

Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast – The Power of the Parents Voice
TRANSCRIPT

Presenters: Female Narrator; Tom Oates, Child Welfare Information Gateway; Sam Blue, FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council; Bruce Bynum, FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council; Jessica Diel, FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council

00:00:00 [Music Introduction]

FEMALE NARRATOR [00:00:03]: This is the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast, a place for those who care about strengthening families and protecting children. You'll hear about the innovations, emerging trends and success stories across child welfare direct from those striving to make a difference. This is your place for new ideas and information to support your work to improve the lives of children, youth, and families.

TOM OATES [00:00:34]: Welcome in to the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast. We are so glad to have you with us, I'm Tom Oates. You know, we've spent some time on the podcast focusing on working with and engaging families. A lot of times you've heard about meeting families where they are and how agencies are working to become family-centered. But, I want to toss some questions out there - how are families really shaping our programs and systems? Are they involved in the development and the continuous improvement of systems and services - if not, how could professionals and agencies incorporate the families in planning or gaining support from leaders and legislators to making those improvements that we're seeking?

[00:01:16]: Well, in today's episode, The Power of the Parent's Voice, we're gonna talk about that and spend some time talking about the work of the Parent Advisory Council put together by the FRIENDS National Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention. Now, this is a group of parents - all with various and long-standing personal experiences with Child Welfare. Now, they share their personal stories to put a relatable face on Child Welfare - which you'll hear goes a long way to impacting decision makers. They also provide insight into the barriers or concerns parents may have when agencies are designing programs or applying for grants.

[00:01:52]: Their insight provides a valuable perspective that many times isn't present. So, we chatted with three members of the Parent Advisory Council - Bruce Bynum has a history of Kinship Care, plus he's worked as a coordinator for Parents Helping Parents and Kinship Navigator for the Kansas Children's Service League and currently, he's a family consultant for the Capacity Building Center for States. Jessica Diel created a parent advisory council for Missouri and she's a current member of it. She served on the Missouri Family Partnerships Steering and Planning Committee multiple times and served on the policy council for Early Head Start for about two and a half years. She's also facilitated multiple parent and community cafe workshops, seminars and webinars.

[00:02:36]: And Sam Blue is a community engagement specialist for the Vision for Children at Risk through Project LAUNCH, which is short for Linking Action for Unmet Needs in Children's Health. Sam was selected as both the Missouri and Region Seven Head Start Association's 2011 Father of the Year.

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[00:02:56]: So, we talk about how agencies can leverage parent’s voices, key barriers to recognize, and some of the ‘ah ha’ moments professionals have when first hearing some of these impactful stories. Now, before we get into the conversation, I want to share with you part of Sam’s story - and this is about a minute long, but it’s part of Sam discussing his personal parent journey and how he became involved with Head Start. And, you can find, actually, 20 parent stories recorded and posted on the FRIENDS website - and two of them are actually in Spanish - we’ll have a link to them on this podcast’s webpage over at acf.hhs.gov/cb, just search ‘podcasts’. And, so, alright, take a quick listen to Sam’s story and then we jump right into the conversation.

SAM BLUE [00:03:44]: I got this! I’m dropping off my son to the Grace Hill Head Start Program. He was previously kicked out of the daycare for jumping and dancing on tables. I one day tried to sign the sign-in sheet quickly so I could catch up on some work projects, but Abraham’s teacher stopped me before I could get out the door.

[00:04:04]: “Mr. Blue, you need to spend time with your son in the classroom”.

[00:04:07]: I had two jobs, plus I felt, at the time that was their job. She looked me directly in my eyes and demanded that I rearrange my schedule to make time for Abraham’s emotional and social well-being.

[00:04:24]: The highlight of my day was the outside activities. We played kickball, slide down the sliding board together. All of a sudden, Abraham jumped into the wagon and asked me to pull his wagon. That was the last thing I wanted to do. Before I knew it, other children begged to jump in the wagon.

[00:04:46]: In my mind, I screamed, “Please get me out of this play yard so I can go and make some money!”.

[00:04:52]: After recess, Abraham teacher asked me to run for president of the center’s parent committee. Well, I ran for president and, to my surprise, I won. I will forever be grateful for pulling my son’s wagon.

TOM OATES [00:05:10]: So, now, we’re joined by Jessica, by, by Sam and by Bruce and we just heard a snippet from, from Sam on, on telling a little piece of your story - and Sam, I want to start with you - when you tell your story - and there are folks from Child Welfare agencies in the audience and they’re hearing you for the very first time, what’s the reaction that they’re giving you?

SAM BLUE [00:05:33]: Well, Tom, depends on who you’re talking to and what region of the country that they’re coming from. I recall going to a conference it made mention in the story in the short version and that particular practitioner, which, he was a new practitioner, I said oh my, we interact with the parents the way you proposed, those parents would relapse, they would have some issues, so we don’t interact like that with parents - I was shocked and to others that I’ve talked to, they respond, they received it real well - “Wow, what can we do more to, to engage with you and to understand the real time issues?”

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[00:06:28]: So, it's a mix, it's a mix reaction, but I am conscious now, when I do tell this story now and to kind of get a little background information on the new practitioner, what region they are coming from and I can bring them up to speed when it comes to current issues.

TOM OATES [00:06:49]: So, this is what we're talking about - what do we do in that professional setting to involve parents, to involve that story and the best way possible that can really shape the system for better outcomes. So, so, Sam, I'll start with you, what can agencies do - because, hey and we heard it at the beginning during the introduction, the biographies that you guys have, you've got the great lived experience, decades' worth - so, what are the best ways that those agencies out that if they want to get parents involved, identify those types of parents who are suitable, or qualified, what are the best ways they can do to find the right folks?

SAM BLUE [00:07:28]: Well, Tom, first, they just need to identify all parents, whether they're doing big things or great things or small things, should I say. You know, just showing up at a conference or a parent meeting, or small things they doing in the community - whether big or small, they need to recognize all parents. And, also, they need to better engage, strategically engage parents in retreats and what we've been using, like, cafes - where they get around the table, be around the table with parents and take off that practitioner hat and get on their levels to engage in more and understand where they're coming from.

TOM OATES [00:08:12]: There's gotta be a sense of just getting that story from folks - 'cause that's what we do, we sit around the table and we have conversations and how do you leverage those conversations in terms of making the real value to have an impact across a system. So, so Bruce, you're part of this, as well, so, you identify, maybe a parent and they become comfortable with wanting to share that story, what can then agencies do to kind of prepare themselves, prepare those parents for sharing those stories effectively?

BRUCE BYNUM [00:08:42]: Well, there's, what I look as the main thing is get them involved in stuff that Sam related to earlier, that, you know, facilitate roles and group support, have support groups for the parents - Parents Cafe, which Sam mentioned, is a really great way to have the practitioners and the parents come together and to be able to not have a specific role, but every voice is respected, every voice is heard and it's amazing when you do these kind of things, especially that Parent Cafe, how they were able to hear the parents and the parents be able to hear them and they find there's a lot of similarities and that's really a great thing.

[00:09:20]: Community councils really kind of form those things in the community to help the parents do that, they're gonna need some help and some may already those things, so support it and Parent Leadership Advisory Councils, Kansas does a great job at that, they really do a fantastic job, FRIENDS has a lot of resources, I know we're gonna talk about that, that really talks how to reach out, how to look at parents and really those kind of pros and cons - but a lot of the really, the more pros that helps. So, you can look at what maybe some of the diff-, I say difference, or what's better, what's worse for the agency wherever the region they live in.

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[00:10:01]: So, state, national conference attendance and present. So, find those parent who have a voice, work with them in these other things and, you know, let them allow to be a presenter, as well, for these national or state-wide, national conferences and that way more practitioners get to hear them and legislator advisory opportunities those are just things - when a parent actually goes to a legislator, they're more willing to hear than it is just about a program. So, it's really interesting how powerful that parent's voice is when they're up in front of legislators, which can help promote the programs that the agencies are looking at.

[00:10:40]: And, then finally, community, states, national advisory councils, taskforce, boards of directors. So, parents should be involved in every aspect of a agency and when they do those things, they actually get to see them, they get to, you know, get to hear what they're doing and it really makes an impact on the agency and really, in turn, do less work, instead of more work for the agencies, because now the parents are promoting the agency.

TOM OATES [00:11:07]: You know, it's one of those things where you start to realize we tell stories about people, and when we tell stories about people, especially ourselves, other people can relate to that. Where a program, with a system and dollars - that's important, for the structure - but if you really wanna talk about the impact, it's person to person, so taking advantage of that. Hey, Sam, I'm sorry, Bruce, let me, let me follow up on for a second - what about those parents that are willing, but may be a little apprehensive about getting in front of an audience?

BRUCE BYNUM [00:11:38]: Well, that comes through repetitiveness and encouragement. When you believe in somebody and you respect them, you respect what they're saying, you honor what they're saying - it's not like, oh here's a parent or throwing them off - but this is part of our, this parent is part of our agency, they have as much voice as we have. So, when the top to the bottom believes in that parent, that parent is even more apt to go out. And then, just like what you're doing with this podcast, telling us even if you mess up, it's okay. Even if you don't get it right, if your heart is right, if what you really believe in is right, then it'll come across good.

[00:12:20]: Nobody want to hear a polished, polished person who never errors, or never makes a mistake. The more honest you are and even when you say, I'm uncomfortable, but I'm doing this, not because of me, but I'm doing it because I wanna see families become better and they're able to have the resources that's needed in order to keep families together. So when it's like that, to me, that's the power.

TOM OATES [00:12:43]: And you are doing nothing wrong, let me, let me just say and so, I again, appreciate everyone's time, including Jessica, and so, this was something that when we talked earlier, before we recorded, there is a key distinction - because agencies have, you know, those parent partners that they may use, or you know, Kinship Navigators where they've got, kind of, a rolodex of parents that could be at their disposal and then some of them actually become employees. And Jessica brought up a point, I'd love for you to repeat it, about the importance that you have these parents that are sharing their stories, not the practitioners. Jessica, why is that so important?

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JESSICA DIEL [00:13:24]: It's, it's really important to bring parents to the table who are not practitioners because practitioners typically come to the table representing their agency or organization and so, thereby, they are following their policies and procedures and guidelines and they're not necessarily thinking as a parent, even if they may be one.

[00:13:50]: Parents have a different point of view. They have different experiences than most practitioners and when they bring that to the table it can not only help other families within the programs that these agencies and organizations serve, but it can also help them better services that may be lacking, you know, what's working, what's not, what might need to be modified to best, to give the best service to families to give them a higher chance to succeed.

TOM OATES [00:14:32]: You know, you bring up something very interesting that as, you know, Sam and Bruce and, you know, we heard part of Sam's story when they, when you're in front of an audience and sharing the kind of real life examples through this, but it's not always through a presentation that you can, kind of, leverage the power of the parent's voice. So, Jessica, I wanna get a sense of how you and other parents have really worked throughout an agency, not just in a presenting role - if you could give me, maybe some examples of what you've been able to do to really impact systems and what you've seen within those states of, kind of, the impact of having that parent perspective involved in, let's say, the planning or the development of either a process or a program.

JESSICA DIEL [00:15:17]: You can, myself and other parents, they can join parent advisory boards or councils, whichever they choose to call it, and voice their opinion on what's working, what's not, review materials that are being provided and let practitioners know whether or not they're still relevant, whether they need to be updated. They can speak to CBCAP state leads when they come down to review the programs and inform them on, on, again, what's working, what's not, what needs to be modified to best service parents all the way around. And, they can also do this by serving on Head Start, Early Head Start policy councils.

[00:16:16]: I personally have joined a committee post the Joplin tornado to help establish a guideline on how to find kids who were affected by trauma and how to go about asking them how to do that and so that they didn't step on any toes, but at the same time they were providing the best service possible for children and their families. You can also do this by reviewing grants that they might be applying for, creating resource guides for your community to help find resources that people might not know of, so instead of getting a resource list that is outdated and many of the places don't exist anymore, parents will have something that's really a useful tool.

TOM OATES [00:17:23]: That's a heck of a list.

JESSICA DIEL [00:17:24]: They can help with fundraisers and volunteer for activities that the agencies and organizations put on.

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TOM OATES [00:17:33]: That is, that's an impressive list of where we talk about the power and having that perspective, and especially, you know, you brought up, in terms of writing of the grants - when you have to talk about where the program's gonna be effective, looking at resources and say, is this really valuable to a parent, what are they thinking and how would they use this, or not be able to use this? So, Bruce, when, when you get a chance to be at that level, when you get a chance to really start to work with an agency in terms of the planning or, or even their execution - talk to me about when, kind of, the light bulb pops on in their head and they have these "ah ha" moments of realizing the value that you're providing. What's it like for those states when they, when they are leveraging the parents voice, kind of, for the first time?

BRUCE BYNUM [00:18:18]: Well, you know, kind of really "ah ha" moments come in a way that sometimes you know something, but you really don't know until you hear it or see it yourself and you say well, I've been hearing stories of my parent leaders, I've been, you know, we've been kind of afraid, we've been, kind of, scared to look at these things, or the apple don't fall far from the tree, you know, those kind of things - but then when they actually like what Jessica was saying, involve parents and get them involved, these "ah ha" moments come like, it has relationship between families and providers.

[00:18:50]: I mean, what better ah ha moments now to say the thing we struggled at, the things that we worked so hard to do, it's now coming together, because now parents are advocating for our agency. Parents, are now saying, hey, this is a great agency to have resources that care and really wants to hear your voice. When a parent tells another parent something, it's gonna be powerful to that agency who is trying to get more families involved. A lot of times they say well we can't find, we can't, you know, there's a lot of can't sometimes.

[00:19:22]: But then when you have the "ah ha" moments, it's like wow. Now that because we embrace it, we're finding that now our families are working with us. They're really hearing us and we're hearing them, more importantly. And now making our programs and our policies, practices and procedures to follow through with what they feel their needs are. Because what, who knows a family better than the parent? Who knows their children better than the parent? And, and there's so many agencies, sometimes, we can have all the good, you know, programs we wanna have, but then it may not be effectively for what we're looking for - especially in the areas as Sam talked about earlier, sometimes different geographic have different needs.

[00:20:05]: So, one size doesn't fit all. So, you may have something that says, hey, this is a, you know, evidence-based study, we have all these things that show if we do this, here's the outcome, and then you take the same evidence-based and put it in an area that doesn't have the same needs, and they never listen to the families, it's not working and then wondering why it's not. So, the other one, increase responsibilities to the family, identifying their needs.

[00:20:33]: And so, that kind of refers to what I said earlier, it just increases that. Now we're looking at okay, what is it that strengthens the family, what is it that we could do - first of all, honor that parent for being strong. You know, fighting for their child. No matter what situation, you know, I'm a grandparent raising grandkids. So, my daughter, you know, got through some things and she had the other four, we

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had the four that we adopted. But, we still have to work as a family together, so what can I do to strengthen her to make sure that the other four kids.

[00:21:05]: So, there's no sense in me talking about, you know, she did this, you know, we just say all kind of things, but we don't look at what is her needs. What is it that we can help, to help provide for her to be able to keep the rest of the family together. And, then, of course, for us, how do we keep the siblings in touch with each other? So, that's been kind of a challenge, but it's part of things we do, and agencies can help that be better when they look at, you know, what is a family unit? You know, not all families are the same, there's all different, you know, scenarios for different families. So, developing fresh perspective on how, you know, services could be delivered, I mean, that's the big "ah ha" moment.

[00:21:44]: I think, well, maybe not to you guys, but I told the story earlier where there was a school that was not having the kids, the families kids weren't coming to school, so agencies go together to say hey, what is the problem? So, they kind of took a geographic survey of the area and they said well, they need sidewalks, so we'll go ahead and build them sidewalks so they can walk to school. And, so they built these sidewalks and the kids weren't still coming to school and so they finally decided to ask the parents, why are you not bringing your kids to school, and the parents said it's because of the dogs and the snakes.

[00:22:20]: So, it wasn't the sidewalk, it was because there was loose dogs and snakes around. So, if they would've asked the parents, maybe they could've had a more effective resource to be able to provide so kids can get to school safely, whether it's a bus system or something else. So, that is kind of, "ah ha" moment, a lot of times the agency, we've been trying to work on this, we've been trying to figure it out and here's a parent that just told us the solution, wow.

TOM OATES [00:22:42]: And like you mentioned, every family is different and so, every family is gonna have barriers and, and the question you just brought up about dogs and snakes, you know, I don't think they're dealing with that problem in the Bronx, New York. I don't think they're dealing with that problem in, you know, in let's say, Alaska - maybe the dogs - but, you know, if you start to think about it, what's, what's on paper needs to fit in with what's really going on.

[00:23:11]: But, you mentioned something, you know, and Bruce mentioned something here, Sam, Bruce mentioned the can'ts. You know, there's lot of can'ts out there. So, what have you seen as, kind of, like, those biggest barriers, those biggest can'ts that states and agencies are facing when they're trying to incorporate parents within their systems?

SAM BLUE [00:23:30]: Well, Tom, yeah, you have different regions, different areas and different problems depending on what regions you're in, in terms of the barriers. But, and as you know, in some regions you have transportation or child care issues and things of that nature, but I think one of the biggest things is systems need to understand real time, no matter what region or what area of the country they're in, they need to understand the real time that those parents are facing. And, one thing I see and I hear parents all the time, you know a lot of parents are going through drama, toxic stress a lot

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of things, trying to make ends meet - and you got all these practitioner people around them, they getting paid.

[00:24:24]: And I believe that parents need to be compensated for their time. They're human and they're like any other hard working citizen and they need to be compensated for their time and we need to understand that and somehow that has to be leveraged with systems and to understand that we have bills, too, we have families, we need to spend time with our children with their homework and with their social, emotional development. And, it costs and you take away from that parents, maybe the opportunity to look for the type of work or extra work or things for their own children, so we want to be real with this. I think this is one of the biggest barriers, is parents need to be compensated by, for their time.

TOM OATES [00:25:14]: You know, you're bringing up something, and, and that's really important that I wanted to bring up about the parent advisory council and so, Jessica, I'm not, you know, I wanna kind of, bring this to you, about the fact that folks like a parent advisory council, folks in your roles, Jessica, you're able to help parents become advocates, their own advocates, you know - where is the strength and the power of not only parents advocating for themselves, but having that kind of parent advisory council, those on their side, you know, encouraging them to, to be advocates for themselves?

JESSICA DIEL [00:25:53]: The biggest thing that parents, or that, when you're helping parents to learn to advocate, you need to break down any stigmas there are about Child Welfare or any other organization that maybe they're being pushed into working with, or they might want to work with, but they're like I don't know because I've heard these things - I think first you need to break down these stigmas about these organizations. Because, a few bad experiences shouldn't dictate a whole program.

[00:26:32]: And then, secondly, I think that you need to let them truly understand that those agencies are in place to help them strengthen their family and get it back to a healthier, happier place. I think you also need to - and this is, this ties in with the previous question, I think this is a barrier - that, you need to break down the terminology you're using with parents. You can't use acronyms that you might use every day with a parent and expect them to understand what you're talking about, because it's just not going to happen.

[00:27:18]: If your agency wants to work with a parent, then they need to take the time for the education of the common terminology used - whether it be in a meeting or co-facilitating at a workshop - so that they fully understand what is happening around them. And not only that, but you also need to let the staff know that you're bringing parents on board, you need the parents, they matter and get everybody on board with, you know, working with them on, you know, friendly terms, respecting them just as they would any other coworker.

[00:28:08]: And, I think that you need to connect with them because when you're working with parents in the Child Welfare system, you need to connect with them on some level, because practitioners can be really intimidating and if parents are working with other parents, then they're not as intimidating

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because they can relate to another parent and they don't see them as a threat, whereas they do with a practitioner.

[00:28:40]: And I also think that they need to know that their voice matters and that change is only gonna happen if they choose to speak up. Programs are only going to know when there's an issue or when something's not working right if they speak up. And it doesn't matter if they are advocating at their child's pediatrician office, their child's school, they're advocating on a city-wide level to maybe get a stop sign in place where there should be one, or a state level to help advocate for laws that are going to be harmful to children of all ages, such as changing healthcare and whatnot.

[00:29:42]: Teaching them that they matter, getting them to believe that they matter and encouraging them and constantly letting them know that, you know, you support them 100%, those are, those are big roles in incorporating parents into the Child Welfare system.

TOM OATES [00:30:12]: You know, this brings up something Bruce mentioned a number of minutes ago about getting in front of legislators, getting in front of decision makers and that the power of hearing directly from someone's experience resonates and so, so, and kind of empowering that with those parents is pretty powerful because it is their perspective and they're the ones, you know, kind of, change has to start right there and if, if you're not going to be, if you don't feel like you've got some power in your own voice, then there's no momentum that's gonna get started.

[00:30:48]: So, Bruce if you've -

JESSICA DIEL [00:30:50]: Sometimes, sometimes organizations are hindered by how far they can advocate because of, you know, whether or not they will, you know, continue to receive grants or donations based on what they do, so that's why it's really important to utilize parents who, who agree with what the organization might want, but their hands are tied. Because, if you teach them the proper ways to advocate, they could start soaring.

TOM OATES [00:31:29]: So, in case there's, you know, for those out there that, and you know, working in agencies that want to expand the reach of a parent's voice, or take better advantage, or start to incorporate parents - Bruce, what's the, you know, we've talked about a number of different things, what is the one important factor, the most important factor for a state or for an agency that they must have to making involving those parents and making involving their voices, you know, successful and sustainable?

BRUCE BYNUM [00:32:01]: Well, you said what, but for me the greatest what is that what Jessica referred to, Sam referred to, we all refer to is that parents or practitioners have equal partners. You know, that one is not looked upon as inferior. So, a parent is just not somebody who's coming in just to support your program and that's the only thing you wanna use them for, but they're actually a partner that's equal to what you are doing.

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[00:32:29]: So, referring to Sam, as well, sometimes partners need to be paid, like the other partner. So, in order to, to be able to advocate and not have to worry about how I'm gonna have childcare, how I'm gonna do this, how I'm gonna do that. So, to me, that thing where you can finally the agency says, you know what, they're equal partners. Because what is the whole goal of an agency in the first place? The goal is to be able to help the family. I mean, if they're an agency that deals with family - whether it's through Child Welfare or whether it's through foster care and - it's really that goal is that I'm there for the family. And what better way to help the family than empower the parent to have an equal partner voice?

TOM OATES [00:33:11]: Well that, that's, and you know, that's the title of this episode is the power of the parent's voice and that means, you know, not only getting the parents to recognize that they have power, but also providing power within the agency to say, you know, their voice matters, and their perspective matters. Sam, you've got a state or an agency that they wanna incorporate or increase the parent's voice involvement, where do they start?

SAM BLUE [00:33:42]: Well, Tom, number one they start off with taking off the practitioner hat and put on their parent hat and try to understand some of the things that these are parents, too, and trying to build a relationship with those parents, with the many evidence-based programs that's out there and folks taking a deeper dive when it comes to encouraging parents to support each other.

[00:34:10]: But, but mainly, you know, we as the practitioners, we, we say we wanna help parents and we wanna do this and that, we have good meetings and we all meet together, but you know, they, they, a lot of practitioners don't really leverage their voice, they really don't even move the needle and you got to practice what you preach, you really got to write down that information, follow up with those parents and put them into programs, write them into programs, that's important.

[00:34:38]: And that will make that parent feel important. And, another thing, parents, they're not practitioners and a lot of them may not have the level of education, the expertise practitioners have - and one thing I do appreciate that the TAG team, we had a training on strategic storytelling - sometimes we get out, we talk to legislators and we talk to practitioners and just spilling the beans and not saying it in a way that the legislators and many others lose the point because they get wrapped up in a lot of details.

[00:35:14]: So, we went through a special training called Strategic Storytelling and that gave, that gave us ammunition, gave us the tools that we need to use in order to articulate and to tell our story without tell our whole business. So, parents, the ongoing training and how to communicate and how to talk to legislators and practitioners, I think that would be a plus for any state agency.

TOM OATES [00:35:40]: You know, that brings up a good point, because you share the story, but if you've got a legislator or a decision maker, you've gotta make sure that they understand what can they do to institute change, so it's just not the story itself, it's what can somebody do in their position of power that if they did x, y and z, we could have better outcomes. Jessica?

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JESSICA DIEL [00:36:01]: I think agencies and states can also, to further on what Sam was saying, not only invite them to conferences and, whether they're, you know, they're state or national, but bring them along, keep their training going, because if they're current on what's current in, you know, the Child Welfare, you know, field, then they will be able to better advocate, not only for their own families, for others families, for the agency, for their state. And, the more they know, the more, the farther they're gonna go.

TOM OATES [00:36:45]: You know, you bring up something that's very important, because we talk about giving the parent perspective to kind of get those "ah ha" moments and so then agencies can then say, gee, that's the barriers that they're dealing with, sharing with the parents of, hey here's the barriers that a legislator may deal with, so they're able to say, hey, here's how you can get around that to help folks like me. Bruce?

BRUCE BYNUM [00:37:07]: Yeah, one of the things I think that shouldn't be forgotten, that with their program in planning the PIPs other things that they fall short of and agencies when they get their end of the year report and they look at all the different reports of where they're short, it usually comes into the parents, the fathers, you know, the other pieces that they're trying to lift up so they can have at the end of the year when they're looking at funding, they can say we're meeting these obligations, it's we're actually exceeding these obligations.

[00:37:41]: So, having that parent voice resolves a lot of that, because usually where the need is, where the marks are being lowered is because that parent voice isn't there. And when you talk about turnovers of Child Welfare, especially our social workers, when you have a parent that's cooperating and they help other parents cooperate, how less strenuous is it for social workers to be able to have, you know, where they're not finding all these other things.

[00:38:09]: And so, I think, when we're saying all that we're saying, it also benefits the bottom line of organizations. And that bottom line is are they meeting the needs that they're getting funded for? And so, when they have the big program in planning, when they have their annual year report, they gotta show that they're meeting those obligations, and not just saying a checkmark and say oh yeah, we had a parent, you know, but actually, as Jessica established, they really make them involved and be a part of that, so you can now, at the end of the year or when that five year or however they do, you really can say here's what's going on and other states can follow through and use some of those good resources, as well.

JESSICA DIEL [00:38:51]: I think basically what it comes down to if states, agencies, organizations aren't willing to include parents in meaningful ways, then they're not going to sustain parent involvement because parents need to feel like whatever they're volunteering for is productive and that they matter.

TOM OATES [00:39:17]: Guys, I really, really appreciate not only the time that you're spending with us today, but, but sharing your stories and I'll remind the audience, we're gonna have some links on the web page to this podcast where you're gonna be able to listen to a number of different stories, including

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a couple in Spanish, as well, that have been produced and are being shared and so you get a sense of, of the power of the parent's voice.

[00:39:42]: So, Bruce Bynum, Sam Blue, Jessica Diel, I thank you guys so much for your time and being part of the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast.

JESSICA DIEL [00:39:51]: Thank you.

BRUCE BYNUM [00:39:52]: Thank you, so nice to be a part.

TOM OATES [00:39:56]: So glad to have Sam Blue, Bruce Bynum and Jessica Diel share their stories and insight with us. Now, if you head to this podcast web page, we'll point you to both the Parent Advisory Council's web page and the link for you to check out the series of those recorded parent stories. Just jump over to acf.hhs.gov/cb and search 'podcasts', you'll find this episode under Power of the Parent's Voice.

[00:40:20]: We'll also point you to a series of other resources about engaging and involving parents and families, along with the other episodes featuring community prevention efforts coordinated and supported by the FRIENDS National Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention. So, any other resource or information needs you're looking for, reach out to Child Information Gateway over at info@childwelfare.gov. We've got a team of information support specialists that can help you with your research or program searches or find useful tools and information that you can provide to parents and families.

TOM OATES [00:40:55]: So, thanks so much for joining us here for this episode of the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast. I'm Tom Oates, and we'll talk to you next time.

FEMALE NARRATOR [00:41:08]: Thanks for joining us for this edition of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. Child Welfare Information Gateway is available at childwelfare.gov and is a service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. The views and opinions expressed on this podcast do not necessarily reflect on those of Information Gateway, or the Children's Bureau.