

Parent Membership in the LICC

Parents have a unique and extremely important role in the LICC. That is to be the voice for yourself, as well as other parents, in your community. At LICC meetings:

- **Speak up** about concerns you may have regarding your child and family.
- **Offer suggestions** to improve services.
- **Express satisfaction** with services your child is receiving.

The LICC will assist in making this partnership work by providing:

- **networking opportunities.** Meet representatives from state and local agencies and the local school system, as well as private service providers and professionals.
- **partnerships.** The LICC will introduce parents to LICC members (parents and/or professionals) who can offer information and support.
- **parent compensation.** Parents are eligible for a stipend for their travel and child care expenses when applicable. LICCs may be able to offer childcare at meetings or offer appropriate referrals for childcare providers.

The role parents play as a member of the LICC can be, but is not limited to:

- **serving as parent co-chair of the LICC.**
- **assisting the LICC in public and parent education.**
- **participating in LICC projects and committee work.**
- **being a parent voice in LICC issues and discussions.**
- **serving as a family advocate in LICC activities including lobbying legislators.**
- **serving as a resource, advisor, liaison and representative of the LICC for families of children with special needs.**

Parents set their own criteria and guidelines for participating in LICC and related activities:

- What have you decided are your own goals or reasons for accepting any new involvement offered? Does this new invitation fit in with your goals?
Goals: increasing knowledge, getting to know the players, considering new career, advancing the goals I have for my child, making changes in the system.
- What challenges do you face being involved on the LICC?
Challenges: time limitations, scheduling hassles, child care arrangements, expenses of travel and parking, other family obligations.
- What resources are being offered, or what can you request, to help you balance a new set of tasks with your responsibilities?
Resources: money (stipend), reimbursement or provision of travel and parking, childcare costs or childcare.
- Who is available to help you learn more about your new role? Are orientation sessions provided? By whom? When?
Help: experienced parents, professional staff members, written and/or visual materials.
- How will you evaluate whether your efforts are being successful and whether the rewards continue to outweigh the challenges?
Evaluation: personal checklist of goals for regular review.
- What would encourage you to increase or decrease level of activity?
Reasons for Changing: success of efforts, feeling encouraged/discouraged, camaraderie, fatigue, family needs, children's activities.
- What plans have you made to help prevent yourself from burn out?
Supports: regular exercise and relaxing time, support of family, training stipends, rotating with another family.
- Will you have opportunities to share your ideas and impressions with other parents?
All families share a common "language" of having children with special needs. A diversity of families would be both representative and supportive of each other.

Adapted from: "Who You Gonna Call?", Coalition Quarterly-Early Childhood Bulletin, Spring & Summer, 1994