

Quality Indicators of Effective Parent to Parent Support

Respectful

- Remembering who is in charge of the problems and solutions
- Behaving in a way that affirms a person's basic worth, regardless of their beliefs or actions

Objective

- Accepting a parent "as is" in their emotional adjustment, without prodding them to where they "should" be
- Withholding judgments to acknowledge varying points of view
- Sharing unbiased information

Warm

- Accepting
- Caring
- Understanding

Genuine

- Real -- no phoniness, pretense, or patronization

Empathetic

- Seeing the situation through the eyes of the parent
- Believing that everyone's actions and beliefs make sense from their perspective

Competent

- Completing and carrying out personal responsibilities
- Communicating personal thoughts and ideas clearly

Timely

- Making first contact within 48 hours of the referral
- Returning calls and following up promptly

Flexible

- Connecting, as appropriate, in a variety of ways (initial phone contact, visiting at family's home, meeting community site – coffee shop, fast food spot, etc. email)
- Responding to family structure, traditions, patterns, practices- culturally competent
- Meeting at times that work for the family

Easily available

- Easy to find – Reflecting widespread community awareness and ability to make matches quickly
- Easy to access – Streamlined referral process that reflects coordination between referral source and Mentor Parent



Effective Parent to Parent Support

“Mentor parents understand that the event that has altered their lives is painful. Parents do not have the power to change the event but they can change the way they think about it...New parents may not know this. Mentor parents are not saying it is easy, but they can teach this. They can plant the seed.”

Janice Wright, Parent to Parent of Vermont

Effective Parent to Parent Support can:

- **Ease** the pain. . . but not remove it
- **Affirm** or validate feelings or emotions . . . but not change, or control them
- **Offer** information and resources . . . but not provide a diagnosis, give advice or make decisions
- **Explore** options and ideas . . . but not solve every problem
- **Provide** a partner on the journey . . . but not fix the situation
- **Reduce** isolation . . . but not provide a social life or offer lifelong friendship
- **Encourage** with hope . . . but not predict the future
- **Foster** adjustment . . . but not force acceptance

In responding to the reality of life’s circumstances a parent has an opportunity to become someone new and different, to grow and learn, and become more than he/she is. Respectful Parent to Parent programs make a point not to undercut that growing process by making parents dependent on their help or advice, but rather to foster self reliance. Parent to Parent Support should not resemble a service that is done **to** families or **for** them. With effective support, families will find their own ways to survive and cope. They will create their own new reality and assume responsibility for their own lives.



Self-Assessment for Parent Mentors

Answer these questions.	Yes	No	Sometimes
1. Am I a good listener?	_____	_____	_____
2. Do I generally possess a positive outlook?	_____	_____	_____
3. Am I realistic, yet hopeful?	_____	_____	_____
4. Do I have a comfort with and an understanding of my own grief?	_____	_____	_____
5. Am I a creative and proactive problem solver?	_____	_____	_____
5. Am I open and comfortable offering support and emotional encouragement on a personal level?	_____	_____	_____
6. Do I believe that every child is valuable?	_____	_____	_____
7. Can I be honest, yet temper it with kindness?	_____	_____	_____
8. Am I flexible when changes occur or things don't go as planned?	_____	_____	_____
9. Do I have the time and energy to be a parent mentor?	_____	_____	_____
10. Can I support the individual decisions of parents even if I don't agree with them?	_____	_____	_____
11. Do I believe each culture has a right to its own beliefs and values?	_____	_____	_____
12. Am I ready for the emotional impact of connecting with another family?	_____	_____	_____
13. Have I successfully integrated a child into our family and community?	_____	_____	_____
14. Am I competent and able to carry out my commitments and responsibilities?	_____	_____	_____

Supporting other families requires commitment and effort. As parents of children with disabilities there are times when supporting other families is not what is best for me, my family or other families. I need to be aware of my situation and personal well being, and if being a parent mentor and supporting other families is not right for me at a certain point in time, I need to step out of the parent mentor role.

