

Partnering for Engagement

Last updated by: Sheila Warren

Session Summary Link:

Time: 3 hours

Recommended Class Size: Approx. 35

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify tools and techniques for family and community engagement
2. Gain insight into the experiences of parents who have been involved with the child welfare system
3. Know the benefits of family engagement and how it impacts the change process

Materials:

- Partnering for Engagement PPT
- Parent Panel Worksheet
- [Protective Factors Conversation Guides](#) (Digital Only)
- Partnering for Engagement References

Media/Tools:

- Trainer PowerPoint

Room Preparation Guide:

- N/A

Engagement Legend:

-  Large Group discussion
-  Small Group Breakout Rooms
-  Polls

-  Quiz Game
-  Animated Slide
-  Individual Activity
-  Annotate exercise
-  Video
-  Handout
-  IdeaBoardz
-  Trainer Notes
-  Panel

Trainer's Agenda:

Introduction (20 minutes)

- Welcome, learning Objectives, and overview of the day
- Opener: Day 1 retrospective using the weather report

Strength Based Practice (30 Minutes)

- Identifying strengths
- Protective Factors introduction and application

Parent Panel (80 Minutes)

- Participants hear from a panel of parent mentors with lived experience
- Reflection & debrief

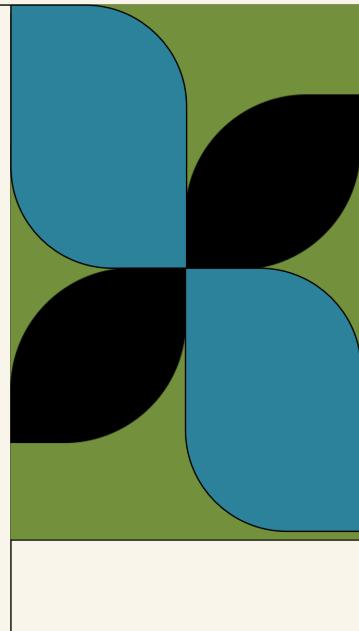
Partnership & Collaboration (30 Minutes)

- Partnering for change
- Partnering with communities

Training Content:

Slide 1

Partnering for Engagement



1

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

9:00 (1 min)

Materials/Links:

Partnering for Engagement PPT

Content:

- Welcome to day 2 of Essential Elements
-  **Partnering for Engagement PPT**: Share this session's PowerPoint with participants and explain where they can locate it in their Week 1 materials behind the "Partnering for Engagement" tab.

Slide 2

Learning Objectives

1	Identify tools and techniques for family and community engagement.
2	Gain insight into the experiences of parents who have been involved with the child welfare system.
3	Know the benefits of family engagement and how it impacts the change process.



2

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

9:01 (3 min)

Materials/Links:

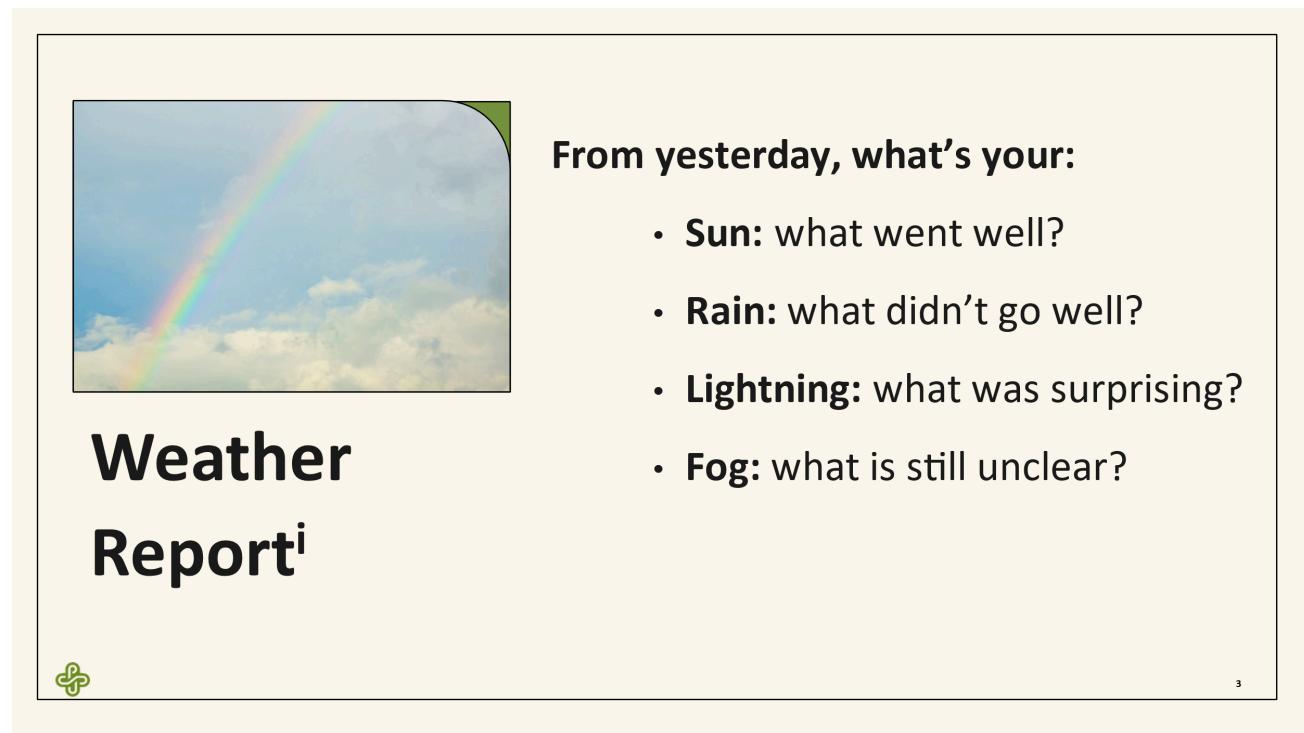
N/A

Content:

- Our work today will build on the concepts you explored yesterday.
- You may notice that our first Learning Objective for this morning was also on yesterday's list of Learning Objectives. Developing the tools and techniques you will need to successfully engage families and communities is a crucial part of your job as a child welfare professional. We will continue working towards that objective not only today but throughout your three weeks of training.
- We have the tremendous privilege this morning of hearing from a panel of parents who were previously involved with the child welfare system and now work as mentors to other parents experiencing child welfare involvement.

- We're also going to look at the connection between quality family engagement and the change process for the families we work with.

Slide 3



The slide features a large image of a rainbow arching over white clouds against a blue sky. Below the image, the word "Weather" is written in a large, bold, dark font, followed by "Report" in a slightly smaller bold font. In the bottom left corner of the slide area, there is a small green stylized logo. In the bottom right corner, there is a small number "3".

From yesterday, what's your:

- **Sun:** what went well?
- **Rain:** what didn't go well?
- **Lightning:** what was surprising?
- **Fog:** what is still unclear?

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

9:04 (11 min)

Materials/Links:

N/A

Content:

- Invite participants to reflect individually on the content that was covered during Day 1 and to consider what went well (sunshine), what didn't go well (rain), what is still unclear (fog) and what was surprising (lightning)¹.
- After giving time (30-60 seconds) for individual reflection, invite participants to share one of their reflections in chat in the following format:

¹ MacFarlane, G. (2024). *How to develop critical reflection in your practice*. Retrieved from Community Care:
<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2024/08/14/how-to-develop-critical-reflection-in-your-practice/>

- Fog: I still have questions about possible barriers to engagement.
-  **Trainer Note:** As participants put reflections in chat, voice some out loud. For any “Fog” comments, be sure to acknowledge those responses in particular. In response to “Fog” comments, the trainer may choose to address them respond in one (or more) of the following ways:
 - Ask if the participant is willing to come off mute to share more about what is unclear.
 - If it is a straightforward point of clarification that the trainer can address directly/quickly, the trainer themselves can address it directly without inviting participation from the group.
 - If it is a topic that could be beneficial for the large group to consider, the trainer can invite other participants to consider and provide input on the point mentioned in the “fog” comment.
 - If it is a topic that will be covered more in depth later the same day or later in training, the trainer can relay that it will be addressed in detail soon (let group know when that will be if trainer has that information).

Slide 4



Drawing on Strengths and Promoting Protective Factorsⁱⁱ

The Principles of Partnership compel us to recognize and use the strengths families possess to help create solutions to concerns and needs.

4

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

9:15 (5 min)

Materials/Links:**Content:**

- If you recall from yesterday afternoon, adhering to the Principles of Partnership is critical to meaningful and effective family engagement.
- The third principle, everyone has strengths, is solely focused on partnering with families to identify strengths and use those strengths in planning to help create solutions to the challenges families face.
- When we talk about strengths, it is important to recognize we are talking about strengths that function to support safety

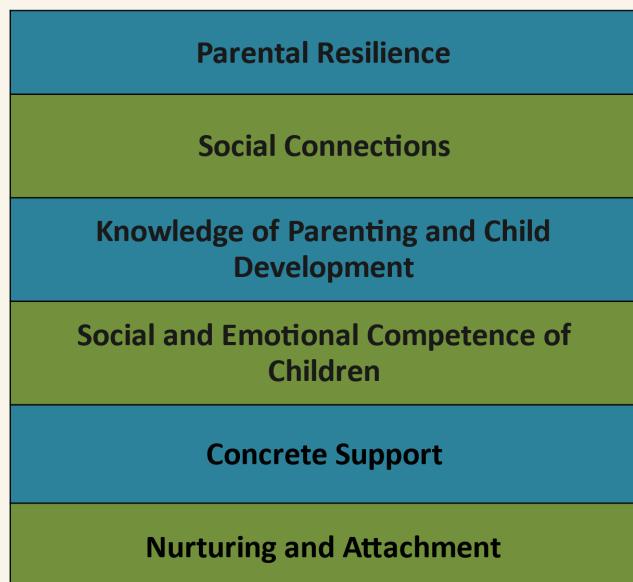
and/or well-being in the family. It can be easy to get stuck on descriptive strengths, like “the parent loves their children”, but in casework we are challenged to take it a step further and understand how strengths operate.

- **Ask:** Can someone give me an example or two of strengths a parent or family may possess that directly relate to the safety of their children?
- Possible examples include:
 - The parent can keep calm when the children misbehave. They can sit with the child to help them regain composure and move through difficult situations.
 - The parent has been employed for two years and is able to cover the family’s living expenses because of this steady employment.
 - The parent understands young children should not be exposed to substances and takes great care to ensure any substance use occurs outside of the home.
 - The grandparents live within walking distance of the family home and have daily contact with the children.
- Research has shown that strengths-based practice is essential to fostering a strong rapport with families and building relationships. Further, strengths-based approaches can increase a sense of empowerment and encourage families to find solutions and make decisions about their own lives. There is also some evidence to suggest that workers are also empowered in the process of empowering families. Turns out as workers, when we focus on family strengths, we increase our knowledge and skills to help families².
- One way you can ensure you are focusing on strengths in your practice is through the protective factors framework.

² Toros, K., Falch-Eriksen, A. Strengths-Based Practice in Child Welfare: A Systematic Literature Review. *J Child Fam Stud* **30**, 1586–1598 (2021).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-01947-x>

Slide 5

Protective Factors
mitigate risk and
promote healthy
development and
well-being for all
children and
families^{iii, iv.}



5

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

9:20 (5 min)

Materials/Links:

Parent Panel Worksheet

Content:

- Historically, the child welfare system focused on deficits within families and geared strategies primarily around eliminating risk factors. Time and research have helped us to understand this approach is short-sighted. Families need support,

encouragement, and solutions that build strength for the long haul.

- The original five protective factors come from the Center for the Study of Social Policy and have been proven to reduce risk, promote well-being, and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for families and children. The sixth factor, Nurturing and Attachment, was added by the Children's Bureau, specifically for the child welfare context³.
- The Protective Factors framework is rooted in a social-ecological approach that considers how the experiences of individuals are influenced and interact with the people, environments, and systems surrounding them.
- Additionally, the protective factors are influenced by a singular overarching protective factor, culture. The Center for the Study of Social Policy asserts that within the protective factors framework, “racial and ethnic culture is conceived as an overarching protective factor that influences how resilience is demonstrated, the nature of social connections, what knowledge is acquired and how, the expression of social and emotional competence, and the type of concrete support and care that is sought and provided”⁴.
- Thus, when exploring protective factors with families, it is imperative to approach them with curiosity and cultural

³ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2020). Protective factors approaches in child welfare. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/protective-factors-approaches-child-welfare/>

⁴ Harper Brown, C. (2024). Expanding the Perspectives and Research Foundation for the Strengthening Families & Youth Thrive Frameworks. Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved from <https://cssp.org/resource/expanding-the-perspectives-and-research-foundation-for-the-strengthening-families-youth-thrive-frameworks/>

humility. Let's take a few moments to define each of the protective factors.

-  **Parent Panel Worksheet:** Share the link to the handout in chat and direct participants to read along. Explain they will engage with this handout for the remainder of the morning. Review each of the protective factors and their definitions as follows:
 - **Parental Resilience:** managing stress and functioning well— facilitated by individual, relational, community, or societal factors—when faced with stressors, adversity, or trauma. This is an updated perspective on resilience and moves away from the hyper-individual perspectives of the past.
 - **Social Connections:** healthy, meaningful, trusting, and sustained relationships with people, institutions, communities, or a higher power that promote a sense of connectedness, belonging, and mattering.
 - **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** learning about prenatal, infant, and child development, and using developmentally and contextually appropriate parenting practices. A big part of embracing this protective factor is acknowledging that parenting can be hard, and perfection is not expected or necessary.
 - **Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** providing environments and experiences—grounded in early relational health— that build positive social skills; enable children to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behaviors; and promote effective communication, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. These skills do not come naturally and must be modeled and taught through experiences and environments parents and caregivers provide. Children fare better in school and life when socially and emotionally well-adjusted.
 - **Concrete Support:** identifying, accessing, advocating for, and receiving high quality and equitable support including

the necessities everyone deserves and specialized services to address specific needs. As a caseworker, you can be instrumental in providing and accessing concrete support for families.

- o **Nurturing and Attachment:** The emotional tie along with a pattern of positive interactions between the parent and child that develops over time. Nurturing and attachment with caring adults in early life is associated with better grades, healthier behaviors, stronger friendships, and an increased ability to cope with stress later in life.

Slide 6

Protective Factors in Action



- In your Learning Team, review the protective factors definitions
- Each participant share an example of a protective factor in action (from your own experience as a child or parent/caregiver or from a professional perspective)
- Next, select one protective factor to discuss further and identify 1-3 strategies to help bolster that factor
- If time allows, move on to another factor and repeat



6

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

9:30 (15 min) *Suggested break after this slide*

Materials/Links:

Parent Panel Worksheet

Content:

- Now you will have time to think more deeply about the Protective Factors through small group discussion.
-  **Small Group Breakout Rooms (10 min)**

- In Learning Teams, participants will review the definitions for the protective factors listed on the  **Parent Panel Worksheet**.
- Each person should be prepared to share with your team an example of a Protective Factor in action (you choose which one). Your example can draw on your own personal experience as a child or as a parent/caregiver or you can use a professional example. You can also make something up on the fly if that is your style.
- Once you have discussed your examples, select one protective factor as a group and identify 1-3 strategies for bolstering that protective factor. If time allows, move on to another protective factor.
- You will have 10 minutes for this discussion, so be sure to transition about halfway through to discussing strategies.
- Once groups return, invite participants to write one of their strategies in chat. Spend the remaining time debriefing the activity, inviting 2 or so participants to share out loud about either their example or strategy.
-  **Trainer Note:** Share a personal example of a Protective Factor, feel free to use one of these examples if you do not have your own.
 - Parental Resilience and Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development: Receiving emotional support from and alongside other new mothers and enhancing my knowledge of infant development while participating in a lactation support group for 12 weeks after my daughter was born.
 - Social and Emotional Competence of Children: I enrolled my young child in preschool and worked with her care providers to reinforce the social skills and relationships she built at home and in preschool.
- In just a few minutes we will head to our first break of the day. When you return from break, we will be joined by a panel of parents from the Morrison Center Parent Mentor Program. The panelists are all parents with prior experience in the child welfare system who now work to support parents with current involvement. They have meaningful stories to share, and we look forward to the opportunity to learn from their experiences.

-  **Parent Panel Worksheet:** Direct participants back to the handout. Invite them to use the handout to take notes during the parent panel and jot down questions they have for the panelists. Once the panel concludes at around 11, they will be asked to answer the reflection questions, which they will have an opportunity to discuss in their learning teams.
-  **Trainer Note:** Stop sharing the slide show and take a 10-minute break by 9:50 to begin the panel at 10:00 a.m. sharp.

Slide 7

• Use the handout to take notes on strengths and protective factors you hear reflected in the panelist's stories.

• Write down any questions you have for the panelists.

• Following the panel, answer the reflection questions.



Parent Panel



7

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

10:00 (60 min) *Suggested break after this slide*

Materials/Links:

Parent Panel Worksheet

Content:

-  **Trainer Note:** The trainer may use this slide to remind participants to take notes and write down questions as they listen to the panel. The trainer should turn off screen share during the panel itself.
-  **Panel:** Introduce the panel as a group of parent mentors from the Morrison Parent Mentor Program who will share a bit about their program and their own personal experiences.
 -  **Trainer Note:** The parent mentors are typically prepared to facilitate their own time with participants. It generally consists of introductions by the panelists, one of the parent mentors sharing about the Morrison parent mentor program, followed by each parent mentor sharing their story. The panel will typically leave 15 minutes or more at the end for participants to ask questions.
 - When the panel concludes, thank the panelists and excuse them from the room.
-  **Individual Activity:** Invite participants to take a few minutes to write down their answers to the reflection questions, reminding them they will be discussing their reflections in learning teams following the break.
-  **Trainer Note:** Take another 10-minute break around 11:05 a.m. when the panel concludes.

Slide 8

In your Learning Teams, discuss your reflections.

- What strengths and/or protective factors stood out most to you? Why?
- What caseworker actions did you note in the stories shared during the panel? How did those actions help or hinder the family?



Parent Panel Reflection

8

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

11:15 (15 min)

Materials/Links:

Protective Factors Conversation Guides (Digital Only)

Content:

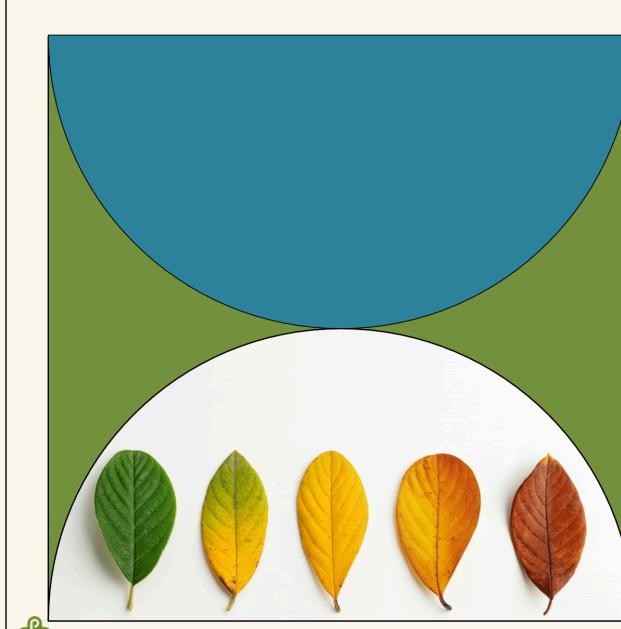
-  **Trainer Note:** While participants are on break, arrange breakout rooms according to the Learning Teams established on Day 1.
-  **Small Group Breakout Rooms (8-10 min):** Welcome participants back from break. Explain that they will be sent to

breakout rooms with their Learning Teams to discuss their reflections from the parent panel.

- o Allow 8-10 minutes in breakout rooms, instructing participants to discuss all the reflection questions.
- Call participants back and ask them to share their biggest takeaway from the panel and/or their learning team discussion in the chat. If time allows, invite 2-3 participants to share aloud.
-  **Trainer Note:** As you transition to the next slide, share the  **Protective Factors Conversation Guides (Digital Only)**⁵ with participants.
 - o These are “Nice to Know” resources to help workers better understand the factors and engage with families around them.

⁵ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2023/2024). Protective Factors Conversation Guides. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventionmonth/protective-factors-conversation-guides/>

Slide 9



Partnering for Change

- Why is change hard?
- What is the positive intent behind reluctance to change?
- What motivates us to change?

9

Suggested Start Time and (Duration):

11:30 (15 min)

Materials/Links:

N/A

Content:

- Ask participants to reflect individually on a change they have personally been considering. Provide the following instructions:
 - Write down a change you have been considering but haven't made yet. If you don't have any changes you're considering right now, think about an experience when you considered making a change. You will not be asked to share this with anyone. Maybe you're considering giving up caffeine or nicotine; maybe it's beginning a new

exercise routine, breaking a certain habit, or learning a new skill.

- o After you write down the change you've been considering, write down the benefits of making that change.
- o Now, write down why you haven't made that change yet.
- o What feelings come up for you when you think about making that change?

-  **Large Group discussion:** Invite participants to unmute and share their reflections on the following questions:

- o What would make change hard?
- o What are the positives you experience from not changing?
- o What would it take for you to feel motivated to change?
- o How do you generally react to someone trying to force you to change?
- o How does this exercise relate to partnering with families involved with child welfare?

-  **Trainer Notes:** Optional follow-up discussion questions (if time allows):

- o Which Principles of Partnership can you use to help families find motivation for change? What would it look like for you to apply that Principle when partnering for change?
- o How can understanding Protective Factors help you partner with families for change?

- In our roles as caseworkers, we are asked to motivate families to make some change in their lives (discipline in a new way, cope differently, etc.)

- As humans, we all resist change at times. This can be for many reasons. It's important to remember, though, that even when we know and can articulate the benefits of changing, whether we are consciously aware of them or not, we also experience benefits from *not* changing. We think about the benefits of not changing as the positive intent of resistance.

- o Example: Lots of people talk about wanting to exercise more. They can describe the positive benefits. It makes them feel healthier and stronger. Who wouldn't want that? So, why is it so hard for some people? What is the positive intent around not exercising; around resisting this change in behavior? It could be that not exercising gives a person

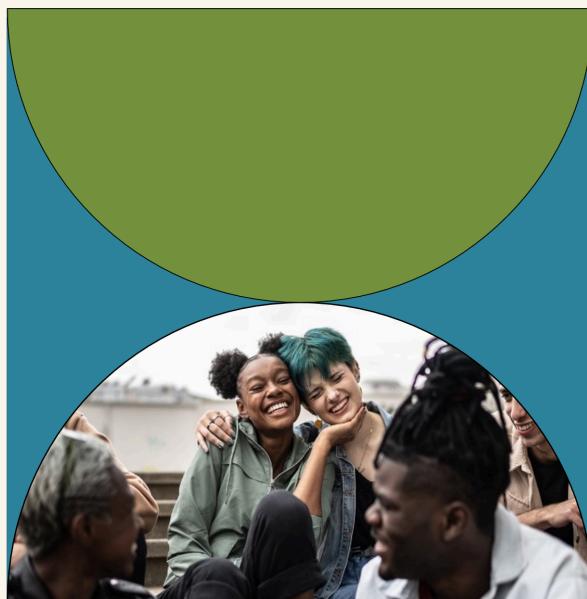
more time to relax, which also helps them feel better or maybe they resist exercise because they feel the need to work long hours to look good at work.

- It's worth noting that if a parent is focused on safety needs such as having food to eat and a place to sleep, asking them to focus on higher level needs such as "self-actualization" is an unreasonable expectation. It is important to meet the client where they are in their change process.

Slide 10

Partnering with Communities

- Who are the community partners we work with?
- What are benefits of partnership for families?
- What unintended consequences could arise for families?



10

Suggested Start Time:

11:45 (10 min)

Materials/Links:

N/A

Content:

- To best serve youth and their families, child welfare work requires working in collaboration with others.
-  **Large Group discussion:** Invite participants to share:
 - o Who are the community partners we work with?
 - o In cases of good partnership and collaboration – what have been the benefits for the family?
 - Culturally responsive
 - Shared knowledge and expertise

- Family voice/empowerment
 - Less recurrence of CW involvement – responsive/preventative supports
 - Expanded resources
 - Equity – addressing systemic oppression
 - Sustainability and motivation for change
- o For families, what are some of the unintended consequences that could arise when we partner with others? Examples could include:
- Further activation of historical trauma – consider the family or community's previous involvement with law enforcement, juvenile justice, the courts, and other systems.
 - Families do not understand their rights within other systems.
 - Families do not understand the differentiation of community partners from child welfare and child welfare not making this differentiation clear – for example, a family may think that they have to cooperate with law enforcement or work with a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) as a part of child welfare involvement.
 - Confidentiality and the sharing of personal information across multiple systems.

References

- ⁱ MacFarlane, G. (2024). How to develop critical reflection in your practice. Retrieved from Community Care: <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2024/08/14/how-to-develop-critical-reflection-in-your-practice/>
- ⁱⁱ Toros, K., Falch-Eriksen, A. Strengths-Based Practice in Child Welfare: A Systematic Literature Review. *J Child Fam Stud* 30, 1586–1598 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-01947-x>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2020). Protective factors approaches in child welfare. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/protective-factors-approaches-child-welfare/>
- ^{iv} Harper Brown, C. (2024). Expanding the Perspectives and Research Foundation for the Strengthening Families & Youth Thrive Frameworks. Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved from <https://cssp.org/resource/expanding-the-perspectives-and-research-foundation-for-the-strengthening-families-youth-thrive-frameworks/>
- ^v Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2023/2024). Protective Factors Conversation Guides. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventionmonth/protectivefactors-conversation-guides/>



11

Suggested Start Time:

11:55

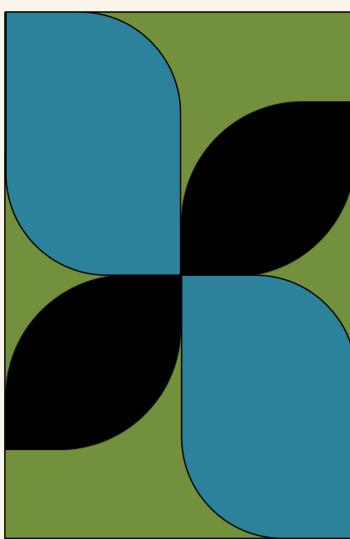
Materials/Links:

Partnering for Engagement References

Content:

-  **Partnering for Engagement References:** Refer participants to the reference information for this session.

Slide 12



See you this afternoon!

Thank you!

12

Suggested Start Time:

11:58

Materials/Links:

N/A

Content:

- Thank participants for their engagement with the Parent Panel and the activities. Trainers can let them know that we will be addressing Screening and Initial Contact in the afternoon.