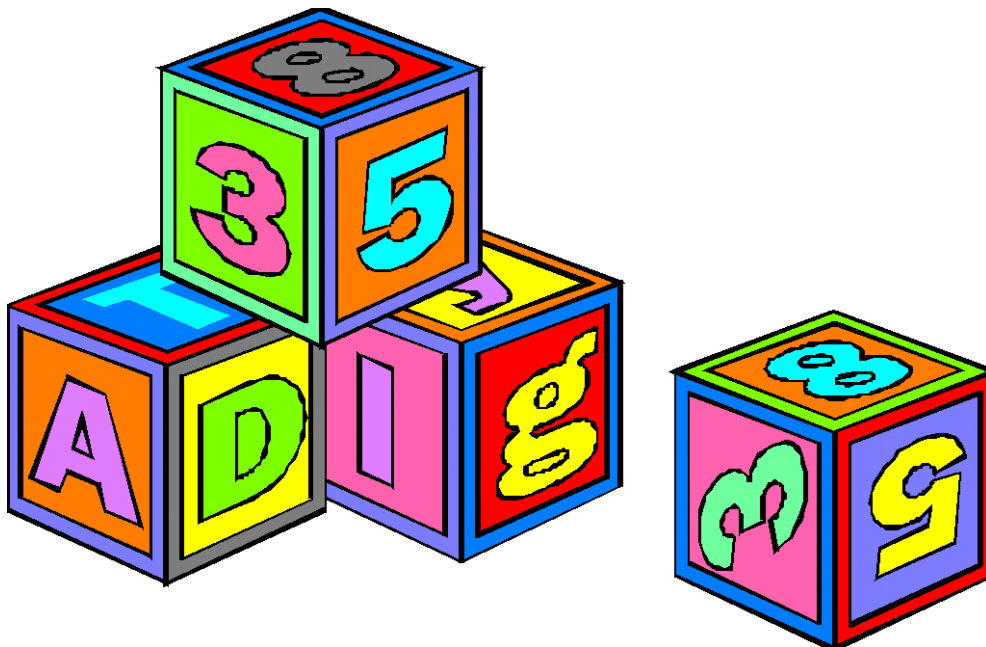


# BUILDING BLOCKS TO COMMUNITY INCLUSION

A Facilitator's Guide  
to Community Conversations

A PRODUCT OF THE RESULTS FOR CHILDREN INITIATIVE,  
A PROJECT OF THE FOUNDATION CONSORTIUM

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Including:

- The facilitator's role
- What is a community conversation?
- Why & how to include community voices
- What does it take to be successful?
- Listening vs. hearing
- Facilitators checklist
- Overview of Children and Families Act (Prop. 10)  
& Results for Children Initiative (RCI)

## THE FACILITATOR'S ROLE



Facilitators are organizers and communicators

Facilitators understand and value the goals of community engagement and inclusion

Facilitators are flexible and assure culturally and linguistically inviting settings (meeting times are accessible, child care is provided)

Facilitators use questions to develop and encourage individual involvement

Facilitators manage the meeting structure NOT the content

Facilitators assure a culture of information exchange - without judgment or favor

Facilitators are the first to arrive and the last to leave

Facilitators respect time; meeting start time, meeting end time

Facilitators ask for assistance in recording information that is provided by participants without edit or restatement



## INCLUSION OF COMMUNITY VOICES

### The Community Conversation



**What is a Community Conversation?** A community conversation is a gathering held specifically to engage parents, community members, providers, and others into a specific process. Community conversations have been successfully utilized in the development of strategic plans for children that are meaningful to families and communities. They can be used for large-scale purposes (county-wide planning) or small scale (how can our agency do a better job working with families?). We believe that we must plan with families not just for families.

**Why is it important?** The inclusion of community voices in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs and/or other initiatives is a core value of our Children and Families Commission. Parents may be overlooked as the primary expert of their child's development. Other community residents and non-profit partners bring an array of experiences to our work. We believe these community members represent our greatest resource in discovering our diverse communities collective wisdom.

**What is your role?** Your role as facilitator is crucial to the gathering of this wisdom. We encourage you to use this guide to create an environment that brings families, providers, and others together to create the best community possible for our children.

**DISCOVER THE GOALS OF YOUR COUNTY'S COMMISSION AND SHARE WITH THE PARTICIPANTS - WE ARE ALL HERE FOR THE KIDS!**



## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

**SINCERE FACILITATION:** Review the list of attributes that a good facilitator will employ in engaging a group (see sidebar - Facilitator's Role). Above all else be sincere.

**THOUGHTFUL LOGISTICS:** You will want to assure that all logistical issues are addressed:

- ❑ Is the room set-up in a welcoming configuration? Not classroom style? Round tables? An environment of openness?
- ❑ Do you have the necessary supplies? Flip charts, pens, sign-in sheets, name tags, background materials (in various languages, if applicable), agenda?
- ❑ Do you have assistance in recording the information that is gathered? Again, if the community conversation is held in other languages, you should be prepared to have recorders in the appropriate language.

**OPEN COMMUNICATION:** Set the stage for a trusting exchange of ideas and experiences. Share the goals of the conversation with the participants at the beginning of your time together. In addition, share "ground rules" for communication to include some or all of the following:

- ❑ All ideas count and will be recorded.
- ❑ Everyone participates (use a unifying question for participant introductions, e.g. My name is *Alma* and the children in my life are Sophia who is two years old and Gabriel who is five. This process is important to remind ourselves why we are together.)
- ❑ Share purpose of gathering and desired results.
- ❑ Invite other ground rules - for example; we will not interrupt when someone is talking, only one person speaks at a time; "listening" not just "hearing" (see sidebar); etc.
- ❑ Be mindful of your body language; gently redirect if conversation strays by focusing on purpose. At all times be warm and caring.

**COMMITMENT TO NEXT STEPS:** Be sure to share the plans of your Commission to "check-in" with families, through newsletters, availability of strategic plan, opportunities to volunteer/advise, etc. and provide resource materials that are relevant to your participants.

**USE THE CHECKLIST  
LOCATED ON THE NEXT PAGE!**

## Are you Listening?



**"DO THEY REALLY CARE  
ABOUT WHAT I SAY?"**

**Listening** means that, while another person in the group is talking, I am so intent on what they are saying that I am visualizing it, can respond to it, and will remember it long after they have said it - there is nothing else on my mind

**OR ARE YOU JUST  
HEARING...**

**Hearing** means that, while another person in the group is talking I am thinking about something else (like what I am going to say next), and I miss listening to what you are saying.



# CHECKLIST

A checklist for successful facilitation:

- Meeting is scheduled in an accessible location, convenient time and date
- Child care is arranged on site whenever possible
- Transportation is available, as necessary
- Food is provided appropriate to time of meeting
- Simple and easy to use written materials are available in appropriate language
- Translation services are available for the non-dominant language speakers
- Recruit and orient volunteers to assist with logistics, recording, child care
- Multi-media approaches are used to encourage learning
- Differences in literacy are accommodated
- Ensure culturally appropriate levels of informality and respect
- Share next steps and provide resource information

**FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW  
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS  
- THEY ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS  
FOR OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE**



## CALIFORNIA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACT (PROPOSITION 10)

In November 1998, California voters passed the California Children and Families Act. This initiative increased the tax on cigarettes and tobacco products. The revenue is used to promote early childhood development from the prenatal period to age five. The intent is for all children to enter school physically, mentally, socially, and developmentally ready to learn. The initiative generates approximately \$700 million per year statewide. Each county is allocated a portion of these revenues based on the number of live births. The Children and Families Commission of each county is required to invest these dollars in ways that best serve the needs of all children in their counties.

### RESULTS FOR CHILDREN INITIATIVE

Where Inclusive Governance meets  
Results Based Accountability

The Results for Children Initiative (RCI) is a partnership between the Foundation Consortium and four County Children and Families Commissions. RCI believes that if commissions adopt "Inclusive Governance" principles and practices that they would be more likely to achieve equitable results for young children across ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and economic groups because they would be more likely:

- ✓ To identify equity as a desired result;
- ✓ To be aware and knowledgeable about strategies that work for different populations;
- ✓ To be able to use and interpret data to hold themselves accountable; and
- ✓ To be aware if certain programs aren't reaching certain populations

"Results Based Accountability" assures clear logical relationships between the desired results, needs, indicators and strategies. Systems are in place to monitor progress towards achieving these results and communities, providers, and Commission are engaged in a continuous process of "how can we do better".

**THIS FACILITATION GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED FOR  
USE BY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSIONS**

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