



IN THEIR VOICES

How Families, Youth, Communities and Tribes Help Us Remember What Is Most Important

California Partners for Permanency continues to grow and learn and be inspired by the experiences of the families, youth, communities and Tribes with whom we work. Their voices are clear and effective reminders of what is most important in the development of a Child and Family Practice Model that will help reduce long-term foster care and improve the lives of children and families in California. The following captures some of what we are learning from these important partners.

Focus first on what children youth, families, communities and Tribes say they need.

“Let’s not get stuck in the detail of how we measure things -- let’s first decide on what is right for families and then figure out how to measure it.” (Foster youth alumni)

The structure of the system impacts how families experience interactions with social workers.

“You can’t separate the practice from the system...” (African American & Tribal Communities)

Families, communities and Tribes understand the problems and have the solutions -- work with them.

“Being invited to the table as a partner.... to pose the problem and create the solutions.... is an important step forward.” (Youth, African American & Tribal communities)

Child welfare terminology doesn’t always have meaning for families and communities.

“Terms like outcomes, permanency, healing and trauma may have very different meanings to us, or they may not be meaningful at all. Let families, communities and Tribes define the words you use. We live and experience these things – we should define them....” (African American & Tribal communities)

Be fully present in both mind and spirit in all interactions.

“Remember to bring the ‘heart’ into everything you do -- in your work with families, in meetings and processes....everything.” (Tribal communities)

There is wisdom to be gained from communities and Tribes.

“...Native American communities have been doing wraparound for years.... We know how to do this....” (Tribal communities)

Families are powerful and resourceful – it is important to build on their strengths.

“Don’t ever think you can empower families -- families have power. Support the power of families.” (African American communities)

Be open and listen to families, communities and tribes. Understand that building good relationships take time and patience.

“Listen with appreciation.... Learn through our stories and experiences....This listening takes time.” (Tribal communities)

“Find out about us – who we are, how we see things. Be a part of our communities and Tribes... Come to us.” (African American & Tribal communities)

“You need to take the time to build relationships with families, with community....with Tribes.... Trust and communication are core to building relationships.” (African American & Tribal communities)



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