

The COLORADO  
**FAMILY LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

*Families Leading Social Change*

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## **ABOUT FAMILY LEADERSHIP**

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Cultivating Family Leadership to promote better communities and accelerate policy change is a promising practice and is leading the paradigm shift in systems development. This document defines *Family Leadership*, why it is valuable, its progression and how communities can promote it.

### **WHAT IS FAMILY LEADERSHIP?**

Family leadership emerges when community members and parents gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in meaningful leadership roles that help shape the future of families, youth, schools and communities.

*While Family Leadership is a concept, concrete components are foundational:*

- Family Leadership evolves from Family Engagement.
- Family Leadership is an individual, capable of partnering with professionals to impact policy and systems on behalf of families/children
- Family Leadership is demonstrated by meaningful action by families leading change, (family engagement focuses on participation, listening, parenting skill development)
- Family Leadership is demonstrated by the persistent pursuit to create a meaningful role for families in local, state and national planning processes that influence policy and practices to create a positive impact in the lives of children and families.
- Family Leadership is the critical component in partnering with policy makers because it connects theory and practice
- Family Leadership is a proven strategy to address health/education disparities

### **WHY IS IT NECESSARY?**

National directives mandate that families serve as essential advisors in public policy, research, and systems development.

- Families and children are often overlooked as a powerful constituents
- Family Leaders share authentic experiences with comprehensive knowledge
- Family leaders are the beneficiaries of policy initiatives – policy must work for them to be effective
- Policy makers seek informed individuals who can articulate current barriers while identifying solutions
- Partnerships between Family Leaders and policy makers lead to a more balanced perspective during policymaking activities
- Family Leadership Development assures the intent of government (for the people, by the people)
- Family Leaders offer a multi-dimensional perspective, beyond basic parenting
- Family Leaders are invested in the outcomes of their involvement
- Family Leaders can identify lessons learned from unique experiences and connect them to systems change efforts
- Family Leadership reflects the cultural diversity of local communities

## THE PROGRESSION OF FAMILY LEADERSHIP

Family Leadership is an evolution of skills, knowledge, opportunities, and dedication to creating positive social change. The progression of family leadership starts with basic parenting. The continuous cultivation of parenting skills grows in to leadership within the household, then expands to leadership within the community, and eventually is recognized as leadership on behalf of others.

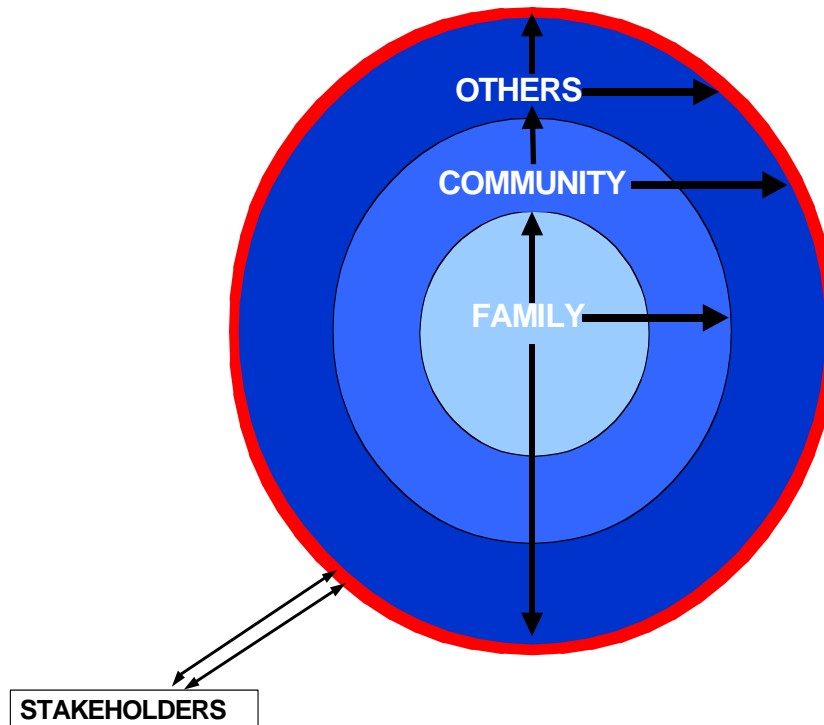
Three progression stages:

1. Leader of your own situation
2. Leader on behalf of your community
3. Leader on behalf of others at a policy level

There is a place for everyone:

1. Skills and experiences are important at all stages
2. Family Leaders can be identified by stakeholders or self-identify
3. Family Leaders decide when to be an active participant
4. Family Leadership opportunities are relevant to *all* families

## PROGRESSION OF FAMILY LEADERSHIP



## HOW CAN COMMUNITIES ENCOURAGE FAMILY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT?

- Integrate Family Leadership opportunities into all community activities and initiatives
- Encourage Family Leaders to co-facilitate presentations, meetings, and trainings
- Acknowledge Family Leaders as equal stakeholders and contributors
- Offer family accommodations such as convenient meeting times and stipends
- Assure competency matches the opportunity
- Maintain a list or database of family leaders that is diverse and representative of the community
- Monitor and track the accomplishments and impact of Family Leadership activities

For more information please visit [www.coloradofamilyleadership.com](http://www.coloradofamilyleadership.com) or contact Eileen Forlenza (303) 692-2794 at The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)