Patient and Family Advisory Councils*

<http://www.ipfcc.org/bestpractices/sustainable-partnerships/engaging/effective-pfacs.html>

Francine T. Sherman & Annie Balck for The National Crittenden Foundation and the National Women's Law Center. *Gender Injustice: System-Level Juvenile Justice Reforms for Girls.*

http://nationalcrittenton.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/GenderInjustice_exec_summary.pdf

Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Immigrant Legal Resources Center, Legal Services for Children. *Noncitizen Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: A guide to juvenile detention reform.*

<https://www.aecf.org/resources/noncitizen-youth-in-the-juvenile-justice-system/>

Annie E. Casey Foundation. *A Guide to Juvenile Justice Reform 11: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in the Juvenile Justice System.*

<https://www.aecf.org/resources/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-youth-in-the-juvenile-justice-system/>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *LGBTQ Youths in the Juvenile Justice System Literature Review*. <http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/LGBTQYouthsInTheJuvenileJusticeSystem.pdf>

Frequently Asked Questions on Compensation for Family, Youth & Consumer Involvement

From Justice For Families' *Focus on Youth and Families: A Guide to Conducting Focus Groups with Youth and Families Impacted by the Juvenile Justice System*



PATHWAYS TO PARTNERSHIP

Frequently Asked Questions on Compensation for Family, Youth, and Consumer Involvement

From the Partnering with Youth and Families Committee
National Child Traumatic Stress Network

The NCTSN's Partnering with Youth and Families Committee is dedicated to building partnerships among youth, families, and professionals based on mutual respect and a common commitment to healing. By encouraging consumers to participate at all levels of program design, development, and implementation, service providers can ensure that youth and families are integral partners in the delivery and evaluation of services. The following questions and answers are designed to help Network centers address some of the compensation issues that arise when working with youth and family members.

Why should youth and family members be compensated for their involvement in Network activities?

Financial and logistical issues can be significant barriers for many youth and families who wish to participate in an advisory or peer-to-peer capacity. Providing compensation can help to overcome these barriers, and also shows respect for the experience and contributions of the individuals involved.

Is it okay if a person wants to volunteer their services or their time?

Of course! The important thing is that the person feels free to volunteer and is not pressured to do so. If a person truly wants to volunteer, the agency should keep track of the time spent as an in-kind contribution to the grant (if applicable).

Is it appropriate to involve individuals or families who are currently in treatment?

Centers may want to establish a policy on this question, with input from family and youth. Some centers seek input from families still in treatment on non-treatment related topics (i.e., waiting room design, hours of service). The most important consideration is that the people in treatment always feel free to decline a request and feel no threat to their ongoing treatment.

What activities might be eligible for compensation?

Some form of compensation or reimbursement is appropriate for any activity or level of participation that goes beyond the scope of regular meetings, including:

- Participation on phone calls, especially conference calls
- Preparation/review of materials

- Participation in focus groups
- Attendance at Network face-to-face meetings
- Participation on a panel with other Network members at a conference
- Providing consultation

How should compensation be structured?

Individual organizations will have different policies about ways to compensate non-employees. It is important to talk with your organization's financial manager when deciding on compensation policies. Some possible options include:

- An hourly rate or flat retainer
- A contract for participation on a community advisory board
- Reimbursement for travel expenses (travel, room, board)
- Reimbursement for time spent on advisory boards, meetings, and preparation time

Keep in mind that cash compensation may have to be reported to the IRS as 1099 earned income, and could jeopardize a family's receipt of public funds or services. In these cases, alternative forms of compensation may be more appropriate, such as:

- Gift cards
- Child care
- Meals
- Tickets to movies or other local entertainment
- Access to computer training or other skill building activities
- Recognition events with food and special certificates for youth and family participants

Whatever form of compensation is chosen, your organization's compensation policies should be as consistent and clear as possible.

Should we make distinctions in pay rates between youth and adults?

Yes, based on age and experience. Clearly define "youth" for your organization. Rates may also vary based on experience and actual work requested. Remember that youth may have valuable experiences and skills that adults do not have.

Should we pay more if someone takes on a leadership role?

Yes. People who take on leadership roles take on more responsibility, and compensation should reflect that fact. For example, if a person spends time developing and preparing for a presentation, compensation should include the value of the advance preparation.

If a person misses work to attend a meeting, should we try to make up for the salary lost?

No. Compensation should be set at a standard rate. Variations in salary make it impractical to assign a value to work missed.

If a person's employer will pay for the time spent on NCTSN activities, should that individual be paid in addition by the Network?

No. If a person works for an organization that will pay for time spent on family involvement issues, extra compensation is not necessary.

Who should pay for family/youth involvement in Network collaborative groups?

This depends on the work being done. If the work is for an individual center (e.g., participation on a community advisory board) then the center should compensate the youth or family member. If the work is for the Network (e.g., presenting at the All-Network Conference or participating in a collaborative group), then the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress (NCCTS) and/or SAMHSA should cover expenses or provide compensation.

As there is a limited budget for providing compensation through the NCCTS, Network members are encouraged to contact the NCCTS as early as possible to discuss their needs and plans. In some cases, the NCCTS and Network centers might agree to share responsibility for compensation for participation in Network activities. At all times, Network centers should collaborate with the NCCTS and SAMHSA to ensure that youth and families are compensated fairly.

Are there any other sources of support for youth and family involvement?

Numerous funding sources are available to support youth and family involvement, including Medicaid, federal mental health block grants to states, corporations, foundations, and local, state, and federal grants or cooperative agreements.¹ The resources listed in **Table 1** offer useful information on funding strategies and compensation rates for youth and family members.

How can I find out what other organizations in the Network are doing?

Examples of cash amounts and other compensation practices provided to family/youth/consumers by other organizations may be obtained by contacting the NCTSN Partnering with Youth and Families Committee at youthandfamilies@nctsn.org.

This project was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

In 2008, the NCTSN released *Pathways to Partnerships with Youth and Families* to provide trauma-treating entities with a method for considering the role of youth and families in their organizations. Many sites have requested more technical assistance before beginning their efforts. This tip sheet was designed to provide additional information on compensation research and models. It is not meant to be an exhaustive guide, but rather a starting place for organizations seeking to develop compensation guidelines in their programming.

Table 1. Additional Resources of Compensation for Family and Youth Involvement^{2,4}

Organization	Resource	URL
California Network of Mental Health Client (Sacramento, CA)/Recovery Innovations, (Phoenix, AZ)	Minnesota peer support implementation: Consultant's report. Concise review of various state approaches to implementing Medicaid-reimbursed peer support services	http://www.californiaclients.org/pdf/Sue%20Watson%20Presentation%20Attachment.pdf
Healthy & Ready to Work National Resource Center	Family/youth leaders consultation rates. Examples of compensation rates for youth and family member participation	http://www.hrtw.org/yac/consultation_rates.doc
Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health, University of South Florida (Tampa, FL)	Effective financing strategies for systems of care: Examples from the field—A resource compendium for developing a comprehensive financing plan. Findings from a five-year study of finance strategies for building effective systems of care for children, adolescents, and families coping with serious emotional disturbances. Includes many examples of financing to support family and youth partnerships	http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu/rtcpubs/hctrking/pubs/Study03-exp-fr-field.pdf

References

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2. Stroul, B.A., Pires, S.A., Armstrong, M.I., McCarthy, J., Pizzigati, K., & Wood, G.M. (2008). *Effective financing strategies for systems of care: Examples from the field—A resource compendium for developing a comprehensive financing plan*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI), Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health. Available at <http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu/rtcpubs/hctrking/pubs/Study03-exp-fr-field.pdf>
3. Johnson, E. (2008). *Minnesota peer support implementation: Consultant's report*. Phoenix, Arizona: Recovery Innovations. Accessed July 10, 2009 from <http://www.californiaclients.org/pdf/Sue%20Watson%20Presentation%20Attachment.pdf>
4. Hackett, P. (2005). *Family/youth leaders consultation rates*. Augusta, ME: Healthy & Ready to Work National Resource Center. Accessed July 10, 2009 from http://www.hrtw.org/yac/consultation_rates.doc

Suggested Citation: National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Partnering with Youth and Families Committee. (2009). *Pathways to Partnership: Frequently Asked Questions on Compensation for Family, Youth, and Consumer Involvement*. Los Angeles, CA & Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

5 R'S TO CONSIDER WHEN ESTABLISHING A FAMILY COUNCIL

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



READINESS OF AGENCY CULTURE

Before a family council is established, it is vital that the agency culture be assessed to ensure that the

- 4 CORE CONCEPTS**
1. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IS A MINDSET
 2. DEFINE FAMILY BROADLY
 3. VALUE CULTURE AND CONTEXT
 4. SELF-EXAMINATION & PATIENCE ARE KEY

leadership, staff, service providers and other partners understand the importance and value of partnering with families in an authentic way. An agency staff member should serve as the point of contact to

lead the family partnership work and to identify the needs of an agency to prepare them for a family council. A budget must also be allocated for the family council to cover expenses including stipends, meals, meeting space, and required trainings. Generally, an agency is prepared to have a council when they have grasped the *4 core concepts* of family engagement.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

The strategies to recruit members of the council should be informed by a diverse group of stakeholders, including youth, families and community members. Be sure to tap into existing networks of impacted family members that may already exist, e.g., families that participated in a focus group. The recruitment of family members should be intentional and targeted by race/ethnicity and geographic location. Your family council should only include family members with lived juvenile justice experience. Because many of the decisions about the council should be made by the family members themselves, a small number (6-10) of families should be identified as a starting point.

ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF FAMILY COUNCIL

Once you have recruited families, there are several decisions that need to be made in partnership with the council regarding their expected role within the agency and the structure of the council itself. Here are some questions that will need to be determined before the council can hit the ground running.

COUNCIL STRUCTURE

- *What will the governance structure be?*
- *How many members will be on the council?*
- *What will the length of term be?*
- *What does the selection process look like?*
- *How often will the family council meet?*

ROLE WITHIN AGENCY

- *What decisions will the family council be involved in?*

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO FAMILY COUNCIL MEMBERS TO PREPARE THEM

For the council to be as successful as possible, members should be provided with the necessary resources so that they better understand the juvenile justice system. That could mean a “juvenile justice 101” training in which representatives from various parts of the system present on their office (i.e., a prosecutor, court administrator, detention manager, etc.). By providing an opportunity to learn the system in a deep way, the family council will be able to provide the most effective strategies to improve the system.

RECEIVE CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK AND PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT

There will be bumps in the road as you embark on this incredible journey that will inform improvements and changes that are necessary. Be sure to establish a process to receive ongoing feedback, i.e. pre/post-surveys, a suggestion box, and starting each meeting with a check-in.



Samples/Templates

Juvenile Court Family Survey

Family and Youth Information

What brings your child to court today? To resolve an arrest, or being charged with a crime
 Becca/Truancy Probation violation
 ARY (At-Risk Youth) Other _____

Your relationship to the child Parent Guardian/caregiver Other _____

Home zip code _____ Child's age _____ Child's gender _____

Child's ethnicity _____

How many total times have you attended juvenile court for matters involving your children? _____

How many times have you attended juvenile court for this situation? _____

Information About the Court Process

How well do you understand what may happen with your child during this process?
 Not much A little Some A lot

What has been the most helpful source of information? (check all that apply)
 Probation staff Video in court lobby Friends or relatives
 Detention staff Video on court website Other _____
 Attorney Parent Support Provider Other _____

How would you like to get information about the court process? (check as many as you like)
 Website/internet Talking to a parent who has been through the system
 Video with their child
 Brochure or printed information Other _____
 Talking directly to court staff Other _____

How well have you understood the court papers your child received?
 Not much A little Some A lot

The court lobby has brochures and information on a wall near the restrooms. Before this survey, did you know about this information? Yes No

If you knew about this information, did you ever take a brochure? Yes No

What did you learn that was helpful or not? _____

Personal Experience in the System

Please rate these statements.	Not true	A little true	Somewhat true	Quite true
I have the knowledge and materials I need to get through this situation with my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have opportunities to ask questions and get answers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child's situation is being handled fairly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree with the court's decisions about my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Court staff are trying to assist my family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Court staff seriously consider my input when making decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Court staff recognize my child's strengths, not just the difficulties.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race and ethnicity affect the court process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cultural Considerations

Culture, faith, and ethnic values and practices are very important to the court. When making decisions about your child, what could court staff consider?

Court Hours

	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot
Are the court hours convenient for your schedule?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the court hours prevent you from participating?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How could the court hours be improved? _____

What alternative ways to participate in court would be helpful?

- Phone Written report Other
- Video (like Skype) Meeting at school instead Other

Parent Support Providers

The juvenile court has Parent Support Providers in the lobby on certain days. Parent Support Providers raised their own children with emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges.

Did you talk with a Parent Support Provider today? Yes No Not sure

If yes, how did the Parent Support Provider help you?

- Answered general questions Gave referral information
- Provided support in the lobby Other _____

How useful was the help you received?

- Not very useful A little useful Somewhat useful Quite useful

Comments about parent support: _____

Family Council – Use Your Voice to Change the System

The court is seeking family members of court-involved youth to serve on a Family Council. If you are interested in participating, please share your contact information. This information will be kept confidential. You may tear off this section so no one connects your name to your survey.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____ Best time to call: _____

Family Advisory Council Application

Family members who are interested in becoming a member of the Family Advisory Council are encouraged to submit an application. The Council will meet regularly with administrative staff to discuss matters that have a direct effect on them as a group. Meetings are held monthly at 100 Main Street, City, State 00000 (transportation is available).

Completed applications should be submitted to: _____, 100 Main Street, City, State 00000.

Any information that's shared in this application will be kept strictly CONFIDENTIAL and will be used only in the selection process.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact _____ at (____)____ - ____.

Your Information

Name and Contact Information

First Name

Last Name

Address

City

State

Zip Code

Phone Number(s)

Email Address

What is the best way to reach you?

- Phone Call
- Text
- Email
- Other

If other, please specify:

What is the best time of day to reach you?

- Morning (9am-12pm)
- Afternoon (12pm-5pm)
- Evening (after 5pm)
- Other

If other, please specify:

Demographic Information

What is your current gender identity? (Check all that apply)

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to answer
- Transgender
- Do not identify as male, female or transgender
- Other

If other, please specify (optional):

Which category best describes your race/ethnicity?

- Asian
- Black/African American
- White
- Other
- American Indian/Alaska Native/First Nations
- Hispanic/Latino
- Prefer not to answer

If other, please specify (optional):

Employment Information (all questions are optional)

What is your current employment status?

- Full-Time
- Part-Time
- Self-Employed
- Unemployed
- Prefer not to answer
- Other

If other, please specify:

Occupation

Name of Employer

Information About Your Loved One in the _____ Juvenile Justice System

First Name

Last Name

Age

Your Relationship to Young Person

- Mother
- Father
- Sibling
- Grandparent
- Aunt/Uncle
- Cousin
- Neighbor/Friend
- Other

If other, please specify:

Is your loved one still in the care/custody of the _____ Juvenile Justice System? Yes No Other
If other, please specify:

Is your loved one still receiving services from the _____ Juvenile Justice System? Yes No Other
If other, please specify:

Demographic Information About Your Loved One

What is your loved one's current gender identity? (Check all that apply)

(Optional)

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to answer
- Transgender
- Do not identify as male, female or transgender
- Other

If other, please specify (optional):

Which category best describes your loved one's race/ethnicity?

- Asian
- Black/African American
- White
- Other
- American Indian/Alaska Native/First Nations
- Hispanic/Latino
- Prefer not to answer

If other, please specify (optional):

Participation in the _____ Family Advisory Council

Why are you interested in joining the Family Advisory Council?

What skills/experience do you hope to share with the Family Advisory Council?

Do you have any questions about the Family Advisory Council?

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Availability

Family Advisory Council meetings take place on the **second Saturday of the month from 10am-12pm**. Are you available at this time? Yes No Other
If other, please specify:

If you are not available at this time, what days/times work best for you to meet?

	Morning (9am-12pm)	Afternoon (12pm-5pm)	Evening (after 5pm)
Mondays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fridays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saturdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sundays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space to share anything else we should know about your availability:

Accommodations

Will you need any of the following accommodations in order to attend meetings of the Family Advisory Council?

- Transportation
- Wheelchair access
- Childcare
- Translation
- Other

How many children? _____
Ages of children: _____
Language: _____

If other, please specify:

Food is provided during Family Advisory Council meetings. Please use this space to tell us about any allergies or dietary restrictions we should be aware of?

Final Comments/Questions

Please use the space below to share any final comments or questions.

Thank you for your interest in joining the Family Advisory Council. We will review your application and be in touch with you in the next 30 days. If you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact _____ at (____)____-_____.

Family Advisory Council

Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality during Family Council meetings is important. Some Council members may choose to share personal information about their own experiences, or the experiences of their family or children. What is shared during Family Council meetings stays in the Family Council meetings.

I will keep all personal information shared during Family Council meetings private and confidential.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Group Guidelines/Agreements Samples

- **Respect for Everyone:** We all come from different experiences and walks of life. We all have our areas of knowledge and unawareness. Let's respect the strengths and weaknesses of all for meaningful work to be done.
- **Open Minds Only:** You never know what you might learn from someone else's experience or what someone could learn from you. Let's be open to listening and sharing with each other.
- **Critique Versus Criticism.** Criticism has the effect of condemning, blaming or faulting someone, and can strip people of integrity. Critique has the effect of providing assessment, analysis, and guidance, and builds people up by. Let's further our work by pointing out differences without hurting people's feelings.
- **Oppression Exists - We Fight Against It Here:** Since we all live in a world where racism, sexism, classism, ageism, and homophobia exist, it also exists within our group. As an organization fighting the injustices and oppression of the juvenile justice system, we must also actively confront and challenge oppression in all forms wherever it exists - especially among ourselves. Let's provide critique, not criticism, and be open to understanding the work we each must do to fight oppression
- **Use the "WHOA":** We all learn together. If there is anything that doesn't quite make sense, or if we're moving too fast, just say "WHOA!" Let's back up and explain/slow down so that we can all move forward as a group.
- **Step Up/Step Back:** If you are someone who feels comfortable speaking in groups and making comments, we ask that you "step back" and make room for others to do the same. If you're not so comfortable speaking out, we invite you to "step up" and share your ideas with us in this supportive group setting. Let's make sure everyone has had the opportunity to speak up before we speak up again.
- **This is a Place for Solidarity:** We are all here because we believe in fighting for justice, though we have many differences. We cannot let those differences be used to "divide and conquer." Let's commit to understanding that we are much stronger as a whole.
- **Be Aware of Time:** There is always a lot to talk about and get done whenever we come together. If there are issues that come up that we don't have time to talk about, we can always put it in the "Parking Lot" to talk about later. Let's all be aware of time and try to monitor ourselves so that we can be sure to cover everything.
- **One Microphone:** So that everyone can hear and be heard, only one speaker at a time. If there is noise in the background where you are located, please mute your microphone when you are not speaking. Let's speak and listen so everyone can be heard.
- **Default to Trust and Mine for Understanding:** If and when someone says something that offends you take the time to ask clarifying questions and trust that they meant no harm to you. Let's use these opportunities to help others grow as we all have.

- **Three, then me.** If you are a person that often gets excited and steps up often, wait until 3 others have spoken before you speak again.
- **Land the Plane.** We all have lots of experiences and others around us learn from our experiences. However, in a meeting with a set agenda, we may need to just make our point, land the plane, in order to accomplish the objectives of the meeting.

Sample Bylaws

BYLAWS OF VENTURA YOUTH CORRECTIONAL FACILITY WARD FAMILY COUNCIL

MISSION STATEMENT

The Ward Family Council of the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (the “Facility”) in Camarillo, California, is an organization comprised of volunteers that have a meaningful family or community relationship with a youthful offender(s) assigned to the Facility and through their involvement provide support and assistance to the Facility in its mission to provide treatment, training and education services to the youthful offenders assigned to the Facility.

ARTICLE I NAME

SECTION 1: NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION

- 1.1 The name of the organization is the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility Ward Family Council.
 - a. The Ventura Youth Correctional Facility Ward Family Council will be informally referred to as the “Family Council.”
 - b. The Ventura Youth Correctional Facility will be informally referred to as the “Facility.”

ARTICLE II PURPOSE

SECTION I: PURPOSE OF THE FAMILY COUNCIL

- 2.1 To establish lines of communication between Facility administrators and ward family members.
- 2.2 To assist the Facility in maintaining an on-going rapport and to develop a positive relationship between Facility administrators and ward family members.
- 2.3 To serve as a liaison between the Facility and non-council family members in order to improve services provided to the wards assigned to the Facility.

2.4 To make family members aware of the goals and objectives of the staff of the Facility to educate, train, and rehabilitate the wards assigned to the Facility.

2.5 To review departmental policy, program activities, and make recommendations to the Superintendent to improve the services provided to the wards.

2.6 To promote a better understanding by ward families of the treatment and training services provided to the wards assigned to the Facility.

2.7 To promote a better understanding by ward families of the Facility and Departmental policies and procedures that affects wards and their family members.

2.8 To promote a better understanding by the Facility administration of the impact that correctional programming has on maintaining family relationships.

ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1: COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

3.1 The Family Counsel shall be comprised of a balance and cross section of family members of wards assigned to the Facility.

a. A family member is defined as an adult who has a meaningful family or community relationship with a ward at the Facility.

SECTION 2: APPOINTMENT

3.2 The Superintendent shall appoint a six (6) member Family Council and alternates from a list of applicants submitted.

3.3 The term of office for all Family Council members shall be for two (2) years.

a. Family Council members shall not serve more than two (2) years unless reappointed.

3.4 The first term of appointment shall begin on July 1, 2004 and end June 30, 2005.

SECTION 3: VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

3.5 Members of the Family Council participate as volunteers to the Facility.

3.6 Volunteers agree to work within the guidelines of the California Youth Authority's rules, regulations and polices.

3.7 The Facility may limit or discontinue activities of any volunteer or volunteer group that impede the security, safety or orderly operation of the Facility.

3.8 Volunteers who wish to become members of the Family Council shall submit a Family Council application with biographical data.

a. Applications will be made available at the Facility's "Visitor's Processing Area" and upon request of Facility staff.

- b. All information provided in the application shall be considered “Confidential.”
- 3.9 Volunteers shall receive written notification from the Superintendent on their rejection or termination in an expeditious manner.
- a. Reasons for rejection or termination will be clearly delineated.
 - b. A prospective volunteer or previous Family Council member may reapply one (1) year after the date of the last rejection or termination.

SECTION 4: FAMILY COUNCIL DECORUM

- 3.10 Family Council member’s or ward personal issues or grievances not associated with the Family Council’s purpose will not be discussed during the Family Council meetings.
- a. Personal experiences may be used as examples to illustrate a current problem.

3.11 The Family Council forum will not be utilized to circumvent the ward grievance process specified in the Institutions and Camps Branch Manual, Section 70057140, titled Ward Grievance Procedure.

SECTION 5: ALTERNATIVE FAMILY COUNCIL MEMBERS

- 3.12 The role of the Family Council is to support Article II – Purpose, as stated in these Bylaws.
- a. To enable the volunteers to meet this commitment, alternatives may attend all meetings.
 - b. An alternate may substitute for any volunteer member unable to attend.

SECTION 6: REPLACEMENT OF FAMILY COUNCIL MEMBERS

3.13 The Superintendent shall solicit a listing of four (4) names of volunteers from applicants 90 days prior to the expiration of any Family Council member’s term.

SECTION 7: RESIGNATIONS

3.14 Family Council member resignations shall be submitted in writing to the Superintendent or his/her designee.

SECTION 8: VACANCIES

3.15 Vacancies may result from a Family Council member’s death, written resignation, inappropriate behavior, the transfer of the ward(s) or an unexcused absence from three (3) consecutive meetings.

3.16 “Unexcused absence” is defined as failure to notify the Superintendent’s Office of non-attendance at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

3.17 The Superintendent shall fill any vacancy upon receipt of written notification that a vacancy exists.

3.18 The Family Council shall request that the vacancy or vacancies be filled within 30 days after the vacancy.

3.19 Appointments to fill a vacancy shall be for the remainder of the unexpired term.

a. If such an appointment is for less than six (6) months, the member shall be eligible for a regular term.

3.20 The Superintendent may fill a vacancy with a person selected from, but not limited to, the list of applicants submitted.

a. Additional names may be requested and submitted to the Superintendent.

SECTION 9: REPRESENTATION OF COMMITTEE WITHOUT COMMITTEE CONSENT

3.21 No individual Family Council member shall represent the Family Council either in writing or verbally without a majority vote of the Family Council.

ARTICLE IV OFFICERS

SECTION 1: MAJORITY VOTE

4.1 The Family Council Officers shall be elected by a majority vote of those present for a period of one (1) year.

SECTION 2: DESIGNATED OFFICERS

4.2 The Officers of the Council shall consist of a Co-Chairperson, an Alternate Co-Chairperson and a Secretary.

SECTION 3: QUALIFICATIONS

4.3 Any volunteer may serve as an Officer of the Family Council.

SECTION 4: OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

4.4 Co-Chairperson

a. Preside over work group meetings.

- b. Prepare meeting agendas.

4.5 Alternate Co-Chairperson

- a. Perform the duties of Co-Chairperson in his/her absence or as requested.
- b. Maintain Family Council members roster with updated information.

4.6 Secretary

- a. Take minutes of the meeting.
- b. Prepare correspondence as needed.

ARTICLE V MEETINGS

SECTION 1: FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

5.1 The Family Council will conduct monthly meetings, usually the 3rd Saturday of each month.

- a. Frequency of the meetings shall be amended as necessary.

5.2 All meetings are closed to anyone other than the members of the Family Council and alternates.

- a. Anyone, including speakers and special guests, must have informal approval of the Family Council before attending a meeting.

5.3 Members of the Family Council shall make every effort to attend all meetings.

5.4 The Family Council will submit a proposed agenda no later than seven (7) calendar days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

- a. The agenda shall list specific issues to be addressed along with possible alternative solutions and recommendations.

SECTION 2: TIME AND LOCATION

5.5 The meeting will begin promptly at 9:00am and adjourn at 10:30am.

5.6 The location of the meeting shall take place in the Program Room or Board Room.

SECTION 3: ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

5.7 At least three (3) members of the Family Council and three (3) institutional staff members must be present in order to conduct Family Council business.

SECTION 4: INSTITUTION REPRESENTATION

5.8 The Superintendent and/or his/her designee(s) shall attend each meeting.

a. Other Facility staff will attend upon the direction of the Superintendent or on an as needed basis.

5.9 The Superintendent shall preside over the Family Council meetings as the Chairperson.

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Ventura Youth Correctional Facility Ward Family Council

Sedgwick County Division of Juvenile Justice Family Council

Massachusetts Parents/Professionals Advocacy League

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