The Family Journey Assessment: Tracking the Impact of Family Support

Celia Serkin, Executive Director
Montgomery County Federation
of Families for Children's Mental
Health
301-879-5200
cserkin@mcfof.org

Family Journey Assessment Team

Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
ADMINISTRATION:
Celia Serkin, Executive Director
Michele Banks, Family Service Supervisor

FAMILY NAVIGATORS::
Joan Charquero
Christine Deeley
Janet Lee

FAMILY SUPPORT PARTNERS:
Karina Funes Oviedo
Sari Hornstein
Mary Kackley Harris
Valerie Oliver

PARENT ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR/FAMILY SUPPORT PARTNER:
Melody Smith

Georgetown Center for Child and Human Development
Bruno Anthony
Courtney Holland

Family Organization

- **The Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is non-profit organization run by family members who have children with emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges.**

- **We help other family members who are raising children with similar challenges.**
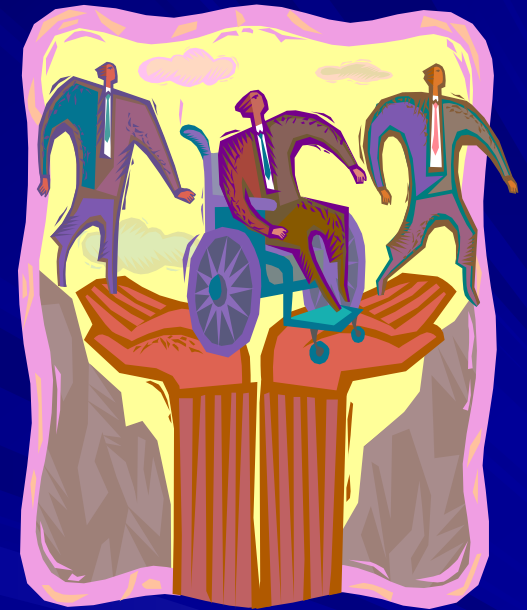
Program Staff

- They are family members who have children with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs.

- They are skilled and knowledgeable family members who provide direct services to parents and other primary caregivers who have children with similar challenges.
  - peer-to-peer support
  - information and referral
  - advocacy
  - group support
  - educational programs
  - leadership opportunities

Family Support Model

- The staff help family members progress in their journey towards self-advocacy and self-efficacy through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and a network of support.

- The staff work with families to identify targets and benchmarks for focused and individualized family peer-to-peer support.

- The staff provide peer-to-peer support that helps families resolve their own challenges and address their unique needs, while moving them to a legacy stage where they assist other families with similar issues.

- Family members have the opportunity to become involved in local and state policy making.

- In this model, family members become advocates for their own children as well as for other children.

Family Organizations and Accountability

In a climate of results-based and outcome accountability, an emphasis on evidence-based practices, and a challenging fiscal climate, it is critical that family organizations measure:

* What/How much they do
* How well they do it
* Is anyone better off

Motivation for Creating Family Journey Assessment

- Create a measure with items of relevance to the important movement, process and experience of family journey.

- Key outcomes derived from family support experience
  - Activation (pursue options, something I can do
  - Collaboration/Decision making
  - Advocacy
  - Self-efficacy
  - Caregiver Impact

How Can We Track the Journey?

EXIT 1A

Road to Self-Advocacy and Self-Efficacy

EXIT ⬇ ONLY

Stages of Growth

Preparing for Action

Actions and successes

Establishing a legacy

The Federation staff promote a family member's movement along three primary stages in the growth process:

– Preparing for action – A family member is preparing to take specific action to improve his/her situation.

– Actions and successes – A family member has taken different actions and has experienced successes.

– Establishing a legacy – A family member is now moving to a legacy stage whereby he/she chooses to advocate for other family members having similar experiences and/or to provide support for these families.

Family Support Levels

A family member may fall in one of five stages on a family support continuum: intensive, moderate, supportive, empowered, or legacy.

The family member's movement on this continuum is fluid. A family member may move back and forth from one stage to another.

When providing peer-to-peer support, staff work in partnership with family members to determine where they are in their journey toward self-efficacy and self-advocacy and how they are progressing. The Family Journey Assessment identifies the baseline and helps to track the journey.

The Federation staff provide a specific level of peer-to-peer support depending on the stage the family member is in at a particular point in time.
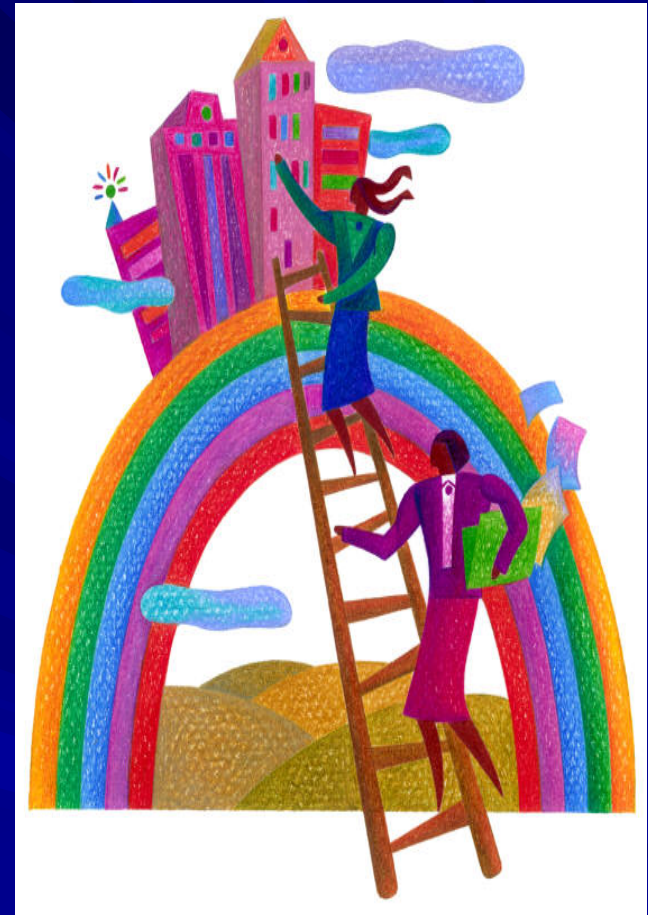
Conceptual Framework and Development

- Conceptual Framework:
  - The FJA's content has been informed by the experiences of family members who have experienced the journey and provided support to other families.

- Development
  - Item creation, including its relation to other measures, and its current structure and administration

Steps in Scale Development

- Begin with a clear conceptualization of the target constructs.

  Journey (continuum) towards self-advocacy and self-efficacy through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and a network of support.

- Creation of initial item pool

- Modification of pool

- Item pool/structure tested (iterative) with initial sample (relatively small)

- Larger scale testing of reliability and validity

Creation of FJA Item Pool

- Wanted to be over-inclusive

- Item wording needed careful attention (simple, straightforward)

- Subscales identified

- Iterative process involving several periods of item writing and modification.

- 34 items

- Separate sets of items for families participating in Wraparound and those approaching the legacy stage

Family Journey Assessment: Examples of Items by Cluster

- **Cluster 1: Self-Knowledge**
  - *Communicates needs related to culture, language, learning and thinking styles in order to progress*
  - *Accepts and appreciates child's challenges*
  - *Sees challenges in an objective way*
- **Cluster 2: Family Well-Being**
  - *Develops and maintains a daily routine*
  - *Can contribute to the decision-making process around the child's issues*
  - *Feels less isolated and alone.*

Family Journey Assessment: Examples of Items by Cluster

- **Cluster 3: Seeking Information**
  - Seeks help by gathering information, resources, or materials to improve the situation
  - *Has knowledge of child-serving systems*
- **Cluster 4: Collaborates with Others**
  - Asks for help and works with others to find supports
  - Accesses natural supports
  - Connects with families having similar experiences
  - Shows/demonstrates empathy for others

Family Journey Assessment: Examples of Items by Cluster

- **Cluster 5: Owns Newly Attained Knowledge**
  - Uses knowledge about resources in an effective way
  - Attends, participates in, and speaks up during meetings
  - Communicates effectively
- **Cluster 6: Coping Skills**
  - Understands that having a range of feelings is normal and is coping well nevertheless
  - Demonstrates resiliency and perseverance
  - Understands and takes care of self

Administration

- Administered by the family support staff in collaboration with the family members.
  - A way to help track the progress of their work together
- Semi-structured interview format
  - Begin with general open-ended questions
  - Suggested follow-up prompts
  - Interviewer needs a thorough understanding of the test items and experience in conducting this type of interview.
- Baseline and three month intervals/end of service
- Consider "average" of past month

Administration

- Celebrate the success
- Expect that there will be fluctuations—may not be a linear process
- Take into consideration factors such as
  - Gender
  - Life experiences;
  - Cultural heritage;
  - Socio-economic circumstances;
  - Role models;
  - Beliefs/values.

Family Journey Assessment: Rating Scale

Intensive	Moderate	Supportive	Empowered
1	2	3	4
The family member finds it very difficult to make changes in to improve the current situation; requires active intervention from FSP/FN.	The family member needs extensive assistance and encouragement from FSP/FN to make changes necessary to improve the current situation.	The family member needs limited assistance from FSP/FN to make changes necessary to improve current situation.	The family member is making changes to improve the current situation without assistance from FSP/FN

Anchors: Communicates needs related to culture, language, learning and thinking styles

Intensive

- Difficult to communicate in the dominant language; rarely verbalizes information that is necessary to address needs; not aware of personal thinking styles, feels intimidated by professionals, difficulty communicating the family's, and particularly, the child's needs; has difficulty articulating beliefs or expectations, does not connect to community resources.

Empowered

- Communicates and verbalizes his or her needs; actively seeks support, seeks educational opportunities (e.g., workshops), and peer to peer support. Very aware of the needs of the family and the child, seeks out community resources, already connected to natural supports, is able to seek and connect to new supports and resources.

Parents/Caregivers Views of FJA

- Keeps focus on goals
- Better understanding of the systems
- Decrease sense of feeling overwhelmed and operating from crisis mode
- Greater sense of self-efficacy
- Know how to make changes