

Building the Child and Family Team

Another product of these first conversations with the family involves identifying support people who will or should be part of the team. The team rather than the single Individualized and Tailored Care facilitator will be responsible for developing a detailed support plan. Individualized and Tailored Care services are about creating an environment in which families can voice their own needs and where supports can be created which are tied to those unique needs. The ability to voice need occurs at the individual child and family team level. Creation of the team is very important because families need to feel safe and supported in order to acknowledge areas in which they need help. By the same token, system representatives often need help hearing those needs as stated by the family versus being reframed in the context of their system or professional training.

When identifying team members, the ITC Facilitator should be prepared for some hesitancy on the part of parents. It may take some period for families to feel safe enough to disclose who they speak to or it may be that they feel uncomfortable discussing issues about their children with friends, co-workers or other family members. A Child and Family Team is not the same as a multi disciplinary team. The Multi-disciplinary Team often represents the professionals involved in the child's life. A Child and Family Team may or may not include all of those professionals but will also have room for friends, neighbors and anyone else who the family identifies. Families don't usually get to choose who will be on a Multi-disciplinary Team while Child and Family Team participation is based on the family's preferences. The focus of the Child and Family Team is broader in that it represents the child's whole life. The Multi-disciplinary Team represents the child's service life. As a rule, Child and Family Teams should have more informal support representatives than formal service providers.

It often may take 90 days for team members to be identified and committed to the process. This is not always the case as some families are very good at identifying who they see as helpful. If families are reluctant to bring others into the process, they shouldn't be pushed. As families begin to trust that this will be a strength based process they will naturally identify those they turn to. When identifying potential team members, it is often helpful to ask families who they have turned to in the past. These can be formal service providers or informal supports. Once someone has been identified the facilitator should not assume that they will be the person responsible for contacting the potential team member. Some families prefer that they contact their own friends and other prefer the facilitator make the contact.

Teams often vary dramatically in size. There is no perfect Child and Family Team size. Teams which are small often include parents, the facilitator and some other professional. Other teams which are larger have included extended family members such as uncles, aunts, ministers, grandparents, neighbors, co-workers or bosses as well as the best friend of the child. If the parent feels uncomfortable with contacting friends, it is often a good idea to hook them up with another parent who has been through the process. Often a parent who has been through the process can explain it in practical terms as it related to their own family. Additionally, some communities ask parents who have been through the process to volunteer with another family as a way of giving something back to the community. In these instances, the individualized and tailored care project enjoys the benefits of having two sources of parent input.

Questions which are Effective in Identifying Child and Family Team Members

- When happened who was the first person you called?
- Was there a professional you worked with who you really felt helped? Would that person be someone you want to have on the team?
- Do you belong to a religious group? Have you ever? Would you want some help in order to reconnect with that community?
- You have obviously been able to cope with this situation for a long time? Who have you relied on for help and support?
- Who at your child's school do you trust? What have they done which has been most helpful?
- Does your son or daughter have any friends who they listen to? Could that person be on the team? Does your child turn to the parents of any friends for advice & would they be helpful?
- Are there any professionals who you would like to have on the team because of their expertise?
Who?