Common Obstacles of Family Advisor Engagement and Strategies to Overcome Them

Below are common obstacles that can arise when engaging family advisors and strategies to overcome them.

"How do I get staff buy-in and support to engage family advisors?"

- Discuss the benefits to the practice of engaging family advisors
- As a team, complete the Checklist For Attitudes About Patients and Families As Advisors
- Have staff involvement in selection of family advisor

"I don't know how to identify appropriate family advisors for my practice."

- Review practice patient list
- Search local community organizations that already partner with your families
- Provide specific roles and expectations through development of a job description
- Partner with community organization to interview potential candidates
- Provide compensation for their time and expertise
- Connect with state AAP chapters for ideas
- In addition to word of mouth, broadcast message or post a job description with an open invitation

"Practice staff and family advisors are hesitant to speak openly about practice issues."

- Have everyone sign a confidentiality agreement
- Have chairperson clearly and openly explain expectations at start of meetings
- Have "No label at the table" meetings (e.g., no use of Dr. during meetings to make everyone feel equal)
- Provide adequate facilitation in meetings so there is bi-directional communication

"I don't know what to do with family advisors."

- Ask family advisors their interest areas and what improvements they believe the practice can make to improve patient outcomes
- Ask the practice staff what changes they want to make to improve patient outcomes and identify ways family advisors can help
- Review the Family Advisor Task Document, which lists a wide variety of tasks that family advisors can engage in, and identify areas of interest (see Appendix B)
- Allow families flexibility in their participation. Maybe they have a specific interest area where they can participate, but can't commit full-time
- Based on the above feedback, create a job description for family advisors with clear role, time commitment, and expectations (see Appendix A)

"How do I sustain family advisors?"

- Conduct family advisor training and orientation
- Have personal, individual outreach and regular touch base meetings with a staff mentor
- Provide financial compensation and be willing to be flexible with family needs
- Document and share the progress and successes of family advisors
- Have clear roles and time requirements so everyone knows what's expected of them and regularly reevaluate
- Identify opportunities within the practice to support continuous engagement
- If possible, create a role in the existing HR infrastructure to make family advisors sustainable