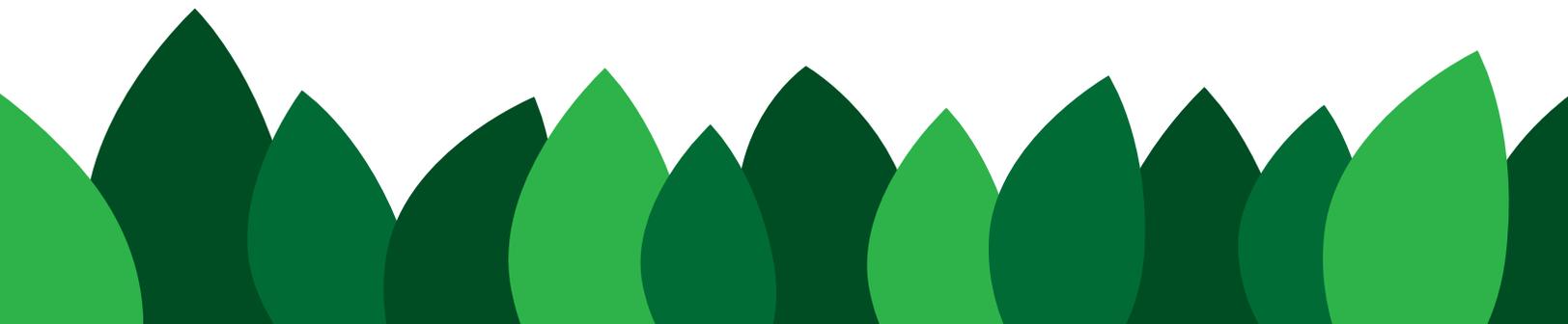


The Path to Effective Trauma-/Healing-Informed Parent and Caregiver Engagement



Family Hui®

A Program of Lead4Tomorrow



The Path to Effective Trauma/Healing Informed Parent/Caregiver Engagement

Lead4Tomorrow's resilience-focused, positive parenting program, Family Hui (hoo'ee), engages, educates, equips, and empowers parents/caregivers through organizational values originating in the Hawaiian Islands. Our core principles of *ohana* (value of family/close-knit community), *aloha* (love, peace and compassion) and empathy (walking in another's shoes) form the foundation of the Family Hui outreach and engagement. Organizationally and programmatically, we aim to see the potential and possibilities in all people while respecting and empathically understanding the diverse circumstances of others. Lead4Tomorrow/Family Hui strives to create a welcoming environment where all feel valued and are met where they are, not where our own biases expect them to be. These principles have served us well as we have engaged with parents/caregivers from diverse backgrounds throughout the State of California.

The following information is based on our experience in the field and offers a methodology for transforming principles into practices. The information includes a framework for better understanding ourselves and others and effectively engaging parents/caregivers/anyone in transformative, trauma/healing informed work. The framework is divided into four sections, Assess, Reflect, Engage, Repeat. Each of these sections offers questions to answer and/or ideas to ponder and helps individuals and individual organizations chart their own paths forward.

Let's get started!



Step 1: Assess

This simple trauma-informed matrix helps assess how an organization is engaging parents/caregivers in ways that reflects trauma-informed principles. What is your organization currently doing well and how is it being done? What needs to be done better and why? What practices should be eliminated and why?

SAMSHA's Trauma Informed Principles	What are we doing well and how are we doing it?	What can we do better and how can we do it?	What should we stop doing and why?
Safety, trustworthiness, and transparency			
Peer support			
Collaboration and mutuality			
Empowerment, voice, and choice			
Cultural, historic, and gender issues			

Source: SAMHSA

The same assessment can be done as an organization or program strives to become healing informed, as well:

Healing Informed Practices	What are we doing well and how are we doing it?	What can we do better and how can we do it?	What should we stop doing and why?
Reflection			
Collaboration			
A Culture of Learning/Curiosity			
Understanding historical context			
Growth Mindset			
Relational Leadership			

Source: Epstein, Ken. "PREPPED for Change: toward healing Organizations." California Department of Public Health, Sacramento. 25 April, 2017. Lecture.

Step 2: Reflect

Being trauma/healing informed requires ongoing reflection as our circumstances and our parents'/caregivers' circumstances change. It is essential to incorporate trauma and healing informed principles/practices internally before a group/organization can effectively apply the principles externally and engage parents/caregivers. Sometimes reflection requires wrestling with difficult truths about ourselves and our institutions. Remember to give and receive grace and blame and shame are not trauma/healing informed principles and practices. The goal is to offer safe, welcoming, and respectful venues and opportunities for input and ideas from parents/caregivers and our colleagues. To achieve this, difficult discussions may have to happen. Remember trauma-informed work is a process, a blossoming and you have to start with small seeds of change and work a lot of dirt before you can reap the benefits of a garden.

Let's jump in!

Effective engagement begins with:

A. CHECKING BIASES

Everyone of us has biases, it's natural. Though natural, biases can be harmful and can perpetuate individual, systemic, historic, and institutional trauma. To effectively engage others in a trauma/healing informed way, we need to better understand the lens/biases through which we see the world and others and examine the impact of our lens/biases on our relationships and interactions.

Implicit Bias: Attitudes, stereotypes, assumptions that affect decisions in an unconsciously.

Confirmation Bias: Ideas that confirm our existing beliefs and impair our ability to see another side of a story.

Fundamental Attribution Bias: Creating contextual excuses for our failures and seeing failures in others as inherent to their race, gender, culture, etc.

In Group Bias: The tendency to favor those from one's own group, tribalism.

B. UNDERSTANDING/ADDRESSING THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF SOCIETIES' "ISMS"

Intersectionality is a phrase coined by Professor of Law, Kimberle Crenshaw to explain the interplay of 'isms' that create and perpetuate systemic, historic, institutional, and individual trauma. Understanding the interplay of 'isms' will help organizations more deeply engage parents/caregivers, address and dismantle systems of oppression, and build systems of wellbeing.

"Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there."

KIMBERLE CRENSHAW

Is your organization aware of and responsive to the intersection of “isms”? If so, how is this awareness reflected in your community engagement work? If not, how can you and your organization be more mindful of and responsive to the complexity of trauma experienced by individuals and communities?

Social Identity Categories	Privileged Social Groups	Border Social Groups	Targeted Social Groups	Ism
Race	White People	Biracial People (White/Latinx, Black, Asian)	Asian, Black, Latinx, Native Americans	Racism
Sex	Bio Men	Transsexual, Intersex People	Bio Women	Sexism
Gender	Gender Conforming Bio Men and Women	Gender Ambiguous Bio Men and Women	Transgender, Genderqueer, Intersex People	Transgender Oppression
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual People	Bisexual People	Lesbians, Gay Men	Heterosexism
Class	Rich, Upper-Class People	Middle-Class People	Working-Class, Poor People	Classism
Ability/Disability	Temporarily/Abled-Bodied People	People with Temporary Disabilities	People with Disabilities	Ableism
Religion	Protestants	Roman Catholic (Historically)	Jews, Muslims, Hindus	Religious Oppression
Age	Adults	Young Adults	Elders, Young People	Ageism/Adultism

Source: Owen and Fox (n.d.) (cited from Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Second edition, Routledge, 2007)

C. ASSESSING OUR INTENTIONS

1. Is your organization’s aim *transactional* (compliance driven) or *transformative* (relationship driven)?

A *transformative*/relational driven aim can be in compliance with mandates but it is difficult for a purely transaction driven motive to be *transformative*.

2. Is your organization’s goal a *collection* of diverse people/voices or the *inclusion* of diverse people/voices?

The former simply brings people to the table. The latter brings people to the table and creates an environment where diverse ideas and opinions are valued and sought. To demonstrate a voice is valued, listen and acknowledge and, if needed, act. To demonstrate a voice is sought, ask.

LEARN MORE: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3IODQ37EurkFf0zMNhazqI?si=qE8z8juuT-ykiUiOLH8i1A>

Step 3: Engage

Now that you know yourself, your organization, and your intentions better, it's time to engage. The following list provides a framework for effectively and respectfully incorporating trauma/healing informed practices when engaging parents/caregivers/anyone into programming and committee and advisory council work.

1. Watch Your Words.

When inviting parents into committee/advisory council work and programming, choose your words well and avoid acronyms. Acronyms may mean different things to different people and may mean nothing to others. Terminology known to many may be unknown to others. Define terms and own the meaning of them. Collectively create working definitions, if possible. Understand impact. The impact of words can be different for different people. Terms such as "leadership/parent leader" can be intimidating to some parents depending on their background and experiences. For many parents, leadership simply begins with taking responsibility for themselves then advancing to their families, and, perhaps, advocating for their families, children, and communities. How opportunities for parent/caregiver involvement are described/framed is an important consideration when inviting parents/caregivers into a group's work.

2. Assess.

An assessment of the needs and circumstances of families being served is an important starting point. What are the needs, dynamics, and characteristics of the parents, families and communities being served? Who has framed the needs, dynamics, and assessments? How were they framed? How can more equitable and culturally relevant engagement opportunities be designed and developed? What venues exist

where parents can be engaged to gain a greater understanding of policies and resources that impact them and their children? What more can be done to help parents become advocates for their children? How can parent input be solicited to increase the effectiveness of parent/caregiver engagement? Finally, how can those who are inviting parents/caregivers into advisory settings/programs develop practices that demonstrate to the parents/caregivers their voices are heard and respected and are authentically part of the process.

3. Plan.

Work with parents before processes begin, meet them well before you greet them. The initial "meeting" can be via phone, in person, or a simple text introduction. Use this time to outline expectations, offer encouragement, and answer questions. Foster parent/organization collaboration and be open to alternative forms of engagement. Plan the time and location with varied work schedules, childcare needs, and transportation needs in mind. Time and location are crucial determinants in the success of parent engagement activities. Are there funds to pay for parent/caregiver time and offer reimbursements for expenses incurred?

4. Partner.

Work with other organizations to identify opportunities – at the state, regional and local levels – where parent voices can be included and where they can play an active role advocating for family/community/child well-being. Try to partner with organizations committed to trauma/healing informed work.

5. Prepare.

Bringing parents into advisory/leadership positions can be especially challenging for

parents/caregivers with little leadership experience or with little experience interfacing with institutions; these dynamics can be intensified when the individuals asked to serve are wary of institutions given previous experiences or perceptions. Effort is therefore needed to prepare parents for the role they are being asked to fill; this includes providing an orientation by the sponsoring organization, reviewing meeting agendas and minutes, and helping parents prepare for upcoming meetings – these are crucial steps, especially when parents/caregivers are introduced into an ongoing process.

6. Communicate.

Identify the best way(s) to communicate with parents/caregivers. The norm for an established group/program may be to communicate via email. Email may be the most effective way of reaching everyone and there may be ways to foster better communication by additionally reaching out via texting or messenger. Are language and literacy needs being addressed? Is the convening in-person or online? If online, do the participants have and feel comfortable with the chosen platform? Feel comfortable appearing on screen? Know the nuances of participating on the platform (chat, mute, green screens, etc.)? Find out about access and comfort well before the planned meeting date so adjustments can be made. If sensitive content is part of the meeting, be mindful that others may be in the room with attendees and caution attendees ahead of time and adjust as needed.

7. Welcome.

Ensure parents feel welcome. How are parents greeted at each meeting? How/where are they seated? Do the members of the committee know each other's names? Are introductions part of the agenda? Do you include icebreakers or grounding exercises? What can veteran committee members do to increase a feeling of warmth, welcome, and safety? Do seasoned committee

members need a training on effective on-boarding/welcoming? Do the existing committee members feel welcome and heard? It is difficult to value the ideas of another when one does feel his/her/their own ideas are being devalued and/or dismissed. Consider mentorship as a way to create an on-going atmosphere of welcome.

8. Respect.

Engage in respectful and meaningful ways. Create meeting norms. Go over meeting norms as a group at the beginning of every meeting. (See Example: <https://valenciacollege.edu/students/peace-justice-institute/who-we-are/principles.php>) Clearly state the meeting purpose and expectations of participants in the meeting. Clearly articulate post meeting needs/action items. On an ongoing basis obtain feedback from parents on their experience and how their participation can be more effective and impactful. Include regular check-ins before and after meetings to ensure parents/caregivers and other committee members are engaged and tracking with the project. Address concerns as they arise. Check-in to see if parents/caregivers (everyone) feel(s) their ideas and opinions heard and not dismissed.

9. Evaluate.

On an ongoing basis evaluate the substantive impacts from the process; be willing to modify the processes as needed to more effectively meet objectives and ensure meaningful parent/caregiver/committee/board/staff involvement. Poor follow-through and lack of impact can lead to disenchantment and failed processes. The aforementioned matrixes can serve as an evaluation tool.

10. Be Accountable.

Be accountable to the purpose and goals of the work and to one another. Be courageous enough to ask tough questions and hear difficult answers.

Step 4: Repeat

The path to effective parent/caregiver engagement is circuitous and more of a spiral, gyre, or helix than a linear process with a definite beginning and ending. Ideally, the path is ever unfolding because we are always learning and growing and are increasingly reflective and responsive to the changing needs in our communities and need for growth in ourselves. As opportunities emerge for creating space to hear parent/caregiver voices and respond to needs in meaningful ways, utilizing the aforementioned tools and framework will provide a foundation for responsive, trauma/healing informed engagement and transformative work.

Thank you for engaging others and sharing the stage so old songs can be heard in new ways and new songs can be sung by new sirens who lead us this time from a society that often is individually and systemically destructive to a society that is individually and systemically constructive, to communities where all can thrive.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THE FOLLOWING REFERENCES MAY PROVE USEFUL:

Engaging Parents, Developing Leaders: A Self-Assessment and Planning Tool for Nonprofits and Schools, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, August 2016

Strategies for Promoting Authentic Engagement of those Most Impacted, California Campaign to Address Childhood Adversity (4CA), January 2017

The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, Jossey-Bass, (July 31, 2012)

Moving Beyond the Family Engagement Check Box: An Innovative Partnership to Promote Authentic Family Engagement in Systems Change <https://cssp.org/resource/moving-beyond-the-family-engagement-check-box>





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Family Hui is an evidenced-informed and externally evaluated program that honors of the wisdom of the shelf and the wisdom of the self.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Lucy Morse Roberts
Family Hui Executive Director
lroberts@lead4tomorrow.org

Greg Bourne
Lead4Tomorrow Executive Director
gbourne@lead4tomorrow.org