*SELECTED FAMILY/YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITES*

*I. Creating and embedding family-focused and strength-based policies and practices within each agency to institutionalize the active and meaningful involvement of family members in their youth’s care*

* OJJDP staff work group to coordinate, infuse and track youth and family partnership activities across agency. Held initial staff training for staff on family and youth engagement.
* Education issued Youth Engagement Plan for the Department in October 2011 to help youth graduate from high school and access higher education.
* ED is integrating family/youth engagement efforts agency-wide and developing a family engagement strategy to identify how the policies and programs help to create and/or support teachers, school staff, administrators and parents individually and collectively support student academic achievement.
* Instructions on “Call for Abstracts” both for branch-sponsored grantee meetings and national meetings, including the bi-annual Training Institutes, request that Family Members and Youth be active participants on panels and workshops whenever possible. For grantee meetings, it is required that a youth or family member be a co-presenter for all sessions.

*II. Building a systemic infrastructure that formally includes families in the development and implementation of agency/system policies and practices*

* DOJ, Education and HHS agencies and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform developed recommendations to advance family engagement and partnership and create an infrastructure to support that work in the federal agencies.
* Several agencies have family and/or youth representation on federal or national advisory councils:
	+ The National Advisory Council of SAMHSA’s Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) includes representation from a young person.
	+ The CMHS also includes a consumer and family subcommittee.
	+ OJJDP’s Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice has youth members and has established a family/youth engagement subcommittee.
* SAMHSA has a project officer position in the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch held by a family member who regularly influences policy and practices within the Child Mental Health Initiative program and manages the Statewide Family Network Program.
* The three Departments promote and support family/youth engagement strategies through grant program work including:
	+ Support to the cities of the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention to engage families and youth in their systems change efforts.
	+ Requiring family liaisons and youth coordinators, e.g., in SAMHSA systems of care (SOC) grantee organizations where they develop activities that represent the voice of youth who have serious mental health needs, facilitate youth involvement in development of the system of care and work with existing family-run organizations to develop, implement and evaluate the system of care and provide support services for families receiving services.
	+ SAMHSA’s Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), which builds partnerships among residential and community providers, families, youth, advocates, and policy makers to achieve positive outcomes for youth and families. The Family Advisory Network (consisting of family members from across the country whose own children have been or are currently being served in residential programs) and the Youth Advisory Group (consists of youth and advocates who have been or are currently being served in residential programs) have developed two guides for successfully engaging youth and families. (*The BBI Handbook: Peer Youth Advocates in Residential Programs (Handbook)* can be downloaded at [www.buildingbridges4youth.org/products](http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org/products). This handbook provides guidance on how to effectively use youth advocates in residential programs)
	+ SAMHSA’s Family Network Grantees, which is a grant program supporting family-run organizations, many of which have produced products furthering family and youth engagement.
	+ OJJDP’s new National Center for Youth in Custody, which has designated youth, family and community engagement as one of its three areas of focus and has included family and youth representatives on its advisory body.
	+ OJJDP’s formula grants to states, which require them to establish State Advisory Groups that must include both youth members (age 24 or younger at age of appointment) and individuals with current or past involvement in the JJ system.
	+ Several Children’s Bureau programs:

John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program; Title IV-B, Subpart 1 of the Social Security Act, Child Welfare Services and Subpart 2, Promoting Safe and Stable Families; and Community-Based Grants for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

* The three Departments promote and support family/youth engagement strategies through technical assistance, including:
	+ SAMHSA’s Technical Assistance Partnership (see TA Partnership.org) for its systems of care grantees.
	+ OJJDP’s National Training and Technical Assistance Center and its contract provide TA to the states and can support family/youth engagement work.
	+ The Children’s Bureau provides coordinated training, technical assistance, research, and consultation services to States, Tribes, communities, and child welfare professionals through its Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) Network.
* The Children’s Bureau’s National Resource Centers (NRCs) provide topical T&TA to States and Tribes to address key issues related to child welfare service delivery, including: Permanency and Family Connections; In-Home Services; and Youth Development
* Children’s Bureau T&TA Network members offering information, training, and technical assistance include:
	+ - *National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Child Welfare Systems of Care Grantee,* which improves safety, permanency, and well-being for families and children, focusing, in part, on using family involvement and engaging families as partners in developing their own case plans; recruiting and working with families in developing peer support services; and empowering families to participate in decision-making and apply their experience as service recipients to system change activities.
		- *The Family Resource Information, Education, and Network Development Service (FRIENDS) National Resource Center* has established a Parent Advisory Council to provide overall program direction and guidance to Center.
		- *National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers*, which involves non-resident fathers in their children's cases improving child welfare outcomes.

*III. Supporting families to become more effective external advocates and assisting them in having their voice heard in improving policies and practices involving the engagement of families.*

* Children’s Mental Health Initiative System of Care (SOC) grants require youth and families to have significant input into the developing children’s mental health system. Requirements include hiring a Lead Family Contact and a Youth Engagement Specialist to contribute management. SCO grantees also are required to have a governance structure that includes family and youth members and are encouraged to make their governance board at least 51% families and youth. Communities have achieved different levels of success; but all governance structures have youth and family voice.
* SAMHSA supports Statewide Consumer and Family Networks along with a TA Center. These dollars support having consumers and family members involved in state level policy and decision-making activities.
* SAMHSA’s Technical Assistance Partnership employs two youth involvement content specialists who work directly with systems of care; have affinity calls, and sponsor youth tracks at national meetings.  The TA Partnership also employs two family involvement content specialists and leads a family community of practice. The TA Partnership has also established a community of practice for youth in transition and families. [Variety of products produced including, *Integrating "Youth Guided" and "Cultural Linguistic Competence" Values into Systems of Care;* [*Youth Adult Partnerships in Systems of Care*](http://tapartnership.org/docs/Youth%20Adult%20Partnerships%20Guide.pdf); [*A Youth Guide to Treatment and Treatment Planning*](http://tapartnership.org/docs/Youth_Guide_to_Treatment.pdf).]
* SAMHSA funds Youth M.O.V.E. *(*Youthmovenational.org), a youth led national organization devoted to improving services and systems in support of positive growth and development by uniting the voices of individuals who have experience in various systems including mental health, juvenile justice, education, and child welfare.
* ED’s Title I, Part D “Neglected or Delinquent” education program through its technical assistance contractor, NDTAC at American Institutes for Research, ED is finalizing a “family-friendly” guide to family, youth and community engagement in juvenile justice educational settings.
* The Children’s Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR)establish expectations that promote family and youth engagement in the casework process. During the review, a sample of cases are assessed to ensure that States develop case plans jointly with parents and children, have monthly caseworker contacts with parents and children that promote achievement of case goals, and assess the needs of families and provide services to meet those needs.

*IV.  Raising Awareness and Informing Work through Research and Listening Sessions*

* The three Departments raise awareness about the value of family/youth engagement:
	+ Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement, in partnership with United Way Worldwide, the National PTA, the Southwest Education Development Lab, and the Harvard Family Research Project, sponsored the ***Achieving Excellence and Innovation in Family, School, and Community Engagement Webinar Series*** to inform stakeholders about research on family, school, and community engagement, best practices, and innovations in school improvement and student learning. The series archives can be found at <http://www.nationalpirc.org/engagement_webinars/>.
	+ The three Departments worked together to organize the May 2012 meeting of the Coordinating Council to update member agencies on federal action related to family and youth engagement and partnership.
* The three Departments regularly convene listening sessions to inform their work:
	+ The three Departments collaborated on the first-ever federal Lesbian, Gay, Bi Sexual and Transgendered Youth Summit last year, which involved LGBT youth.
	+ OJJDP partnered with the Campaign for Youth Justice to hold four listening sessions with families of and youth involved with the JJ system.
	+ OJJDP held youth listening sessions in 2010 and 2011 to inform the Tribal Youth Program and the work of the Coordinating Council Issue Teams.
	+ OJJDP continues to hear from families and youth in signature initiatives such as the Defending Childhood Initiative and the ED-DOJ school discipline initiative.
	+ Education’s Office of Communications and Outreach conducted a National Youth Listening Tour in various cities with “Student Voices” sessions with Secretary Duncan and senior staff. Another listening tour for youth who have been in contact with the juvenile justice system, and their family members and community advocates, is proposed for summer 2012.
* The Children’s Bureau awards discretionary grants for research and program development to State and local agencies, Tribes, faith-based and community-based organizations, and other non-profit and for-profit groups that include:
* *Comprehensive Family Assessments to Improve Child Welfare Outcomes* and *National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)*, which is a data collection system to track the independent living services States provide to youth and develop outcome measures for program assessment. Cohorts of youth are asked at ages 17, 19, and 21 to report on their outcomes after leaving foster care. As part of this work, States partnered youth with their State Independent Living Coordinator and Data Specialist. The first data was collected in October 2010, and youth were first to get results and provide commentary, which was used to inform the meeting, which was focused on the youth-adult partnership model.