



American Academy
of Pediatrics



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Examples of Family Advisor Engagement

Benefits and Importance of Family Advisors

The relationship between families and their pediatrician is critical. These relationships can make a lifelong difference in child and family health. Meaningful patient and family engagement can help:

- Patients and families feel heard, understood, and empowered
- Strengthen the family's relationship with the clinical team
- Show that the practice cares for the whole family and values their lived experiences
- Improve patient outcomes and lower health care costs¹

Pediatricians are now talking with their patients about social drivers of health, infant and child mental health, and other complex and chronic health care needs. These conversations can be sensitive and raise questions around confidentiality, community referral services, health equity, and more. Family advisors can help practices address these questions and develop solutions together. Their experiences make them the perfect partner to bridge the gap between community and clinic services.

How to Use this Document

Even if practices see the benefits of engaging families, they are not always sure how best to use their skills. This document was developed to help fill that gap. Together, review this document to find tasks that fit the practice's needs and the family advisor's time, capacity, and interest. The tasks are organized by topic area and level of experience to select tasks more easily.

These tasks were created by the Addressing Social Health and Early Childhood Wellness (ASHEW) Initiative's Family Advisor Affinity Group and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAPs) 2019 Chapter Annual Report.

¹ Carman KL, Dardess P, Maurer ME, Workman T, Ganachari D, Pathak-Sen E. A Roadmap for Patient and Family Engagement in Healthcare Practice and Research. (Prepared by the American Institutes for Research under a grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Dominick Frosch, Project Officer and Fellow; Susan Baade, Program Officer.) Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation: Palo Alto, CA; September 2014. www.patientfamilyengagement.org.

Supporting Family Advisor Engagement

Family Advisors can help Primary Care Practices:

- Reach and maintain practice's mission, vision, and value statements
- Be culturally responsive to the needs of the children and families served
- Partner with families to address concerns related to child health
- Address the unique needs of children with complex care needs
- Improve communication between parents and providers
- Help identify and remove barriers to service
- Serve as a connection between families and providers
- Serve as a connection between providers and community partners, improving service coordination
- Identify practice changes that improve patient facing policy

Primary Care Practices can support Family Advisors by:

- Having a staff mentor and regular check-ins with family advisor(s)
- Discussing materials and thinking through ideas prior to meetings with family advisors
- Making sure agendas and materials are free of jargon
- Informing family advisors of any changes made based on their feedback
- Providing training to family advisors to build skills and confidence

To partner with family advisors in a meaningful way, practices should include them in all family-centered engagement activities and participate in thoughtful planning. The practice needs to discuss and document clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the family advisors and identify a staff person to serve as a mentor. The impact of this planning will set both the family advisors and practice up for long term success.

Examples of Family Advisor Task

Beginner Tasks

Office Environment

- Provide a family point of view about the building and staff:
 - Do members of the care team represent the population served?
 - Do staff smile when greeting families?
 - Can the language be revised to be more equitable?

Patient Facing Resources

- Review posters, books, surveys, handouts, etc. in the office to ensure they represent population served.
- Review practice website for feedback
- Have a family voice in newsletter, blog, social media, or other materials.

Policies and Activities

- Make sure internal policies and activities equitable. For example, does the late policy support families who may not have transportation?
- Seek parent input when talking about issues that come up during the year.
- Create and regularly use a family feedback survey.

Meetings and Trainings

- Help plan and develop internal meeting agendas.
- Act as a member of Executive Committee/Board of Directors and attend meetings and retreats.
- Attend clinic trainings and webinars.

Intermediate Tasks

Work with Outside Organizations

- Help build community partnerships with clear activities and rules.
- Work with groups such as:
 - Everytown
 - Family Voices
 - Federation of Families
 - Local government
 - Local parent groups
 - Moms Demand Action
 - National Alliance on Mental Illness
 - Community Impact Partners
 - Fathers' Network
 - Parent to Parent USA
 - Parent Teacher Association
 - State Family to Family Health Information Center
 - Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
 - Voices for Children

Policies and Activities

- Include family voices into quality improvement programs.
- Include families in the budget, planning, completion, and review of a project.
- Help care team members better understand the value of screening during well-child visits.
- Learn about parents' experiences and needs as it relates to racial/economic differences in health care.
- Learn from parents about the importance of cultural humility when providing care.
- Engage with special parenting populations, like foster parents, to learn about their needs.

Examples of Family Advisor Task

Intermediate Tasks

AAP Chapter Related

- Provide leadership roles in Chapter's Mental Health Access Program.
- Attend yearly chapter meetings and present updates and any concerns.

Conferences, Education, and Advocacy

- Partner with parent advocate groups on programs, such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) projects, mental health workgroups, and gun violence prevention.
- Hold community meetings with families who have complex health care needs.
- Share comments from community meetings with state groups and suggest ideas to improve services.
- Conduct parent support groups, workshops, classes, and peer-to-peer networks.
- Speak on panels, webinars, and at conferences. Sample topics:
 - Concussion management
 - Early childhood obesity therapy
 - Families as Allies
 - How to best assist parents and children shift to adult care
 - How to make practices youth-friendly
 - Mental health
 - Resources for children with complex health care needs
 - Transgender youth
 - Trauma informed care
 - Youth voice in the health care
- Collect patient & family stories (about local topics and concerns like vaping, mental health, child development) for lawmakers.
- Identify areas of family interests that impact pediatric health.

Advanced Tasks

Advocacy and Law

- Involve parents of children with complex needs in governmental advocacy efforts.
- Host a children's mental health forum with a caregiver to teach lawmakers.
- Partner with Parent Teacher Associations and youth to pass Tobacco 21.
- Participate in the Speak Up for Kids advocacy day, governmental hearings, and press events.

Policies and Activities

- Set up a panel of pediatricians, family medicine providers, parents, social workers, etc. to get input on warm handoffs between primary care and behavioral health.
- Help identify plans that focus on equity.

Training

- Engage families in Medical Home Projects
- Include a parent co-trainer in events to share their story about the difficulties of talking with doctors and getting care.