

## 1140 PARENT LEADERS OF THE DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Chapter: **Staff Responsibilities**

Section: **Collaborations**



New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families Policy Manual

Policy Directive: **14-26**

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Approved:

Handwritten signature of Maggie Bishop in black ink.

Maggie Bishop, DCYF Director

Related Statute(s): [RSA 169-B](#), [RSA 169-C](#), [RSA 169-D](#), and [RSA 170-E](#)

Related Admin Rule(s):

Related Federal Regulation(s):

Related Form(s): **FORM 1040, FORM 1140, FORM 1141, and FORM 1142**

Bridges' Screen(s) and Attachment(s):

The Division for Children, Youth and Families honors all individuals, whether staff, volunteer, contracted, or in the community. Everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy and respect, and has strengths that they can share with the Division. The Parent Partner Program brings the voices of fathers, mothers, and other adults in parenting roles, together to create positive changes in child welfare practice and policies, to improve the lives of children and youth, increase reunifications, and support and strengthen New Hampshire's families.

### Purpose

This policy is to inform staff about Parent Leaders collaborating with the Division for Children, Youth and Families and the roles and boundaries that support the collaborations.

### Definitions

**"Assessment"** means the process documented in the NH Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), Bridges, by which the DCYF CPSW enquires into a report alleging abuse or neglect pursuant to RSA 169-C: 37, to determine the validity of the allegations and the need for further protective services.

**"Better Together Team"** means a group of individuals, representative of CPSWs, JPPOs, DCYF Supervisors, Parent Leaders, and community partners within a region of New Hampshire, working together to promote parent voice and parent engagement at the District Office level.

**"Case"** means the planned provision of services and supports to address the challenges that have resulted a child/youth and family becoming involved with the Division for Children, Youth and Families pursuant to RSA 169-B, RSA 169-C, or RSA 169-D, managed by a CPSW/JPPO in collaboration with the family through a non-court agreement or through court-ordered interventions.

**"CPS"** means the Bureau of Field Services' Child Protective Services under DCYF.

**"CPSW"** means a Children Protective Services Worker employed by DCYF.

**"DCYF"** or the **"Division"** means the DHHS Division for Children, Youth and Families.

**"DHHS"** or the **"Department"** means the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.

**"Guardian"** means either a natural parent or a person appointed by a NH Circuit Court, or the court of similar jurisdiction in another state, to have responsibility for the care, custody, and educational needs of the child/youth.

**"JJS"** means the Bureau of Field Services' Juvenile Justice Services under DCYF.

**"JPPO"** means a Juvenile Probation and Parole Officer employed by DCYF.

**"Parent Consultant"** means a Parent Leader contracted or employed by DCYF to consult on specific Division projects and provide support and management to the Parent Leaders.

**"Parent Leader"** means fathers, mothers, and other adults in parenting roles with system experience, who are committed to utilizing their voice, knowledge, and personal expertise to promote positive changes and work in partnership to improve the lives of children, youth, and their families.

**"Parent Partner"** means a Parent Leader who has accepted the responsibility of working collaboratively with a specific office of DCYF in facilitating peer-to-peer support with parents who have an open assessment or case with the Division.

**"Parent Leadership Coordinator"** means the DCYF Program Specialist who administers the Parent Partner Program.

**"Parent Partner Program"** means the New Hampshire program that supports Parent Leaders in collaboration with Better Together Teams to promote parent voice, parent leadership, and parents as change agents.

**"Prospective Parent Leader"** means a parent, guardian, or caregiver who has been or is being recruited to be a Parent Leader.

**"SYSC"** or the **"John H. Sununu Youth Services Center"** means the architecturally secure juvenile treatment facility administered by the DHHS Division for Children, Youth and Families.

<b>Policy</b>
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- I. All DCYF staff are expected to support the recruitment and retention of Parent Leaders.
  - A. DCYF recruits and partners with Prospective Parent Leaders to represent the voice of families, to improve DCYF practice, and better meet the needs of the children and parents the Division serves.
  - B. Through their role, DCYF field staff has a responsibility to identify, reach out, recruit, and invite Prospective Parent Leaders to learn more about how they can be involved in the Parent Partner Program.
    1. Prospective Parent Leaders should have had first-hand experience with CPS or JJS, and
    2. Prospective Parent Leaders must not be actively involved with the Division at the time of becoming involved in the Parent Partner Program.
  - C. Field staff should use the end of a family's involvement with DCYF as an opportunity to celebrate success with the family and provide the family with information regarding the Parent Partner Program, inviting them to become a Parent Leader and discussing the Parent Leader process.

1. Field staff will share the program brochure "New Hampshire Parent Partner Program," Form 1040 to further educate and engage families at the close of all cases and assessments as appropriate.
  2. Field staff will provide parents with the contact information for the local Better Together Team Leader, Parent Leadership Coordinator, and the Parent Consultant, and encourage parents to call them to learn more information.
- D. Field staff will provide names of interested parents wishing to learn more information about the Parent Partner Program to the Better Together Team leader in their District Office or the Parent Leadership Coordinator.
  - E. Better Together Team leaders and the Parent Leadership Coordinator will call Prospective Parent Leaders to answer any questions and invite them to upcoming events and activities that include other Parent Leaders.
  - F. The local Better Together Team, in consultation with District Office Supervisors, will facilitate scheduled events to engage parents, guardians, and caregivers interested in learning about the Parent Partner Program and Parent Leader's role with the Division.
  - G. Prospective Parent Leaders who are interested in attending Parent Leader trainings will be identified.
- II. DCYF offers Parent Leaders training opportunities to build their skills and impact change.
- A. DCYF periodically offers Better Together workshops to support and educate Prospective Parent Leaders and field staff on how to effectively work together and build authentic partnerships.
    1. Field staff will connect Prospective Parent Leaders with the Better Together Team at the District Office within their local community.
    2. Better Together Team leaders, or the Parent Leadership Coordinator, will advise Prospective Parent Leaders of upcoming activities they may be involved in.
      - (a) Activities may include:
        - (1) A "meet and greet;"
        - (2) A Strategic Sharing Workshop. Strategic Sharing is a method developed to help people who have been involved with the child welfare system tell the story of their experiences, making sure the message is effective and their well-being is protected; and/or
        - (3) A Better Together Workshop. Better Together Workshops foster equal and mutually-respectful partnerships between birth parents, child welfare agency staff and community allies through an intensive two-day workshop facilitated by one birth parent and one staff/ally.
      - (b) Prospective Parent Leaders will be provided additional Parent Partner Program information by attending these activities.

3. Prospective Parent Leaders may be invited to join the Better Together Team at the District Office. Prospective Parent Leaders, who join a Better Together Team, are encouraged to explore opportunities with support from the Parent Leadership Coordinator.
  - B. The Parent Leadership Coordinator, with assistance from the Parent Consultant, guides Parent Leaders as they join the Division and provides a general orientation to their roles, areas of opportunities, standards of conduct, and expectations.
  - C. DCYF will make ongoing training opportunities available to Parent Leaders to support their growth and effectiveness in their role. (See recommended trainings in the Parent Leader Continuum Form 1142 for consideration of professional growth.)
- III. Parent Leaders can be involved in many ways as identified in the Parent Leader Continuum, Form 1142.
- A. DCYF collaborates with Parent Leaders in reviewing and updating DCYF practices and the supporting policies.
    1. Parent Leaders represent and speak on behalf of parents throughout the state of New Hampshire, which may include:
      - (a) Sharing their actual experiences of involvement with the Division as a means of offering feedback on:
        - (1) What worked well and what did not work well relative to the services provided;
        - (2) Behaviors and actions of staff that were helpful in building trust;
        - (3) Supports that were helpful in initiating changes;
      - (b) Brainstorming ways to engage parents and obtain services that will improve practices relating to a specific concern; or
      - (c) Providing specific case related recommendations consistent with reunification, parent engagement, parent goals, or other practice related advice.
    2. Parent voice supports developing innovative strategies to guide the Division's work with families.
  - B. Parent Leaders who are interested may be provided the opportunity to facilitate workshops, trainings, and meetings with other Parent Leaders, DCYF staff, and community providers.
  - C. Some Parent Leaders may be selected to serve as Parent Partners to work with a specific District Office or telework unit.
    1. Parent Partners are carefully selected from within the pool of Parent Leaders and complete pre-service training prior to receiving referrals for peer-to-peer support.

2. Parent Partners have a unique opportunity to connect with families who are currently involved with the Division through an assessment or open case and provide them peer-to-peer support.
  3. Parent Partners reach out to parents new to DCYF and build trust to help them become an active advocate for their family.
- D. Parent Leaders may be asked to join committees or workgroups, including the local Better Together Team.

IV. Parent Leaders are a part of DCYF.

- A. Parent Leaders complete:
1. A Parent Leader Code of Ethics, Form 1140; and
  2. A Parent Leader Confidentiality Agreement, Form 1141.
- B. DCYF is committed to providing quality and supportive supervision to Parent Leaders.
1. The Parent Leadership Coordinator will provide supervision for the Parent Leaders.
    - (a) Parent Partners and Parent Consultants will receive formal monthly supervision from the Parent Leadership Coordinator.
    - (b) Parent Leaders (statewide) will receive coaching and support from the Parent Leadership Coordinator dependent on their level of involvement.
  2. The Parent Leadership Coordinator and District Office Supervisor will designate a staff to provide supportive supervision to the Parent Leader on a day-to-day basis and serve as an office/program liaison.
  3. DCYF staff and community stakeholders will utilize opportunities to provide mentoring to Parent Leaders.
- C. Parent Leaders and DCYF staff are responsible for identifying areas in which there is a conflict of interest, and seeking support and guidance from supervisors and the Parent Leadership Coordinator if for any reason they feel uncomfortable with each other's presence at an event or activity.
1. DCYF staff must be sensitive to having Parent Leaders collaborate or attend events or meetings together if there is a pre-existing relationship that one of the Parent Leaders has identified as being a conflict.
  2. If a DCYF staff is aware of a situation where another staff member or Parent Leader is experiencing discomfort, the staff member must discuss with the facilitator how to provide support to the individual to help seek resolution.
- D. The Division acknowledges that a Parent Leader may face circumstances that might make it difficult for them to remain active as a Parent Leader and/or participate in activities with the Division, including but not limited to a new referral for CPS or JJS.

1. DCYF will examine each instance on its own merits prior to making any decision.
2. All decisions will involve the Parent Leader and will be made in consultation with the Parent Leadership Coordinator, and DCYF Management when appropriate.
3. DCYF will not automatically suspend a Parent Leader from their role with the Division unless:
  - (a) The concern significantly undermines the integrity of the Parent Partner Program and the Division, or
  - (b) The behavior of the Parent Leader creates an unsafe situation for staff and other Parent Leaders.
4. If a report is received at the local District Office that identifies a Parent Leader as a participant in a referral, the Child Protective Supervisor or Juvenile Probation and Parole Supervisor will talk with the Field Administrator to determine if an office other than the office in which the Parent Leader is actively collaborating, should complete the assessment/case.
5. Parent Leaders are expected to communicate with DCYF staff if they have a concern regarding their ability to function in their role and if they wish to request a leave of absence or reduced function.
6. If any staff has a concern that a Parent Leader is unable to function in their role, the staff will notify his/her supervisor.
  - (a) The supervisor will contact the Parent Leadership Coordinator and/or Field Administrator, as needed.
  - (b) The Parent Leadership Coordinator will meet with the Parent Leader and District Office staff to assess the situation and determine a course of action.
  - (c) Decisions made in these meetings will be communicated to DCYF management, and will be periodically reviewed.
  - (d) Parent Leaders who take a leave of absence or are excluded from the Parent Partner Program may have their cases reviewed, when appropriate.
    - (1) The Parent Leadership Coordinator will complete the reviews with parents and in consultation with field staff.
    - (2) The Parent Leader may be invited to return to the Parent Partner Program if there is evidence that the issues have been resolved.