

Engaging Families: The Journey in Puerto Rico

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Background

Title V leaders in Puerto Rico have sought input from community and family representatives in many ways since 2009:

- *A Family Representative provides input in new policies, educational materials, and outreach work; participates in trainings to providers and families; and represents families in committees, and more*
- *Family Engagement and Support Advocates—who are mothers of CYSHCN— offer family-to-family support at Regional Pediatric Centers and promote engagement*
- *Youth Advisory Council members help design and lead adolescent programs*
- *Title V Family Inclusion Steering Committee offers family engagement workshops to Title V staff*

Building on these impressive efforts, Title V leaders wanted to engage with family members more continuously and in more program areas. They enrolled in the Center's Learning Journey in pursuit of the following goals: *families and communities who are empowered, engaged, and working together with our staff to support and address the needs of the maternal, child, and adolescent population, to improve population health outcomes in all of their program areas, and to reduce health inequities.*

The Journey: Strengthening Family Participation in Title V Programs

Puerto Rico's team began their Learning Journey identifying the steps needed to advance their family engagement goals:

- Learn how Title V programs engage families and gather evidence on how this practice can improve health and health equity
- Determine how to incorporate health equity activities into their plan
- Assess Title V staff views and practices about family engagement
- Offer educational programs to increase buy-in among Title V staff
- Study family perceptions about engagement and offer education for families and community partners
- Establish a strong “Family Network” in and around all Title V programs
- Hire a new “Title V Family Leader” to coordinate family engagement activities

Next, the team set out to develop a logic model to help sequence these steps, a one-page summary to help build buy-in from other Title V leaders, and a questionnaire to assess staff perceptions and practices around engaging families.

Puerto Rico reported the Center helped them advance towards their goals in three key ways:

1. Break down their challenge into smaller parts
2. Gather perspectives of staff, families, and partners
3. Build a strong team to lead the work long-term

When interviewed six months after the Learning Journey, the team co-leads reported that the team had used the staff survey results to make recommendations to better integrate family voices in all Title V work. Recommendations include: conversations with staff who are in direct contact with families about family strengths and capacity to partner; increase staff awareness about the value of partnering with people with lived experiences; promote staff reflections on how to facilitate family participation; and administer a survey to assess family perceptions about engagement.