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Training Guide for the Child Development Program

Supporting Families With Information And Resources

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SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide human services personnel, human resources personnel and coordinators for community organizations information to assist and support families in raising their children. Throughout this publication we will be using the terminology of human services/human resource personnel and community leaders such as extension and others interchangeably as we proceed through the guide. While the age of information has caused an explosion in the availability of self-help, do-it-yourself, treat-yourself materials and resources, raising children is not conducive to a self-study approach. It is a labor-intensive, challenging and rewarding roller coaster of emotional, physical and intellectual ups and downs. It requires constant analysis as children's needs and the home, school and community environment change.

Communication with others is an important factor in helping families maintain a constructive perspective of their children's current and future development. It is also important that families interact with others in order to continue their learning about resources, issues and problems they may confront with their own children.

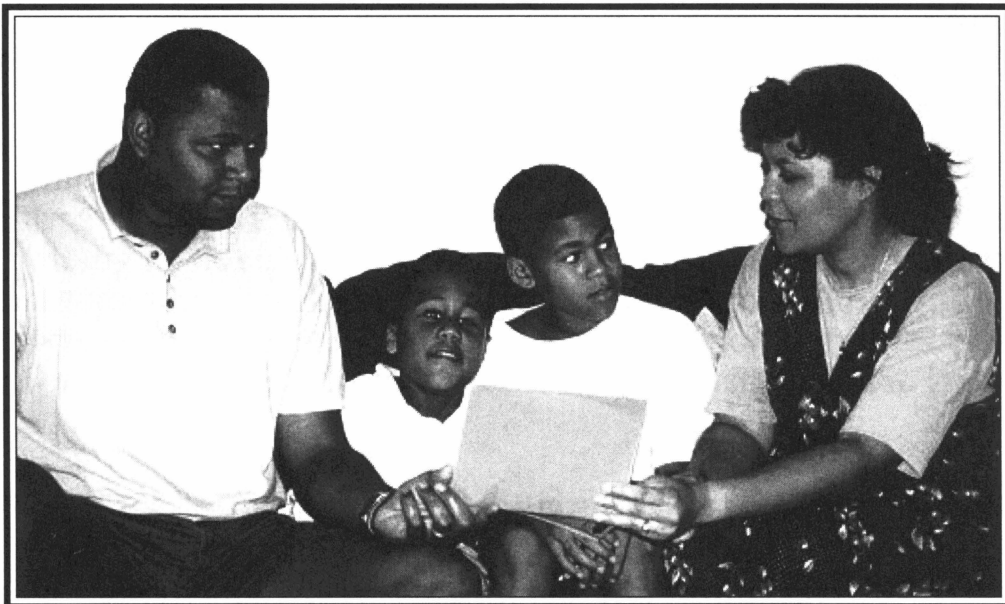
Parenting requires a supportive network within the community to meet the challenges of daily life with children. The leaders within the community services and organizations are valuable in guiding and supporting families in the development of their skills and knowledge in this very important job. As families are challenged, human services personnel are also challenged to assure that families receive the help they need.

Note: *Throughout this guide the word "parents" is used for the ease of reading. However, this word is meant to encompass any significant caregiver including stepparents, guardians, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.*

Outcomes

This guide will assist human services personnel in developing and/or refining skills in the following:

- Identifying child-rearing concerns and priorities of families.
- Identifying the resources and support desired by families.
- Selecting appropriate and available program activities, information resources and support to meet these concerns/priorities.
- Selecting methods of providing support which reflect varied learning styles, busy family lives, cultural sensitivity and family preferences.
- Evaluating and maintaining up-to-date listings of existing resources for family support, training, and information.
- Determining family satisfaction with the resources and support offered by the leaders and community personnel.
- Supporting parents as advocates for their children.



Topics Covered in This Guide

- I. Assessing parents' interests and needs for information and services
- II. Making services and information easily available
- III. Developing a system for evaluating support services
- IV. Developing a system for exploring and evaluating information resources
- V. Developing strategies to support parents as advocates for their children



**TOPIC I:
ASSESSING PARENTS' INTERESTS
AND NEEDS FOR
INFORMATION AND SERVICES**

Outcomes

After completing this section, the community leaders should be able to:

- Conduct formal and informal assessments of available support services.

Key Concepts

- Surveys are usually questionnaires which can provide information on parents' concerns and need for resources.
- Focus groups allow personal contact with parents and opportunity to explore issues together.
- Informal assessments can also provide useful information for planning support services for parents.

Pre-Assessment

Davita is employed as a contact for employees in an industry on the East Coast. Not a week passes that Davita doesn't have to answer questions from an anxious or frustrated parent about his/her child. A typical situation: Davita is walking down the hall with her morning coffee and a stack of memos to review. Knowing that Davita handles programs for school-age children, a parent who has just dropped off her child sees Davita coming and launches into an anxious description of her latest conflict with her 11-year-old son. She complains that he corrects everything she says and does the same with his 8-year-old sister. She's at her wits end as to what to do. Later that day, as Davita is walking to the parking lot, the father of a 13-year-old boy asks her to explain why young boys are so adamant about wearing an earring.

Questions for discussion:

1. What can Davita do to determine how representative these concerns are for parents in her program?

2. What kind of experience and/or assistance does Davita need in order to determine what parents need?

Background Information

Gathering information is a critical part of planning systematic support for parents. Each family is unique, with its own personal concerns, priorities and available resources. Families have a variety of expectations for their children. Therefore, human resource personnel must explore all of these issues in order to effectively provide support to parents. One method of gathering information from parents is through formal information gathering or assessment strategies. Formal information gathering enables resource personnel to systematically determine how to effectively meet parents' needs. Strategies include surveys, focus groups and review of formal requests for assistance.

Surveys

Surveys can be conducted through telephone or face-to-face interviews. Information on surveys can be collected using a questionnaire with multiple-choice questions which require parents to choose from among a fixed series of answers, or open-ended questions which allow parents to write or express their own answers. The major steps for conducting a survey include preparation and utilization of the survey.

The preparation steps for conducting a survey include:

- Determining the information needed
- Determining how many people must be surveyed
- Determining how to make sure the group surveyed represents the entire group
For example: Two paycheck families, single parent families, etc.
- Determining how to reach the parents to be surveyed
For example: In the evening by telephone, or in person at a center meeting, etc.

-
- Determining what type of questions to ask
For example: Questions which force a choice or allow parents to write what they want (open-ended).
 - Developing the survey questions
 - Developing a method for distributing and collecting surveys, or for making telephone calls and recording the responses
 - Trying out (piloting) the questions with at least two other people to make sure they are clearly worded

The following steps will encourage participation and ensure accuracy of results:

- Explain to respondents the purpose of the survey and who will see the results
- Explain whether or not the survey is to be anonymous
- Make sure the respondent understands the questions (repeat or explain them again, if necessary)
- Paraphrase the answer (if conducted in person or by telephone) to confirm what was said
- Record responses to the questions.

See Appendix A for a sample survey.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are meetings between people who have a shared interest in a topic or an issue. They can be used to explore problems and to develop ideas or possible solutions. Make sure the purpose of the meeting and roles of group members are clear, which helps to ensure the success of focus groups.

The preparation steps for conducting a focus group include:

- Developing an agenda with the questions to be discussed
- Establishing the product to result from the meeting, such as a list of suggestions to resolve a problem
- Recruiting members with different perspectives
- Recruiting members who can listen as well as share ideas.

The steps for conducting a focus group include:

- Establishing roles for group members, such as chairperson and recorder
- Establishing guidelines for participation, such as:
 - Let a person complete his/her statement before speaking
 - Paraphrase the previous statement before disagreeing with the previous speaker
- Making a written record (minutes) of the meeting
- Planning an agenda for the next meeting or establishing follow-up activities before adjourning

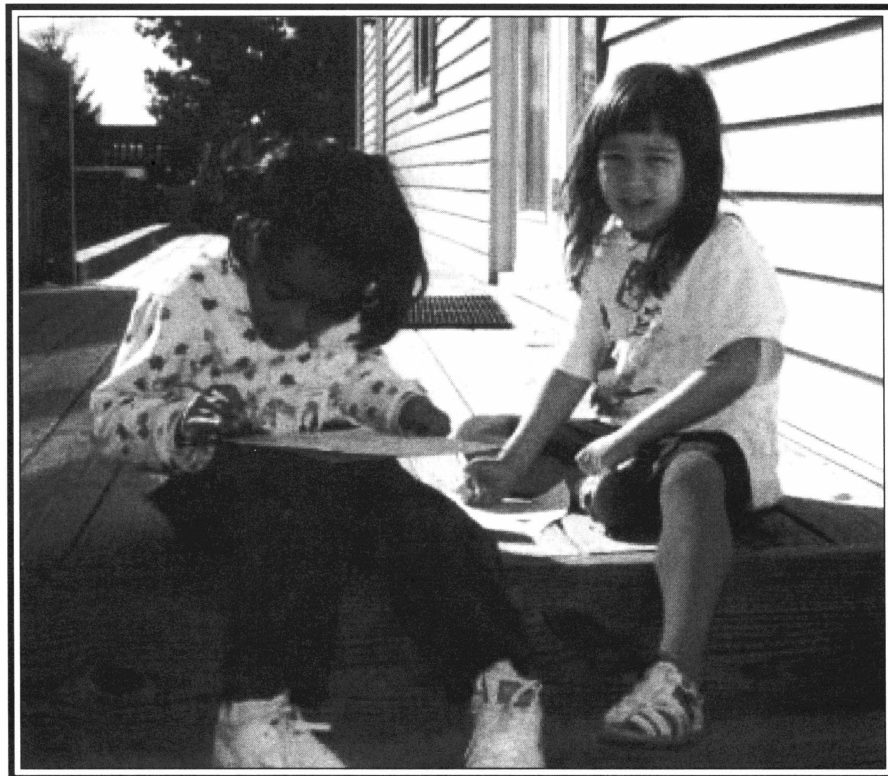
See Appendix B for guidelines for conducting a focus group.

Tracking Formal Requests

Collecting information from formal requests for assistance requires the development of an agreement which will help document requests in a uniform manner. Formal requests may include letters from parents, requests for assistance from social services working with a family and concerns or needs stated on program registration materials.

Formal requests require the following:

- Developing a system to record requests that came through the human resources office
- Acquiring permission to review requests or to talk to staff at social service agencies serving the family
- Arranging a method for reviewing the requests



Informal Assessments

While not as systematic as formal assessments, useful information can also be gathered through informal assessments.

Strategies include:

- Reviewing anecdotal records or descriptions of important incidents
- Collecting notes from teachers
- Keeping notes of informal conversations with parent
- Providing a suggestion box

When reviewing anecdotal records or descriptions of important incidents, it is useful to:

- Determine what information is needed
- Develop a system for recording the situation, the problem, the result of the problem and who participated in the situation
- Acquire the necessary permission to review records from other agencies

Compiling Results

For information collected from formal or informal assessments to be useful, it must be compiled in a way that allows you to easily determine what resources and services parents need.



**STOP HERE AND COMPLETE
LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Activity 1.0 Surveying Families

Develop a short survey using the sample in Appendix A as a guide. Use it to interview three parents. Review the completed questionnaires and formulate what you think may be four priority concerns for these families. Then, list two possible information resources or activities which could be offered to support these families' concerns. Review these ideas with the three families and ask for their feedback on whether your suggestions would be helpful.

Priority Concerns:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Possible Information Resources/Activities:

Concern 1.

Concern 2.

Concern 3.

Concern 4.

Activity 1.1 Tracking Information

Design a form to use for tracking formal and informal requests for information. Share it with a colleague for some feedback. Use it for two weeks. What changes did you need to make? Have you found it helpful?

Activity 1.2 Suggestion Box

Put up a suggestion box where it is accessible to parents. Design forms for parents to use to write their suggestions.

Self-Review

TOPIC I: ASSESSING PARENTS' INTERESTS AND NEEDS FOR INFORMATION AND SERVICES

There were several activities suggested under this topic. Which ones did you do? Why?

Which activities did you not do? Why?

Do you think you have a better understanding of how to find out parents' interests and needs for information and services? Why or why not?

What concerns do you have?

With whom can you discuss these concerns?

What additional assistance or support do you need?

<p style="text-align: center;">TOPIC II: MAKING SERVICES AND INFORMATION EASILY AVAILABLE</p>
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Outcomes

After completing this section, human services personnel should be able to:

- Plan parent education activities.
- Organize support services for parents.
- Acquire and make resource information available to parents.

Key Concepts

- The information gained from formal and informal assessments should help the leaders plan and schedule programs for parents and identify resources available to parents.

Background Information

Never before has there been such a range of opportunities available to parents to provide guidance and assistance for the job of parenting. Opportunities include classes, workshops, mentoring, discussion groups and conferences. Yet, many times parents do not participate. Parenting classes and “chew and chat” sessions that are open to all draw in as few as two participants, even with recognized presenters and personal invitations. The low turn-out may be because:

- there are too many options to choose
- in addition to work-related and personal stresses, the job of parenting is so draining and stressful that parents have no energy left for learning
- some people (depending on their culture, family background, gender, educational level, etc.) do not prefer learning in groups

The challenge for leaders is to develop a range of realistic opportunities that will support families and provide appropriate information. The format chosen, whether classes, workshops, conferences, mentoring, discussion groups, newsletters, one-to-one conversations, or bulletin boards, should reflect the concerns and priorities of families and be convenient and accessible. Because each parent group is unique, this will require some research and some “trial and error” to see what works.

An ongoing responsibility of personnel working with families is to be informed of available conferences, classes, workshops and information resources in the community and their applicability to current family priorities.

Workshops/Presentations

A workshop is usually a brief intensive educational program for a small group of people that emphasizes participation in solving a problem. A presentation is also a brief educational program during which a resource person presents information to a group of people.

Planning:

- Survey parents' areas of interest
- Determine the format, such as panel discussion, lecture, make-and-take, etc.
- Develop criteria upon which to select presenters, for example, expectations for participants and level of interaction with participants
- Determine schedule most convenient for parents, for example, brown bag lunch series, breakfast, combined child (movie night)/parent (workshop) activity

Implementation:

- Distribute information regarding workshops/presentations to parents
- Be present to greet participants
- Distribute evaluation of workshop/presentation experience at the end of the session

Follow-up:

- Informally talk with the participants and the presenter within two weeks of the program
- Record observations or insights to guide planning for the next program
- Follow-up with personal contact, especially with parents experiencing the most need

Classes

A class is a course of instruction under the direction of a teacher. It usually meets more than one time.

Planning:

- Explore parents' interest in classes
- Review course schedules from local colleges, adult education programs and local hospitals
- If appropriate, help parents locate financial aid

Implementation:

- Check in with parents to ensure their success in the course
- Discuss with parents what they are learning

Follow-up:

- Talk with parents about their experience to get feedback
- Record feedback for future reference

Mentoring

A mentor is usually an expert or person with more experience who is matched with a beginner or person with less experience in order to provide feedback and support.

Planning:

- Determine parents' special strengths/needs, through observation and conversation
- Determine whether parents wish to participate in a mentoring relationship
- Get permission from parents to match them with others who might be able to help them.

Implementation:

- Match parents with other parents
- Explain the benefits and limitations of the mentoring relationship
- Check in with parents every two to three weeks to monitor progress

Follow-up:

- Once parents have been matched for two to three months, survey them to determine how successful the mentoring match has been
- Record insights as to benefits and barriers

Support Groups

A support groups is a group of people that have a similar concern or situation and meet on a regular basis to share support, information, and resources.

Planning:

- Determine the type of format for the support group, specific topic or general topic
- Develop selection criteria for facilitators, for example, communication skills, experience in the topic area, expectations for participants
- Develop a list of potential facilitators
- Determine the location of the group meeting
- Survey parents for input as to a good time for a meeting
- Arrange for a facilitator and explain the purpose of the support group
- Prepare announcements for the group meeting

Implementation:

- Distribute announcements for the group meeting
- Remind parents through personal contact of the group meeting
- If appropriate, attend a meeting to observe the facilitator

Follow-up:

- Check in with parents to discuss their experience at the group meeting
- Check in with the facilitator to determine insights about the group and any additional needs that emerged

Counseling

Counseling is guidance or support provided by licensed professionals who have been trained in a variety of methods to help people deal with their concerns or problems.

Planning:

- Explore available counseling resources
- Discuss with mental health professionals the range of counseling needs parents may have and where to refer parents for different levels of counseling and intervention
- Seek assistance from counseling professionals in planning a referral program
- Develop a method for making referrals based on expressed needs of families

Implementation:

- Facilitate parent participation in counseling as needed, for example, help find a babysitter or assist in making transportation arrangements

Follow-up:

- Check in with parents, as appropriate, to determine if additional assistance is needed

Organizing Information Resources

Types of information resources that will be helpful for parents:

- Booklets/flyers
- Books
- Audio cassettes
- Video cassettes
- CDs
- TV/radio programs
- Newsletters
- Community bulletin boards
- Fact sheets
- Websites

Collecting Resources:

- Order catalogs
- Develop a relationship with bookstores to arrange a way for previewing and selecting resources
- Arrange to be on the mailing list for free materials
- Arrange for fund raisers to purchase resource materials
- Identifying appropriate websites on the internet

Arranging materials so they can be accessed by parents:

- Alphabetize materials and display them on a book shelf or in boxes that are easily accessible and clearly labeled
- Develop a check-out card with the title of each book and a space to indicate the parent's name and date of borrowing
- Arrange a time for parents to visit resource libraries
- Identify and suggest special resources as the need arises
- Send home a list of resources available to parents
- Regularly highlight a selected resource in the newsletter



STOP HERE AND COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITIES



Activity 2.0 Sharing Community Resources

Identify a topic you think would be of interest to the parents with whom you work. Outline a one (1) hour workshop on the topic. Identify the format to be used, the topics to be covered, activities that might be used and the general amount of time that will be devoted to each.

Example:

Community Resources for Families

Have circle of chairs. Each person should sign in with name, address and phone number and make a name tag when arriving.

8:00 *Welcome and introductions*

Have each person greet and introduce selves to someone they do not know.

Overview of Program—use overhead.

8:15 *Share with parents available community resources*

Use overhead with resources listed.

Ask for input from parents of additional resources that might be added to the list. Write these on the overhead.

8:45 *Ask parents to share experiences with any of the resources listed. These may be positive as well as negative.*

9:00 *Refreshments and informal conversation*

Follow-up by sending to all of those in attendance a copy of the resources discussed at the meeting.

Activity 2.1 Counseling Resources

Talk with other professionals in the community and use any community resource directories available to identify several counseling centers or agencies that might meet the needs of the parents you serve. Record the name and phone number of each. Add these to your list of resources from activity 2.0 if they were not already included.

Activity 2.2 Parents as Mentors

Identify 3-4 of the parents with whom you work who would be good mentors. Identify the areas in which you feel they could mentor another parent.

Post-Assessment

Marta has talked with several parents over the past two months. They all expressed concern over how to handle problems their children were experiencing. Some parents shared personal problems that they were trying to handle. For example, one mother told her that she and her husband were separating. She was very concerned about how her 14-year-old son was going to cope. Another mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and her husband had just received a temporary duty assignment that required travel overseas for the next six months. A father was concerned because his wife had been given a project that required her to be stationed at another base for three months, and he was not sure what he would do to help his 12-year-old daughter until his wife returned. Marta was uneasy about getting involved in the private lives of any of these people.

Questions for discussion:

1. What could Marta do to help the parents cope with these types of challenges?
2. What barriers might Marta have to overcome to help the parents?
3. What resources might be available for Marta to use?

Self-Review

TOPIC II: MAKING SERVICES AND INFORMATION EASILY AVAILABLE

There were several activities suggested under this topic. Which ones did you do? Why?

Which activities did you not do? Why?

Do you think you have a better understanding of how to make services and information available to families? Why or why not?

What concerns do you have?

With whom can you discuss these concerns?

What additional assistance or support do you need?

TOPIC III: DEVELOPING A SYSTEM FOR SCREENING SUPPORT SERVICES

Outcomes

After completing this section, the participating personnel should be able to:

- Establish criteria for screening support services.
- Establish a method for systematically tracking the helpfulness of support services.

Key Concepts

- Effective screening of support services requires the use of a specific set of objective criteria which is applied to each service that is reviewed.
- The helpfulness of support services provided can be systematically documented and tracked.

Pre-Assessment

Fatima has been concerned about how to direct parents to services based on the needs that arise from their parenting experiences. In order to be helpful, she ordered a directory that listed support services in the area. The directory listed agencies, services, hours and the location of the agencies. Fatima thought the directory would solve her problems. But, the first time she referred a parent to get counseling for a child, the parent came back furious because the agency had religious pictures hanging in the waiting area. The parent said her son walked out and refused to come back because he didn't want to go to Sunday School. Now, Fatima is anxious about referring anybody. She has no idea how to sort out the information in the directory.

Questions for discussion:

1. How can Fatima determine the best support services for parents?

2. How can Fatima maintain up-to-date information about support services for parents?

Background Information

The helpfulness of support services is based on a number of factors over which the leaders have no control. Nevertheless, if you refer parents, you will probably be held accountable for the quality of the service. When parents are in need of help, especially in an emotionally charged area such as child rearing, they are not always clear about what they need, and they are not always in a position to judge the quality of the service they receive. The dynamics of the family and the community will impact the effectiveness of support services, as well as the quality of the delivery of the services. While the leaders/personnel cannot impact family or community dynamics or the quality of the support services parents utilize, they can screen services to which parents are referred and help parents evaluate which services they may want to use. Criteria should be objective and should relate to the diverse needs of the parents. A method needs to be developed for consistently reviewing the outcome of support services so parents are helped most effectively.



Some Criteria for Screening Support Services

- Location of service
- Range of services offered by the agency or program
- Cost of service
- Means of access (i.e., referral)
- Religious orientation
- Gender of staff
- Race of staff
- Languages spoken by staff
- Qualifications of staff
- Experience in working with needs reflected by parents
- Responsiveness to people served
- Licensed

This information should be collected for every agency to which a family might be referred.

Helping Families Evaluate Which Services They Want to Use

The cooperating leaders/agencies can help families develop objective criteria upon which to measure which service(s) they may want to use. One way of doing this is to define in measurable terms what is meant by each criterion and then develop a scale to reflect how well each criterion is met by the agency or program. For example:

Location of Service: distance a parent must travel to access the service:

- + 2-5 miles
- + 6-10 miles
- 11 or more miles

Once families have used a service, methods for reviewing how effective they thought the services were include:

- Informal conversations with family
- Written evaluations by family
- Informal conversations with staff in programs or agencies providing services

For future reference, the human services personnel may want to develop a file to record feedback.



**STOP HERE AND COMPLETE
LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Activity 3.0 Developing Evaluation Criteria

In the previous section, “location of service” was defined on measurable terms. Select 5 of the 10 measures listed below and with a parent or colleague develop possible measurable criteria that a parent could use.

- Range of services offered by the agency or program
- Cost of service
- Means of access (i.e., referral)
- Religious orientation
- Gender of staff
- Race of staff
- Languages spoken by staff
- Qualifications of staff
- Experience in working with needs reflected by parents
- Responsiveness to people served
- Licensed

Activity 3.1 Using Criteria for Screening Resources

Select one agency in your area that is available to serve families. Using the criteria for screening support services, screen this agency.

Self-Review

TOPIC III: DEVELOPING A SYSTEM FOR SCREENING SUPPORT SERVICES
--

There were two activities suggested under this topic. Which ones did you do? Why?

Which activities did you not do? Why?

Do you think you have a better understanding of how to screen support services? Why or why not?

What concerns do you have?

With whom can you discuss these concerns?

What additional assistance or support do you need?

TOPIC IV: DEVELOPING A SYSTEM FOR EXPLORING AND EVALUATING INFORMATION RESOURCES

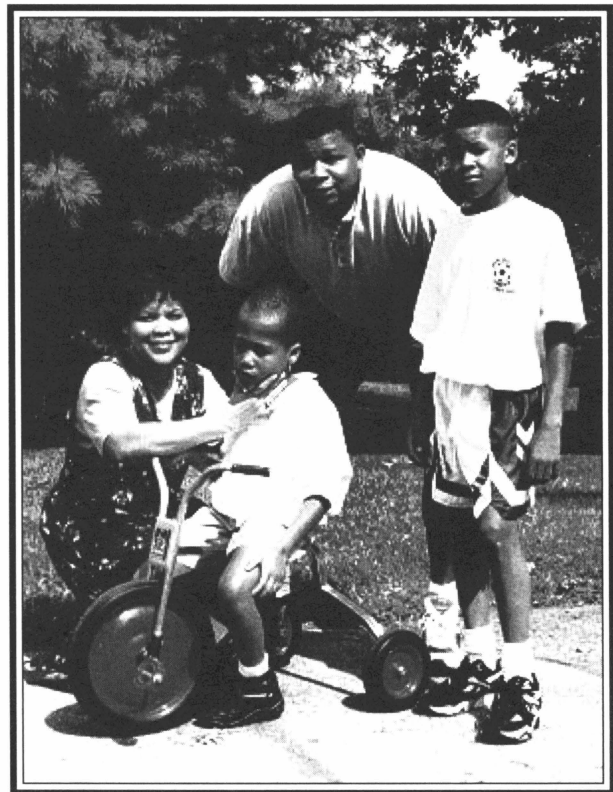
Outcomes

After completing this section, human services personnel should be able to:

- Establish evaluation criteria to use when selecting print resources.
- Establish evaluation criteria to use when selecting non-print resources.

Key Concepts

- Objective evaluation criteria can be established and implemented in evaluating print and non-print resources available to parents and families.
- Lists of resources can be compiled based on the outcome of the evaluation of print and non-print resources.



Background Information

Parents are faced daily with a variety of challenges in raising their children. Much information is also readily available to assist parents. Bookstore shelves bulge with guides covering everything from self-esteem and IQ to anorexia. But, it is difficult to determine the quality or effectiveness of what is presented. Since each child requires a slightly different approach to being nurtured and taught, parents may not be able to use the same resource twice. In addition, each parent has his/her own perspective on raising children that impacts how each resource would be used. In order to provide appropriate resources to support parents, the challenge for the human services personnel is to understand what parents need, know what a resource offers, then match the two.

Some Criteria for Evaluating the Diversity of Print Resources include:

- Readability
- Genders represented in illustrations
- How genders are represented in illustrations
- How genders are represented in content
- Races represented in illustrations
- How races are represented in illustrations
- How races are presented in content
- Ages represented in illustrations
- How ages are represented in illustrations
- How ages are represented in content
- Representation of people with diverse physical features, such as size, height, weight, accessories (i.e., glasses, hearing devices, insulin pump)
- How people with diverse physical features are represented in illustrations

-
- How people with diverse physical features are represented in content
 - Expected audience.

Evaluation of information resources requires objective criteria upon which the quality of the resource can be measured. One way of evaluating quality is to define in measurable terms what is meant by each criterion and then develop a scale to reflect how well the resource meets each criterion.

For example, two measures of quality are readability and diversity represented. Readability and diversity might be defined and measured in the terms outlined below :

Readability: The ease with which a majority of parents would be able to understand what is presented in a printed resource.

- + 5th grade reading level
- + - 12th grade reading level
- graduate school reading level

Diversity of Physical Features: The number of diverse physical features represented by people presented in illustrations in a printed resource.

- + weight, height, and several accessories such as glasses and wheelchairs
- + - height and accessories such as glasses
- no diversity of physical features

Criteria for Evaluating the Diversity of Non-Print Resources include:

- Genders represented
- How genders are represented
- Races represented
- How races are represented
- Ages represented
- How ages are represented
- Representation of people with diverse physical features, such as size, height, weight, accessories (i.e., glasses, hearing devices, insulin pump)
- How people with diverse physical features are represented
- Expected audience
- Equipment required for accessing information.

Evaluating non-print resources also requires objective criteria upon which to measure the quality of the resource. One way of measuring quality is to define in measurable terms what is meant by each criteria, and then develop a scale to reflect how well the resource meets each criteria.

For example:

Equipment The ease with which a majority of parents would
Required: be able to access the resource

+ requires use of VCR

+ - requires use of computer

- requires use of computer with CD

Context of Gender Representation: The types of situations in which men and women are represented in the content

- + men and women are represented in a range of situations, both traditional and non-traditional
- + - men and women are represented in only non-traditional situations
- men and women are represented in only traditional situations



Some Criteria for Selecting Information Resources for Parents Based on Content Include:

- Developmental expectations for children
- Effectiveness of solutions/strategies suggested
- Issues/problems presented

No one resource will provide all the information a parent needs to effectively meet a child's needs. It is important to have a checklist that you and parents themselves can use as they explore resources to help in child rearing. One example of a checklist is presented below.

Checklist for Selecting Information Resources

1. *Developmental Expectations*

- Does material explain underlying developmental expectations for content presented?
- Does material reflect reasonable expectations for children's behavior?
- Does material reflect the range of individual differences related to any particular milestone?

2. *Effectiveness of Solutions and Strategies Presented*

- Does material provide a rational explanation for reasons to apply a particular strategy?
- Does material provide a description of behavior to be observed as a result of use of a strategy or solution?

-
- Does material provide a systematic explanation of how to apply a solution or strategy?
 - Are the strategies/solutions applicable in more than type of situation?
 - Do the strategies/solutions preserve a child's dignity and sense of self-worth?

3. *Topics Presented*

- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Guidance/discipline
- Safety/first aid
- Stress management
- Social pressures
- Coping as a single parent
- Coping with the absence of a spouse
- Coping with transfers or active duty
- Coping with moves
- Supporting children's interests
- Supporting children's emotional development
- Supporting children's academic development
- Supporting children's physical growth and development

Some Criteria for Selecting Information Resources for Children include:

- Readability
- Appropriateness of strategies/solutions
- Range of information presented

No one resource will be appropriate for every child or include the range of information children need to handle growing up. It is important to have a checklist that you, the parents, and the children themselves can use to explore resources to help in handling problems. One example of a checklist for selecting resources for children is presented below.

Checklist for Selecting Children's Information Resources

1. *Readability*

- Is information presented at the appropriate reading level?
- Is information organized around major topics of interest to children?
- Is information presented with appropriate, interesting and relevant illustrations?
- Are major points in the content presented graphically to highlight them?

2. *Usefulness of Solutions and Strategies Presented*

- Does the material provide a simple explanation for why to use a particular strategy?
- Does the material provide a description of the outcome to be expected as a result of use of a strategy or solution?
- Does the content give a child a view of a parent's perspective of any particular situation?

-
- Does the material provide a specific, systematic explanation with examples of how to apply a solution or strategy?
 - Are the strategies/solutions applicable in more than one type of situation?
 - Do the strategies/solutions preserve a child's dignity and sense of self-worth?
 - Do the strategies/solutions promote the relationship between a parent and child?

3. *Topics Presented*

- Getting along with parents
- Coping with parent transfers, temporary absence from home
- Coping with moves
- Coping with siblings
- Coping with social pressures
- Coping with worries about war/violence
- Developing a positive self-image
- Avoiding drug/alcohol abuse
- Avoiding tobacco use
- Making decisions
- Dating
- Coping with physical changes



**STOP HERE AND COMPLETE
LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Activity 4.0 Developing Measurable Criteria for Print Materials

In the previous section, “readability” and “diversity of physical features” were defined in measurable terms. Develop measurable terms for 4 of the 12 criteria listed below for evaluation of print materials.

- Gender representations in illustrations
- How gender is represented in illustrations
- How gender is represented in content
- Race representations in illustrations
- How race is represented in illustrations
- How race is presented in content
- Age representations in illustrations
- How age is represented in illustrations
- How age is represented in content
- How people with diverse physical features are represented in illustrations
- How people with diverse physical features are represented in content
- Expected audience

Activity 4.1 Developing Measurable Criteria for Non-Print Materials

In the previous section, “equipment required” and “context of gender representation” were defined in measurable terms. Develop measurable terms for 4 of the 8 criteria for non-print materials listed below.

- Gender representation
- Race representation
- How race is represented
- Age representation
- How age is represented
- Representation of people with diverse physical features, such as size, height, weight, accessories (i.e., glasses, hearing devices, insulin pump)
- How people with diverse physical features are represented
- Expected audience

Activity 4.2 Applying Criteria for Evaluating Materials

Use the 4 criteria that you developed in Activity 4.1 to evaluate one educational video. Based on the results of your evaluation, would you use this video? Based on the process of using your criteria, are there changes you would make in the criteria either by modifying, deleting or adding elements?

Self-Review

TOPIC IV: DEVELOPING A SYSTEM FOR EXPLORING AND EVALUATING INFORMATION RESOURCES

There were several activities suggested under this topic. Which ones did you do? Why?

Which activities did you not do? Why?

Do you think you have a better understanding of how to develop a system for exploring and evaluating information resources? Why or why not?

What are some of the concerns you have?

With whom can you discuss these concerns?

What additional assistance or support do you need?

TOPIC V: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PARENTS AS THEY ADVOCATE FOR THEIR CHILDREN

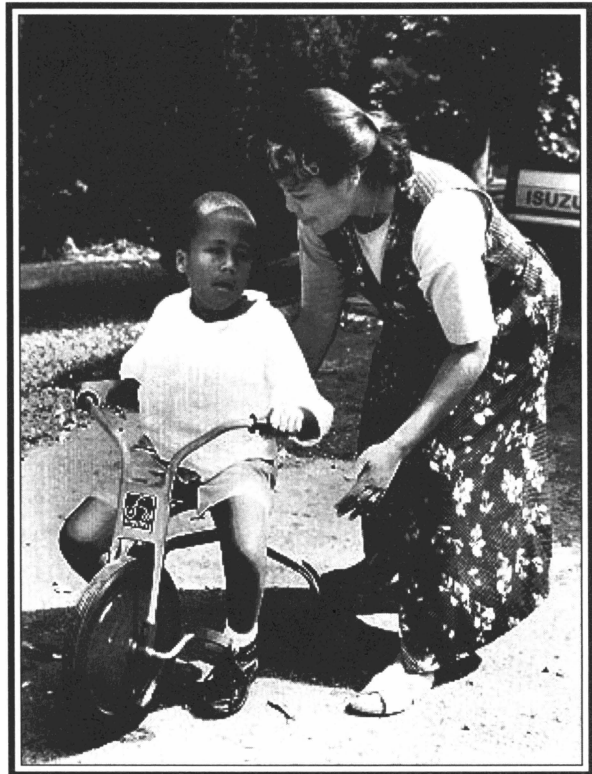
Outcomes

After completing this section, the leader should be able to:

- Help parents understand the meaning of advocacy.
- Help parents utilize advocacy strategies.

Key Concepts

- Advocacy means supporting children.
- Parents are the first and most important advocates for their child.
- There are a variety of strategies for and ways that parents can advocate for their child.

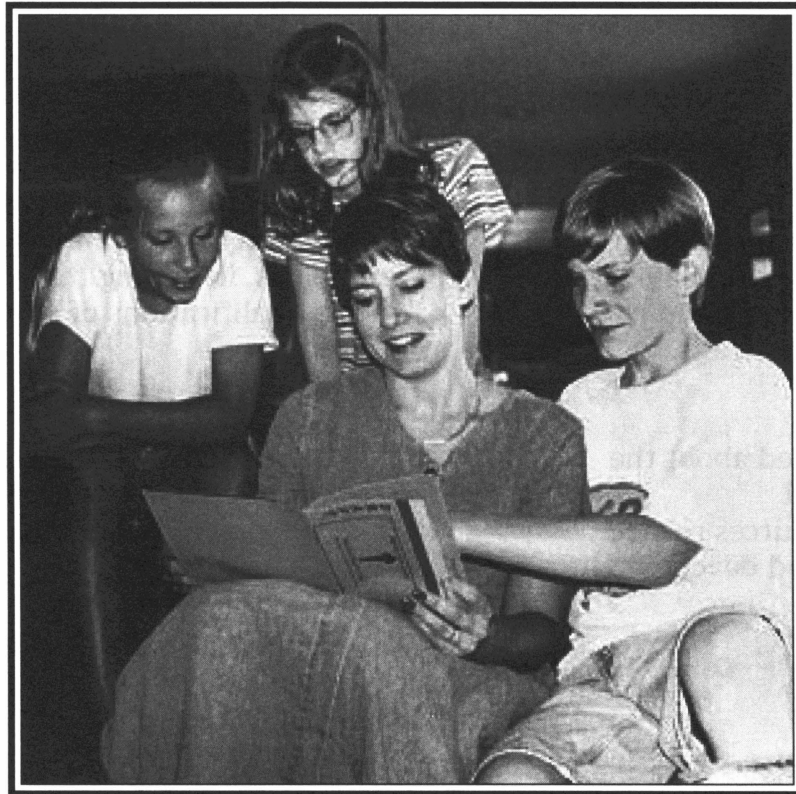


Background Information

Parents are a child's first and lifelong teachers. While a child will have many teachers throughout his/her lifetime, the impact a parent has on a child's development is profound. The role of parent advocate, can help parents develop the skills and knowledge to become advocates for their own children. This involves helping parents understand their rights and responsibilities. It also involves teaching parents advocacy strategies that will enable them to provide constructive experiences for their children.

Being a parent advocate means supporting:

- what parents do to preserve the rights of children
- what responsibilities parents accept in relation to rearing children



Parental Rights and Responsibilities

(The following rights and responsibilities, adapted from the National Head Start Program, *My Rights and Responsibilities as a Head Start Parent*, provide guidance for parent advocates.)

My Rights

1. To take part in major decisions affecting my child's growth and development.
2. To be welcomed in activities in which my child participates.
3. To be informed regularly about my child's progress in any activity he/she participates in.
4. To be treated with respect and dignity.
5. To expect guidance for my child from adults involved in activities in which my child participates.
6. To be able to learn about the operation of any program in which my child participates, including budget and the qualifications of the adults involved.
7. To be informed about the availability of all community resources related to the growth and development of my child.

My Responsibilities

1. To learn about major decisions affecting my child's growth and development and to participate in making those decisions.
2. To participate in or contribute to activities in which my child participates.
3. To seek out information regarding my child's progress from adults working with my child.
4. To treat the people working with my child with respect and dignity.
5. To provide guidance to my child to ensure his/her constructive participation in activities.
6. To learn about the operation of any program in which my child participates, including budget and the qualifications of adults involved.
7. To become involved in community resources related to the growth and development of my child.
8. To continually learn skills and knowledge related to helping my child grow and develop.

Some Advocacy Strategies for Parents

To advocate for children, the parent needs to:

1. **Determine the problem by:**
 - Gathering factual information
 - Talking to people representing different perspectives
 - Encouraging people with different perspectives to talk with each other
 - Stating the problem in objective terms

2. **Determine alternative solutions by:**
 - Brainstorming options for resolving a problem with people involved
 - Exploring the impact of solutions based on factual information
 - Stating potential solutions in specific terms
 - Communicating potential solutions to people involved

3. **Determine with whom to talk by:**
 - Using factual information and identifying who is responsible for decision-making in relation to the problem
 - Using factual information and identifying who might be involved in potential solutions
 - Identifying how to contact decision-makers

-
4. **Determine what to say and how to say it by:**
 - Summarizing the problem and potential solutions utilizing information from previous discussions with people involved
 - Presenting the problem and potential solutions in a pictorial or graphic form so the message is clear and simple

 5. **Implement advocacy strategies by:**
 - Arranging meeting with decision-makers
 - Requesting the participation of people involved, those experiencing the problem as well as those responsible for potential solutions
 - Presenting problem and potential solutions
 - Establishing a plan for implementing preferred solutions

 6. **Follow-up by:**
 - Establishing milestones for achieving preferred solutions
 - Identifying who is responsible for achieving preferred solutions
 - Developing a plan for monitoring implementation of plan
 - Identifying who is responsible for monitoring the implementation
 - Communicating to people involved progress on a regular basis



**STOP HERE AND COMPLETE
LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Activity 5.0 Applying Advocacy Strategies

Identify one problem that parents might experience regarding the child care arrangements, a program in the community or needed community services. Briefly go through steps 1-4 of the Advocacy Strategies suggested above to determine the problem, possible solutions to the problem, important people to talk to and how the problem might be presented to others. Share your problem and strategy with a colleague to get feedback and suggestions.

Activity 5.1 Presenting Advocacy Strategies to Parents

Plan a parents' meeting to present ideas and strategies about advocacy. Briefly outline the meeting. Include topics you would present, strategies you would use to present the information and activities to get parents actively involved.

If possible and appropriate, actually hold your meeting. Then, evaluate the strategies and activities used. Were you successful? How do you know? How might you follow-up to continue interest in advocacy?

Post-Assessment

Serita attended a parent meeting during which a discussion centered on the need for parent volunteers for some of the late afternoon program activities such as volleyball and a tutoring program. Parents were told that it was not possible for staff to supervise all of the activities the children wanted to schedule, therefore, parent help was necessary. Several parents walked angrily out of the meeting saying that they didn't want to pay fees for the program and then still be expected to help out. Serita knew that they would return the next day still angry.

Questions for discussion:

1. What could Serita do to help parents understand their roles and responsibilities?

Self-Review

TOPIC V : DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PARENTS AS THEY ADVOCATE FOR THEIR CHILDREN

There were several activities suggested under this topic. Which ones did you do? Why?

Which activities did you not do? Why?

Do you think you have a better understanding of how to support parents as they advocate for their children? Why or why not?

What concerns do you have?

With whom can you discuss these concerns?

What additional assistance or support do you need?

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE SURVEY

Survey to Explore Parent's Workshop Interests

Responses to this survey will let us know areas of interest and need and how we can best provide you with relevant information.

Directions: Circle or check all responses that apply to you.

1. I would/would not (circle one) be interested in workshops or seminars on issues pertaining to raising children.

2. If you indicated that you would be interested in workshops on topics pertaining to raising children, what topics are of most concern to you? Check all of those that apply and add additional topics that you would want to see included in the workshop.
 - Getting along with parents
 - Coping with parent transfers, temporary duty or active duty
 - Coping with moves
 - Coping with siblings
 - Coping with social pressures
 - Coping with worries about war/violence
 - Developing a positive self-image
 - Avoiding drug/alcohol abuse
 - Avoiding tobacco use
 - Making decisions

-
- Dating
 - Coping with physical changes
 - Others—please list

If workshops or seminars were held, the best times for you to attend would be:

- weekday evenings
- weekdays during lunch

- Saturday mornings
- Saturday afternoons

- other (please specify)

4. The ideal length of a workshop or seminar would be:

- one hour
- two hours
- three hours
- other (please specify)

5. Any other questions or comments:

APPENDIX B

CONDUCTING A FOCUS GROUP

Focus Group Assessment Guide
Developed by Karen DeBord, Ph.D.
University Extension - Columbia
1993

Note: *This sample focus group was conducted after the flooding in the midwest. The questions center around that problem.*

Purpose

To gather community groups for the purpose of holding an informal and open-ended discussion to assess needs.

Procedure

Generally when groups are formed for the purpose of gaining insight and information, people with similar responsibilities and potential need are organized. Forming groups with similar interests and needs will provide a safe space to voice opinion and facilitate the discussion. When opposing groups or individuals with contending interests are mixed, it creates more of a defensive atmosphere similar to an open forum. Open forums can also serve an important purpose.

Some examples of groups would include:

- Community officials and business leaders such as elected officials, business owners
- Volunteers from various organizations such as Red Cross, 4-H, churches
- Agency representatives - schools, social service, Extension, health department
- Family members

Supplies paper, pencil
 tape recorder
 facilitator's script
 index cards for names
 markers

Group Rules

The idea is to have a free flow of ideas and communication. As group members arrive, greet them, be pleasant and create an atmosphere of openness and ease.

Room Arrangement

The room arrangement should facilitate informal conversation. Arrangements that do this might be a circle of chairs or seating around a boardroom style table so that each person can make eye contact with every other person.

Facilitator Script

Good afternoon (morning), I am _____.
I will be with you for about an hour or so discussing
_____ .

You are here because of your involvement in the community, and as a person who will help us gain valuable insight into the community from your perspective.

Here is how we will be operating today. We will be informal and use first names (make tent cards). It will be helpful if you don't get into distracting side conversations. There won't be formal breaks, however, if you want to get up and move around or use the restroom, then do so on your own.

We will take some notes and use a tape recorder as a backup for transcribing. Nobody except the transcriber will hear the tapes. Names will not be used in the report, so comments you make are anonymous. Then we will prepare a summary report of information about your comments and suggestions.

Does this sound okay with everyone?

Even in a group as small as this one, your perceptions and needs will differ considerably. There are no right and wrong answers, so please share your thoughts even if they don't agree with what others have said.

Then, begin discussion. Questions are posed conversationally. Maintain eye contact and respond affirmatively to encourage further responses.

Situation

1. Describe your role or situation relative to the problem or concern.
2. How do you manage?
3. Describe your strengths that have helped you manage.
4. What/who else has been helpful?
5. Describe how decisions are made.

Perceptions of the Community

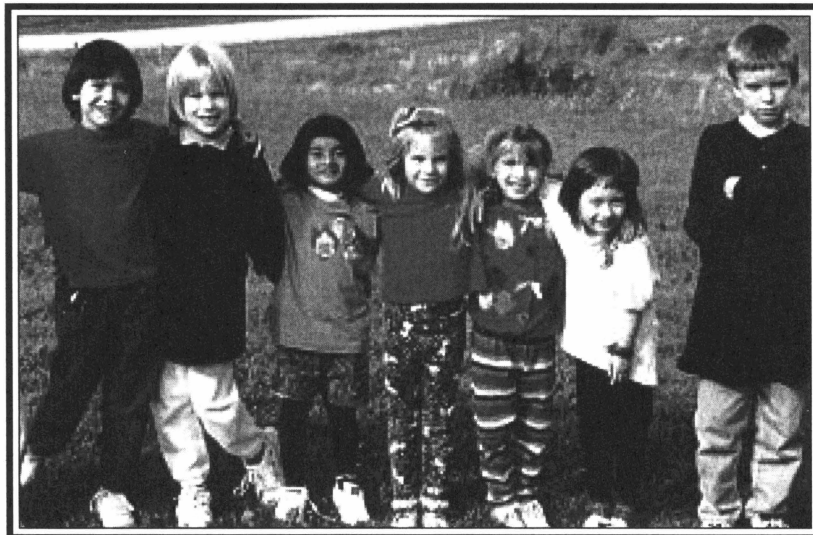
1. What is your perception of the current attitude of the community at large. How have feelings, actions, attitudes changed over time?
2. What key things must now happen to assure families and individuals are served?
3. What roadblocks do you foresee?
4. What aspects of the community will work in your favor to accomplish this?

Political Climate

1. How would you rate the current level of leadership in the community in responding to requests for assistance? (prompts: responsiveness, friendly, dealings with feelings, resourceful)
2. Do community leaders (local officials, schools, media, law enforcement, decision makers, etc.) have the knowledge and understanding to make needed decisions?

Family Needs

1. Who would you say is the most vulnerable in the community right now? (Prompts: vulnerable as far as mental health, stress)
2. In what ways do you think affected families should be involved in decision making?
3. What do you think are some of the most pressing needs for families and children at this time? How about the elderly?
4. What are the most pressing needs of community leaders?
5. How have the leaders managed the stress resulting from this situation?
6. How do parents help their children? (prompts: to manage stress, to cope?)
7. What methods of communicating and reaching affected persons do you think would work here? (prompts: use of media, newspaper, videos, pamphlets, magazines, going to workshops, conferences, modeling others, one-to-one, groups, other).
8. Are different methods necessary for various groups of people? How? What?



What Has Worked

I realize that this coalition is very new and has just been organized for a few months. But one of the things we hope to accomplish is to learn from your experiences so we can share with other communities.

From your perspective, can you tell me what you think has seemed to be important so far and what has worked well to move the group and the group's work along? What has not worked well?

1. What has worked well in responding to your needs ?
2. What assists you with decision making?
3. What has not worked well or been well received?

Closing Remarks

This concludes our focus group session. I think we have all learned a lot today. Our plans are to move through the activities which you will plan for the coming year, then again sit down and discuss what has and has not worked a year from now. Then, we may have something really valuable to share with other communities since we are sort of a MODEL program.

Compiling the Report

A summary of major issues raised and points made should be compiled. Recommendations should be highlighted and listed separately. The report should then be distributed to all participants and other groups in the community specifically targeting those groups with special interest in or authority over the issues discussed.

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