



## THE CORE ELEMENT OF ACCESS & ADVOCATE

The ParentingWell® approach to accessing essential supports and advocating for additional resources to meet parents' and families' needs begins with describing the current situation. Learning about supports and resources parents depend on for emotional, financial, spiritual, or concrete assistance (e.g., who might give them a ride to an appointment or babysit for a few hours) provides the foundation on which to build in the ParentingWell practice approach.

Advocacy may be required to fill in gaps. Parents benefit from the support of other parents often in the context of informal relationships, in neighborhoods, or at the playground. Community organizations, family, and friends offer parents opportunities to join in volunteering, play, learning, worship, and social activities.

***Positive experiences contribute to resiliency and to a sense of mutuality and belonging.***

You can help parents learn skills that allow them to function better in relationships and in diverse situations through role modeling, rehearsal, and practice. As parents develop and navigate social networks and interpersonal situations better, they become more effective advocates for themselves and their children.

## TRANSLATING PRACTICE PRINCIPLES



### Family-focused

- Understands that parents benefit from the support of other parents often provided in the context of informal relationships, in families, in neighborhoods, or at the playground.
- Recognizes that social support both personal and professional enhances the likelihood of positive outcomes for adults who are parents and for their children.
- Does not assume that immediate relatives or extended family members are necessarily helpful as they may have attitudes about mental illness or addictions, parenting and family life that are unsupportive of the parent.



### Culturally-sensitive

- Appreciates that an understanding of the parent's cultural and community context will help the practitioner, working together with the parent, to identify available interpersonal, informal, and professional resources.

## CORE ACTIVITIES

- Begins the conversation about current supports and resources—emotional, financial, instrumental, professional, and personal—that benefit the parent, the child, and the family.
- Provides the rationale for the benefits of social support and positive interactions for both parents and children as they contribute to recovery and resilience.
- Suggests the benefits of and supports parents in helping others as well as asking for help as mutual give-and-take builds more supportive relationships.
- Explores any hesitancy on the part of parents to connect or communicate with others regarding parenting or children, especially to ask for help.
- Asks who helps most with child caregiving, if relevant. Who do parents ask for advice about parenting and relationships with children?
- Asks parents about strengths of partners or other significant family members, especially those who may be involved as caregivers.
- Asks how often and in what context parents interact with other adults (e.g., friends, neighbors, family members), especially other adults who are parents.
- Assists parents in identifying individuals or family members of their choosing, who have some understanding of their circumstances, who can or do serve as positive role models, or who provide positive assistance to the parent and family.
- Asks about resources available or used in the neighborhood and community.

## TRANSLATING PRACTICE PRINCIPLES



### Strengths-based

- Recognizes that connections and communication are essential as recovery takes place in the context of relationships and that parents may need help with skills to promote these.
- Accepts that all parents benefit from help, have questions, and seek advice. It is normal and normalizing to ask for help.
- Understands that parents may need encouragement to reach out to others.
- Appreciates that parents may require support to increase the frequency of positive interactions with children.



### Trauma-informed

- Understands that parents may be afraid to ask for help due to the stigma associated with mental illness and substance use and the fear of being judged negatively.
- Recognizes that parents may need guidance to talk with children, family members, and professionals about important topics related to behavioral health issues and parenting, especially if these conversations have been unsatisfying or unsuccessful in the past.

## CORE ACTIVITIES

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- Asks about involvement with any other systems, services, or practitioners (e.g., child welfare, child's therapist, school system, other services).
- Supports parents in influencing people and environments that promote recovery for themselves and resiliency for their children, from the practical (e.g., negotiating with a landlord for safety latches on screens or cabinet doors) to the professional (e.g., advocating for special education services for children in the context of a school meeting).
- Encourages, role models, coaches, and offers parents opportunities to rehearse and practice interacting with others, particularly if the parent is not socially adept, prefers to be alone, is socially fearful, or feels inadequate or as if no one else understands their situation.
- Helps parents identify alternative or new social support resources, specifically with regard to parenting and family life.
- Researches available opportunities for social support (e.g., parent groups) with the parent.
- Assists parents in identifying professional sources of support, particularly as they may help with parenting issues (e.g., pediatrician, school teacher or counselor, parent support groups).
- Supports parents' developing skill, growing confidence in interpersonal situations to promote continued development, maintenance of social networks and supports, and access to essential resources.