



SHADOWING: Family Partner Job Learning Through Observation

in BRIEF

Briefs are provided as a best practice reference or topic example to support communities in developing the family partner role.

INTRODUCTION:

Shadowing is a widely practiced model for new employees to learn skills required in their job through the process of watching experienced staff perform their job. The shadowing of experienced Family Partners is one of the most important activities in the training and learning process for new Family Partners. Below are some expectations to help both the Family Partner being observed and the new Family Partner who is shadowing.

The Family Partner who will be shadowed will intentionally select the situation to be shadowed (home visit, team meeting, etc.), based on their relationship with the family, what is currently happening with the family and their knowledge of the family's comfort with an additional person shadowing. The Family Partner will explain shadowing to the family, including the expectations for the shadowing Family Partner (i.e., to be silent and remain an observer; that they are observing the Family Partner, not the family). The Family Partner will then ask the family for permission. If the shadowing is to take place at a team meeting, it is a professional courtesy to let the Care Coordinator/Facilitator know that you are expecting to have a new Family Partner in training shadow you at an upcoming team meeting. Let them know what the expectations are for the shadowing Family Partner (i.e. that they will be silent, watching and listening the Family Partner, etc.). If they have concerns, explain that this is a part of the OFSN training process for new Family Partners and is not unlike what they do when they have new Care Coordinators who shadow them.

At times our agency partners may invite new Family Partners to attend a Wraparound meeting with them to observe the process and learn more about the Care Coordinator role. We want to make a distinction with respect to "shadowing" and "observing". A new Family Partner in training "shadows" a seasoned Family Partner. When this happens with a Care Coordinator, we refer to this as "observing", not shadowing. This is an observation of the process and a partner's role in Wraparound, but it is different from shadowing the Family Partner role.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NEW FAMILY PARTNER IN SHADOWING/OBSERVING:

1. Put electronic devices away so you are not distracted with messages and phone calls during the shadowing activity. This is a show of respect for the family. If you are expecting an unavoidable call that will require you to step away, please let the people involved in the meeting know ahead of time so they will anticipate the reason for your departure from the meeting.
2. Do not take notes. You may feel compelled to take notes of what you are seeing or hearing or to jot down your questions. Families may feel like you are writing down things about them. If you really feel like you must write down your questions because you won't remember them, be sure you and the Family Partner ask the family before the meeting, with an explanation as to why you are taking notes. Be specific that these are notes you want to ask the Family Partner about their role and not about the family.
3. Use this time to watch and listen to the Family Partner. We ask that new Family Partners who are observing be silent in the process. Listen to what the Family Partner says, how they respond, how they re-direct. Notice their unique style, notice where you are seeing evidence of the values and principles of Wraparound in their communication with the Family and others in the meeting.



Observe vs. Participate: Observing and Participating use very different functions in the brain. For most individuals, when you are engaged in a process as a participant (talking, sharing, planning, asking questions, etc.) it is also very difficult to observe at the same time. While you are shadowing the Family Partner, it is important that you stay in the observing role.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FAMILY PARTNER WHO IS BEING OBSERVED:

1. Be intentional in your selections of the situations/meetings that you think will be good shadowing experiences for the new Family Partner. We are wanting new Family Partners to be able to see as many different types of situations as possible but there may be some families that, because of the unique circumstances, it may not be appropriate to have some shadow.
2. Ask the family permission and prep the family for what to expect.
3. Let the Care Coordinator know (when appropriate) that you are expecting to have a new Family Partner shadowing you and what the expectations are for the person shadowing
4. The best practice would be to set up time with the new Family Partner prior to the shadowing appointment to prepare them for what to expect, the type of meeting, remind about the expectations while they are in the meeting. It is also very important to plan to spend some time after the meeting to debrief and talk about what they observed, identify important parts for the person so they can see where the values and principle are happening within the interactions. Answer their questions and be sure to point out things they should be recognizing in the process (i.e. Did you notice when I said this? Let me explain to you why I said that, etc.)
5. When you are being shadowed, you should be practicing your highest quality Family Partner work. Remember that you are modeling communication, planning, values & principles, and appropriate boundaries. If you feel that something didn't turn out the way you had hoped for, it's ok to point that out so the new Family Partner can understand the challenges inherent in the many situations the Family Partner has to deal with.
6. During the orientation phases of their job, the new Family Partner may check in with the Regional Director/Peer Supervisor regularly and sometimes daily to also debrief and discuss the experience of shadowing. This gives two points of debriefing.
7. If there are coaching opportunities that come up in the process of shadowing, please feel comfortable to do some coaching with the new Family Partner. Please also call the Regional Director/Peer Coach to let them know how things are going and what you coached them on, your assessment of what they are understanding in the process or where there may be a need for more training, coaching, and support.