

PARENTS WITH A VOICE

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After attending several trainings, I have come to the conclusion that a very important strategies to provide quality services to the families we are helping. One avenue that would help us is to employ people who have gone through the experience of raising special needs children. To borrow a phrase from the training institutes you need to be able to say you have the experience of "walking the walk" or to borrow another phrase from the "Promoting Family Advocacy" Institute, you should be able to say I have "been there, done that."

I think this philosophy is shared in Wyoming's, Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health or otherwise known as "Uplift." It's current staff of 12 includes 7 family members and it's board of 13 includes 8 family members. These numbers came to my attention through the "Involving Families in Multiple Roles in Systems of Care" Institute.

Some ideas covered in "The Role of Religion and Spiritual Beliefs in Mental Health Services" workshop could be considered in dealing with families. An example might be an Asian family, do to their beliefs in incarnation and karma they blame themselves for their illnesses or those of their children. In the Buddhism religion it is believed that a curse or bad spirits can bring on an illness. We must be respectful of the religious beliefs of people if we want them to seek our help.

The last workshop I attended was "Suicide Prevention". I would hope that anyone involved in social work would want to know some basic information about the signs of someone in this state of mind. They would be the following: Changes in appearance-less neat, less clean, changes in behavior-irritable,

sleeping or eating more or less than usual. Some other signs might be verbal warnings-talking about death or about being with loved ones who have died, making final arrangements and giving away personnel possessions, or distancing themselves from loved ones. To have the opportunity to help someone out of this state of mind and do so successfully would have to be a great reward in itself.

Overall I really enjoyed all the workshops.
John G.

9th Annual Children's and Family Conference Creating Caring Communities Thursday, November 7, 2002

This year Carolyn Nava, Senior Family Advisor for the Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health was a keynote speaker. Miss Nava believes that involving families as full partners presents a new way of working with families. Her saying is "Nothing About Us Without Us." The other Keynote speaker was Michael Kelly, LCSW. Mr. Kelly's specialty is working with hard-to-reach adolescents and their families. One thing he stated was don't give up trying to communicate with our youth. Both of the keynote speakers emphasis was on strength-based approaches.

Some of the workshops sessions were as follows: Reaching the Inner Child through music, Strength-Based Planning Using the 40 Developmental Assets, and Latinos/Hispanics: Health Care and Human Services to name a few. It was a very informative conference.

