Evaluating Your Efforts to Build Authentic Family and Youth Representation

Effective efforts in building Family and Youth Peer participation involve reviewing and rethinking what you currently have in place. You should think about what you do to welcome Families while finding a way for existing Council members to be hospitable. When you add Families or Youth to a Council structure consider the following questions in planning a strategic approach in building your council.

- **For Parents & Youth**
    - How do you explain what the Council does to Families? Youth?
    - What are the responsibilities that you are expecting in engaging Families and Youth as full members of the FCFC?
        - Attendance: What is your expectation for being present for Council meetings? Are there subcommittee meetings that you are expecting Families or Youth to be present?
        - Participation: Do you expect Families/Youth to speak up at each meeting or on particular topics? Set the expectations for Families to feel comfortable speaking up rather than waiting to be asked.
        - Representation: Do you expect Families/Youth to be representative of more than their opinion? Have you figured out a way that the parent/youth representative can have access to other parents or youth in systems to gather their opinions about what's being discussed and decided in FCFC meetings?
        - State or National Resources: Are there organizations that are committed to authentic Family Involvement that you could access? Youth Involvement? Are there conferences or gatherings in your state or nationally that could be helpful for Parents who take on representation? (Federation of Families annual conference (virtual or in-person), YouthMove National Conference, etc.)
        - Local FCFC Resources: Do other County Councils have example materials, processes, procedures that you can draw on in your effort to effectively recruit, engage, orient and support Family Representatives?

- **For FCFC Members**
    - Do you have procedures to identify Families/Youth for participation? Are they family friendly or system friendly? How could you make improvements?

- Do you have a usual way you welcome new members to the Council when membership changes occur? Can you seek feedback from others about how this welcoming and orientation worked for them?
- Do you have an organized process to welcome Families/Youth to the Council? How do you expect Families/Youth to get acquainted with all other Directors?
- Who on your Council is willing to be a support person for the first three months to a parent or youth representative to assure that Family/Youth participation & perspective is welcomed and authentic?
- Who else can you turn to for feedback and support? This might include your state FCFC representatives, other agencies, other local FCFCs as well as websites or informational sources.