

## **The Role of the HFA Family Advocate**

The Family Advocate (FA) serves as a liaison between the family and service providers by:

- bringing a family perspective to the table
- helping the family understand and navigate the system
- insuring that the family is fully involved at any and all levels that are comfortable for the family
- working to increase family involvement
- insuring that services are family driven

The FA is a separate but equally important discipline.

Some FA have extensive formal educations but their role is based more on their experience:

- parenting (and living with) a child with a disability
- dealing personally with multiple systems
- advocating for their own children
- advocating for other individual children
- advocating for groups of children
- advocating for systems change at program, local, state and federal levels

The experience of the FA is to be respected and valued by all staff just as the FA respects the formal education and clinical experience of the clinician.

The FA is a full, equal, active, participating member of:

- the child's team
- of the management team

and should be

- respected
- and valued

by all other team members from all disciplines.

Other members of the child's team and of the management team should not only accept, but also seek input from the FA. When team members are resistant regarding the involvement of the FA, it is the role of:

- the FA's supervisor
- management
- leadership

to:

- support the FA
- model acceptance of the FA
- insist that team members fully respect the role of the FA.

The FA should have **full access to all info**

- Clinical
- Anecdotal
- progress notes
- documentation
- etc

on **all clients** in the program

- from pre-admission
- through discharge
- and aftercare.

HFA FAs are **expected to attend and participate** in:

- quarterly FANS (Family Advocates Network of Support) meetings
- monthly HFA Parents Are Partners Roundtable meetings

and to **encourage parents to attend** as well.

The HFA FA needs to **connect families with external community supports** so that the family is supported:

- through transitions
- when they no longer receive HFA services

FAs need to **support families in advocating for their children externally** at

- local,
- state and
- federal levels.

FAs need to:

- assist the family in advocating for themselves externally and to
- advocate for family when the family is unable to do so

The HFA FA needs to **participate, preferably at a leadership level, in external support and advocacy organizations** in order to:

- encourage innovation at a systems level
- to stay abreast of current issues
- to maintain knowledge to be shared with families and HFA
- represent the family perspective
- represent HFA

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