

Success Stories of Engaging Family Advisors





Creating a Family Advisor Panel

By Darci Brosnan
from Children's Health Health
Associates of Salem, Oregon

While there was a parent advisory group 3-4 years ago, it was physician led. From that collaborative came the idea to have a parent lead the group and increase number of parents involved. Physicians and medical assistants both nominated parents who they thought would be good participants. Darci Brosnan volunteered as lead family advisor and acts as the liaison between the family advisor panel and the practice. Brosnan emailed the identified parents about the group, the goals, and to ask if they were interested in participating (see Appendix C). They were able to secure 13 family advisors who attend meetings every 3 months to keep them informed of what is happening at the clinic, any changes that have been made based on their feedback, and to share new suggestions.



Tips for a successful family advisor group from Children's Health Associates of Salem:

- Clarify the role of family advisor. "Advocate" in some practices can be a well-defined term that already has definitions and requirements so be sure to have the practice think about their goals of engaging family advisors.
- Provide training for all family advisors.
- When selecting possible family advisors, keep in mind that a good family advisor can take their experience and apply it to a broader context for all patients. They aren't working just for themselves; they're working for all patients.
- While the practitioner attends every meeting, they eventually leave to give the family advisors a space to speak more freely about any suggestions and questions they may have.
- When the meetings are in person, the practice provides food and a \$25 gift card for every member who attends. If parents can't attend in person, there is the option to join virtually.
- The lead family advisor was given an ID badge to make her feel like part of the team and feel valued.
- The lead family advisor was invited to the clinic a few times to check in with families after their appointments (if desired) so that she could let the patients know the group existed but also to discuss clinic workflows with the patients.



Bridging the Gap between the Practice and the Community

By Angelina Figueroa from Lifelong, California

After moving to Oakland from Los Angeles, Angelina Figueroa needed to learn how to navigate a new city and find resources for herself and her three children. While at a doctor's visit at Lifelong, staff mentioned the family advisor position that was available and recommended her for the role. Because of the work she had already done in identifying valuable resources for herself, she was able to share those with the practice, and in turn, with the patients. Because she was new to the area, she understood the struggle of "where do I start?" when trying to identify resources for families and was able to bridge the gap between the practice and the local community.

Angelina was invited to group meetings and met monthly, one-on-one, with Dr. Omotoso to stay up to date on what was happening at the practice and what changes were being made based on her feedback.

As Lifelong's family advisor, Angelina:

- Helped translate forms and screeners into Spanish to ensure they were meeting the needs of their patient population.
- Reviewed patient-facing material to provide feedback on how patients may respond to the questions and offered suggestions on how to make them feel more comfortable completing the forms.
- Was a trusted resource when patients had questions but may be hesitant to ask due to language barriers and/or immigration status.
- Highlighted that if the practice was going to ask personal questions and refer patients to resources, it was vital they follow up with families on those referrals to ensure their needs were met. She didn't want families to feel they had shared sensitive information, but nothing was going to come from it.
- As a first-time family advisor, Angelina felt the experience was mutually beneficial. She believed her expertise was appreciated at the practice and she was able to learn even more about social drivers of health and how to help families overcome some of those challenges.

Recommendations to Improve Screening Process

By Sedara Owens
from 38th St., Indiana

As the family advisor, Sedara Owens provided 38th St. feedback on how to improve the screening process for their patients. She was able to provide the practice a new, outside perspective on how families experience the process and how to make it a more comfortable, successful visit.



Below are the three recommendations that were implemented:

- Develop an introduction to help discuss with the patient why they are being asked to complete the screen.
- Ask open ended questions during conversations with the patient instead of solely relying on questioners. Open-ended questions can come across more authentic and may yield more honest responses.
- Have the medical assistants collect responses while they are doing the initial check in. This allows them time to take the answers back to the office and gather the necessary resources that can be given to the patients at the conclusion of their visit.



“It [engaging a family advisor] made us more confident about using the Spanish-language versions of the Edinburgh [Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS)] [and] ASQ. It also kept us grounded regarding what it’s really like to be a parent waiting to hear from various referral agencies and struggling to connect.”