



PECAN's Family Partnership Manifesto **Transforming Systems for Children 0-8**

Problem Statement/Statement of Need

Parents in our community are gravely concerned about the challenges facing their children, especially Black and Brown children. Parents have indisputable expertise based in part on their lived experience. Parents are highly motivated to partner with leaders and service providers to create a more effective infrastructure to improve outcomes for all our children. However, too frequently services and systems-level efforts in Rochester have not included participant, family, or youth voices. When they have, often it has not been done in a meaningful way but rather as a token effort. This manifesto seeks to transform services for children in Rochester by utilizing families' lived experience and expertise to shape, guide and lead.

Our community hosts an impressive array of resources and services, but lacks comprehensive networking, communication, and education systems regarding these resources. As a result, families and service providers do not always have knowledge of or access to existing resources and organizations that may fit their needs, especially related to services offered by smaller organizations. Before we focus on developing or expanding existing services, we first need to understand the community's resources and the inherent strengths that are available, valued, and trusted by the community to be served. We then need to hear from families where the gaps are. Using that knowledge combined with relevant data, we can partner to identify solutions and use fiscal resources wisely to maximize capacity where the need is greatest.

Often smaller organizations who are most connected to families are not included in systems-level discussions and efforts. This further limits the community's awareness of resources and opportunities and leaves out important perspectives.

And, often, many agency staff providing services to Rochester residents don't reflect the families receiving - or intended to receive - the services, including their race and where they live.

We know, from practical experience and research, that the involvement of fathers is critical to children's healthy development and positive life trajectory, but fathers are regularly left out of most services. Services that do include fathers are often not designed to effectively engage and support father's unique needs.

Parents need more information and support to better understand and meet their children's mental health needs. This includes what they can do as parents to support their child's emotional development and an awareness of effective mental health services/supports when needed.

Many organizations and service providers do not know how to effectively support families when they are in crisis and even though their efforts are well-meaning, they can be ineffective or escalate the crisis to cause further harm.

Focusing our efforts on the 0-8 age range for our children means we need to also focus on prenatal to help ensure babies get the best start in life from the very beginning and that pregnant women's voices are listened to which will improve maternal and birth outcomes. Some examples of needed resources in this area include midwifery, doulas, infant and early childhood mental health, prenatal classes, home visitation etc.

Parents are the experts on their children's and family's needs, and experts on their community. They understand best the issues facing their homes, families, and neighborhoods but are too often left out of designing services and systems when they should be co-creating more effective solutions. This results in resources not being used as effectively as they could be and a continued lack of progress in addressing the root issues and inequities that plague our community.

Proposed Services/Scope of Practice

The Parent Engagement Collaborative Action Network (PECAN) is the table where parents come together to inform systems level change for improvements in cradle to career outcomes for Rochester's children. PECAN is respectfully but strongly advocating for opportunities that have real potential to meaningfully center family voice and transform this voice from token representation to a position of influence that shifts the power to those most knowledgeable about the needs of children and families in Rochester. The proposed PECAN services could be utilized in the pending Whole Child Health RFP or in other community initiatives.

PECAN is able and willing to partner with collaborations and organizations, including:

1. **Educating community groups and agencies** on the assets, strengths, and needs families are experiencing in their community. This could include:
 - Interested parties joining PECAN meetings to engage in relationship-based dialogues.
 - Parent-led presentations to groups.
 - Round-table discussions with a panel of parents offering diverse perspectives and expertise.
 - Participating in or conducting surveys and assessments of community needs/assets/resources.
 - Participating in or conducting surveys and assessments of cultural competence/racial equity, parent engagement and leadership strategies.
2. **Advising:** Assisting in creating and guiding program development, quality improvement and quality assurance efforts.
3. **Shared Planning:** Providing representative parent voice to review grant applications and offer suggestions for revisions or enhancements to proposed services.
 - These services could be offered to funders to help shape RFP's or in reviewing applications or to agencies as part of the development of their proposals
 - Reviewing applications for funding and making recommendations for which services should be prioritized. Again, this could be offered to funders to assist them in making funding decisions and awards or within larger systems wide initiatives (like the pending

Whole Child Health proposals) that need to make decisions on how to allocate resources within a specific project budget.

4. **Parent and Community Voice in Evaluating Agency Impact:** Providing support to Incorporate parent voice into program evaluation methods. Because accountability and transparency are key to transforming services effectively, participant families need to be included in evaluating program outcomes and overall effectiveness to best assess the impact on families. We need to “go to the source” by asking families how the services impacted them as a foundational metric of success. We further suggest that organization work include:
- Incremental participant assessments throughout any project.
 - Engaging parent leaders in determining measures for proposed projects.
 - Goals should be designed to have long-term and sustainable impacts that allow for continued growth.
 - Participant’s experiences should guide program development, improvement, and quality assurance efforts.
 - Specifically, representative families should be part of designing solutions for program development and improvement efforts (ie. parents of children with special needs, hearing impairment, those experiencing language barriers)

Further, we recommend that agencies:

- **Employ parents and community members:** Prioritize filling paid positions with parent and community representatives of the population to be served, particularly positions of leadership and influence. Help identify and recruit parent applicants from the community to fill these positions. We further suggest:
 - Posting positions at locations that will attract parents from the community.
 - Emphasize the opportunity parents will have to be influential in the work and their community.
 - Encouraging parents to represent this professional work experience on resumes.

Budget Considerations

Program Expenses: Build into the project or organization budget line items to support costs that support and make possible parent participation and engagement in the work, such as mileage, zoom/data fees, meeting supplies, childcare, interpretation, translation, meals, etc.

Compensation: In honor of the time and expertise that parents bring to the table, we recommend the following

- **Consulting:** A minimum rate of \$35/ hour for consulting services on specific projects or a stipend of \$100 for 3 or fewer hours per month.
- **Salaries:** For paid part-time or full-time permanent positions, we recommend an annual salary of \$35,000-\$50,000. When crafting job requirements, we strongly encourage you to consider what is truly needed for position, as well as what can be learned through training and experience on the job. Consider eliminating or making optional a minimal degree requirement, when other work and life experience can be brought to bear on the position. Consider lived experience and parental expertise as job requirement alternatives.

Training: Support continued professional learning for parents through mentorship, on the job training, and coaching opportunities, with relevant compensation.