

NATIONAL ALLIANCE

~of~

CHILDREN'S TRUST & PREVENTION
FUNDS

Community Cafés: Changing the Lives of Children One Conversation at a Time

Community Cafés are a series of guided conversations based on the Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education framework; leadership; and parent partnership. These conversations increase community wisdom, build parent voice, and facilitate action to improve lives for children. It is a process that is designed, planned and implemented by parents, working with their community partners. Typical community partners include: early child care and education sites, neighborhood centers, community based family resource centers, schools, immigrant and refugee agencies, faith based organizations, health departments, or any system or agency that provides family services.

Steps to Implementing Community Cafés in Your State

1. Create the leadership challenge! This step is your own internal process for positive change, to challenge what's there, including personal habits, beliefs, attitudes, expectations by asking your self questions like: "Why is partnering with parents important to me? What are my own personal benefits? Where would I need the most support? Who do I know that could help me with this? What observable difference would it make for my organization?" Then,
 - ❖ Create the safety to try new things – Assess if there is a region or program area looking for ways to build parent leadership or partnership; get their feedback and support
 - ❖ Facilitate self care – Are you in a good space to start something new? If not, what could you do to reinvigorate yourself?
2. Contact Robin Higa or the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds with your interest in starting Community Cafés or write robinhiga3017@comcast.net to get some basic information over the phone, relative to your own specific state and/or community. This conversation:
 - ❖ Clarifies the need
 - ❖ Sets the intention
 - ❖ Begins the action steps to implement the vision
3. Schedule a teleconference with a Café consultant to orient you and others on your team to get more details about Community Cafés, discuss your particular needs and goals, and outline a potential process for implementation. This conversation:
 - ❖ Creates a team vision and clarifies the purpose of the using the CC approach
 - ❖ Begins the co-design process specific to your goals and resources

4. Build your starting team. Dialogue with staff and/or parent leaders who may be interested in building parent partnerships or Community Cafés. Begin to assess their strengths, resources and commitment. Build on projects you are already doing. If you do not know any parent leaders to talk to, ask a program person from a contracted site to make the parent leader contacts for you. Staff of exemplary programs can easily identify parent leaders they have a trusting relationship with to vet this new idea for you. This will likely become your initial pilot site. These conversations:

- ❖ Build common language and purpose with a broader community
- ❖ Clarifies roles and builds relationships

5. Once your team is established, arrange for the orientation with a Café consultant(s). They will provide you with the cost of the orientation to have a team come to your site. A consultant will conduct pre-site visit planning with you, your partners and your parent leaders and post-training technical assistance as needed. They can also network your parents with other parent mentors who are hosting Community Cafés. These conversations:

- ❖ Prepare parents to conduct Cafés on their own
- ❖ Provide parents and their community partners with practical tools, a conversation kit and the theory behind each guided conversation
- ❖ Adapt Cafés to fit the cultural uniqueness of their community
- ❖ Allow local parents leadership in planning, implementing and monitoring cafés
- ❖ Provide the content for a series of up to seven different café discussions
- ❖ Provide tools for documenting their activity, outcomes and progress

6. Once your Café project is running, Community Café Alliance coaches and others who have hosted focus on mentoring your hosts to design, evaluate and sustain their cafés. To continue leadership opportunities you may want to eventually connect these parent leaders with other organizations to facilitate the inclusion of strong parent voices in other systems. These conversations:

- ❖ Build individual, program and system relationships throughout the ecological model
- ❖ Reinforces the value of parent partnership
- ❖ Creates opportunities to recognize specific achievements and contributions
- ❖ Help parent leaders to know other agency partners, their work, communication styles and how the relationship helps you achieve your work goals
- ❖ Create a variety of feedback loops
- ❖ Facilitate deeper and broader relationship building with other service systems
- ❖ Create more opportunities for parent leaders to involve others
- ❖ Create opportunities to present your work at conferences and meetings as a team
- ❖ Provide ongoing skill development opportunities for parents by keeping them on an email info list, sponsoring their attendance at conferences, providing access to publications and literature, access to information shared at your meetings, etc.
- ❖ Begins to build a network or constituency base of parent leaders

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