

Purpose: To get social work students thinking about their professional trajectory and how their current and future roles can push towards meaningful family engagement.

Guidelines:

1. Assign a dialogue facilitator, timekeeper, recorder, and reporter.
 - a. Timekeeper: Each team has 20 minutes to complete this activity
 - b. Recorder: You'll want to listen for what your peers identify as key takeaways for applying meaningful family engagement to their social work practice.
 - c. Facilitator: You'll want to keep the dialogue flowing and focused on the concepts at hand. Make sure everyone is engaged and contributes in a way comfortable for them.
 - d. Report: You're job is to help the group identify its core themes and message, and to share this and any other key a-ha's with the large group.

2. The discussion facilitator should read the following quote to the group:

“...The task is not to bring families into an arena that they've not previously belonged to. The task is to fully recognize and honor the membership they already have — a membership that is absolutely central to the life of the child. Once this membership is acknowledged, the task is simplified. In short, it consists of creating linkages between all the members of the system -between the professionals and the families.” (Adams, Biss, Mohammed, Myers, & Slaton, 2000:3¹).

3. As a group, let's think about this description of engaging families from a systems perspective and the emerging priorities for meaningful

¹ Adams, J., Biss, C., Burrell Mohammad, V., Meyers, J., & Slaton, E. (2000). *Family- professional relationships: Moving forward together*. Alexandria, VA: National Peer Technical Assistance Network's Partnership for Children's Mental Health.

family engagement in social work practice. Let's start thinking out loud about two basic questions:

- a. How would meaningful family engagement ***“show up”*** in the child- and family-serving systems that constitute the child welfare?
 - b. What would meaningful family engagement ***look like*** for the policy analysis? Frontline social worker? Supervisor? Court judge? Birth Father? Program evaluator? Administrator? Foundation Officer/Funder? Grandmother? Teacher? Youth?
 - a. NOTE: Consider a role that you are currently in and one you might aspire to further on in your career?
 - c. What results and achievements should we look for to help us see progress and improvement in our shared commitment to meaningfully engage families?
4. What would our community/agency/school look like if we fully recognized and honored the natural membership of families as system partners? What steps could each one of us take to move in that direction...**starting NOW**?
- a. NOTE: This is a slippery one. The point is to begin to think about how you can take the concepts and apply them to your current practice “on-the-job” as well as your education/professional development in your studies. What actions can you put with the ideas to create change now....not after graduation (:~0)!