

# Improving Access to Mental Health Care Through Creating Certified Family Peer Specialists Across the Lifespan

Joy Hogge, Executive Director, *Families as Allies*

Cindy Seekins, Executive Director, *G.E.A.R. Parent Network*

Zira Franks, Program Development Director Adult Services, *Family Involvement Center*

Lynda Gargan, Executive Director, *National Federation of Families*

August 12, 2020



**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

# Disclaimer Slide

This webinar was developed [in part] under contract number HHSS283201200021I/HHS28342003T from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.



Joy Hogge, Executive Director  
Families as Allies, Mississippi

# Families as Allies Overview

- Founded in 1990, we are the only statewide organization run by and for families of children with mental health challenges in Mississippi. We support each other and work together to make things better for our children.
- Our [vision](#) is that all children will have the opportunity to reach their potential and succeed.
- Our [mission](#) is that families are partners in their children's care.

Supporting

**Families**

**Community**

**Positive  
Change**

# What We Believe About Families

- Parents know their child better than anyone.
- Parents are their child's strongest advocate.
- Systems should follow laws and policies about children's and parent's rights.



# Challenges Families Shared in Focus Groups

- Behaviors that may indicate mental health challenges in young children are not recognized by professionals
- Few, if any, resources for assessment of mental health needs in young children are available.
- Families have very limited access to appropriate treatment interventions for mental health challenges faced by their young children.
- Few schools, communities and teachers are able to understand and manage early childhood mental health challenges with appropriate tools or strategies.
- Young children experience childcare/preschool disruptions and parents/caregivers experience employment stresses due to behavioral challenges beyond the abilities of programs to manage.



# What We Learned is Important When Supporting Families of Young Children

- *Another focus group finding:*  
Parents/caregivers identify one-to-one help from other parents as highly important in overcoming the barriers they face so we prioritize parent peer support.
- Awareness efforts are needed that infant and early childhood mental health challenges are a real thing.
- Advocacy is needed for supports and services that are family-driven.



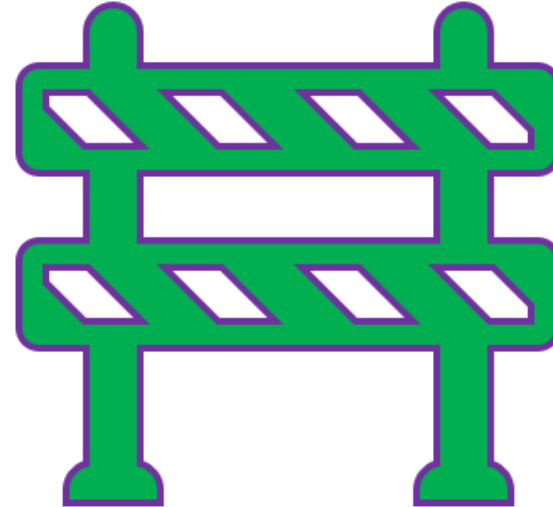
# Awareness Campaign





# Barriers We Have Found

- Parents may not have a basis of comparison.
- Parents may be afraid of losing their child if they speak up about the child's challenges.
- Parents may not be sure where to turn.



# What are Parent/Family Peer Specialists and How Do They Support Families in Maine?

Cindy Seekins, Executive Director  
G.E.A.R. Parent Network, Maine



1-800-264-9224 | [www.gearparentnetwork.org](http://www.gearparentnetwork.org)

10 Caldwell Road, Augusta 04332 | Find us on Facebook!

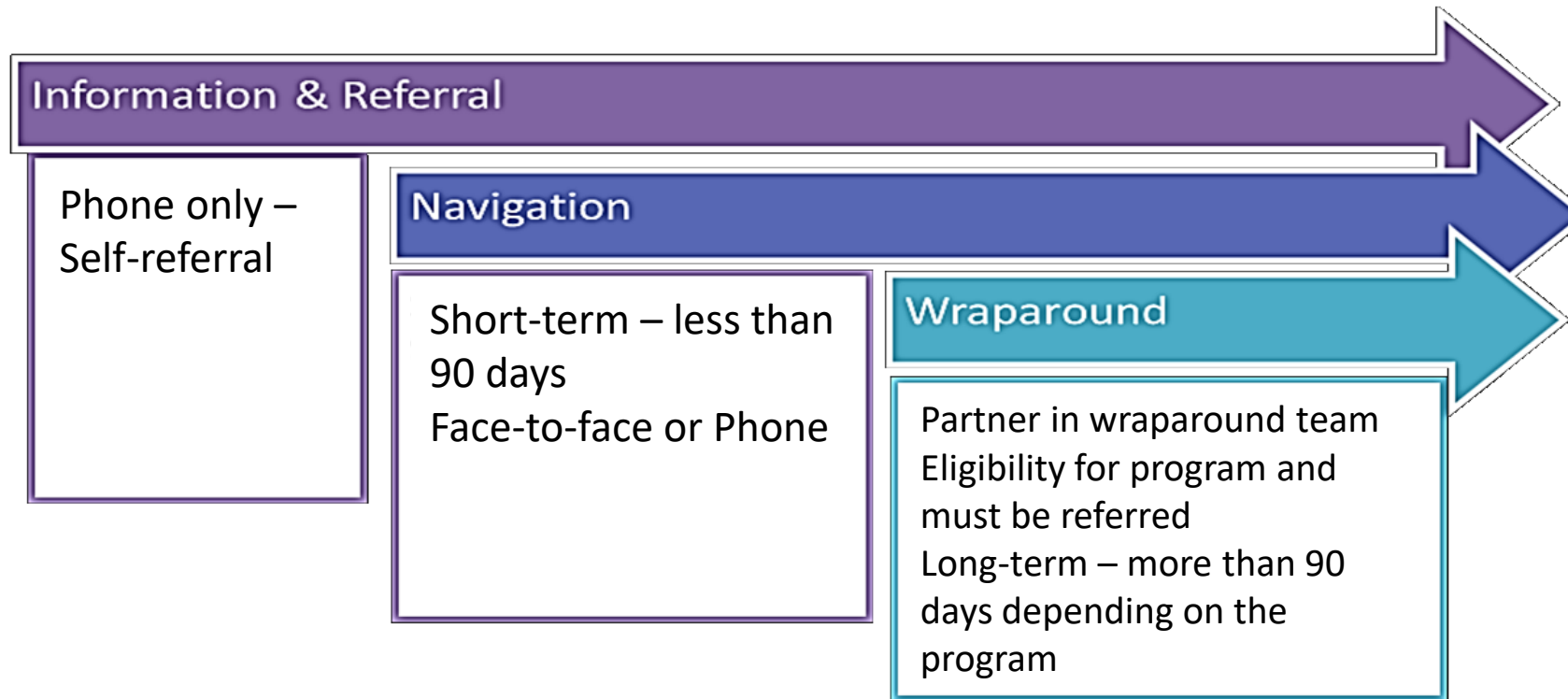
# G.E.A.R. Family Peer Specialists



Are parents who have years of “lived experience” raising a child/youth with a behavioral health concern and are able to articulate that experience.

Have a strong connection to the community and are very knowledgeable about resources, services and supports and in navigating the child serving systems of care.

# Levels of Parent/Family Peer Support



Parent/Family Peer Specialists are also known as “parent support professionals, navigators, mentors, family partners, parent partners, and parent support providers.” They each offer a wide range of assistance and support; depending upon training they receive, the settings in which they work and whether the family needs they serve are short- or long-term.

# Family Peer Specialists: Mentoring Families Who Have School Age Children and Youth

## Family Peer Specialists provide education and/or role modeling around:

- Trauma and Trauma Informed Care
- ACEs Education
- Use of Georgetown Family Journey Assessment to measure parental progress
- Use Search Institutes Developmental Assets (appropriate to developmental age)
- Building Family Resiliency Factors
- Importance of Self Care
- Family Values
- Creating a “Family Vision” Plan



## Helping parents to learn to consistently meet basic needs; and their own health care needs so they can be there to support and nurture their children.

- Help families maintain their housing or go from homelessness to their own places. Make housing applications and calls to landlords together.
- Help families get basic home needs met such as to secure a stove that they did not have for over a year.
- Financial and/or food budgeting to ensure finances meet budgets and healthy meal planning.

## Doing three-way calls to help parents make their own referrals on behalf of their children.

# Family Peer Specialists: Families with Children in Elementary School

These are children who are exhibiting verbal and physical aggression, anxiety, depression, have Learning Disabilities, ADHD, Conduct and Disruptive Behavior Disorders, Autism.

- FPSs support families by helping them to understand that sometimes they need to meet the child where they are.
- Teaching parents “special education” regulations, how to file a grievance.
- Help families understand they need to participate as a member of a team with child's services and/or with the IEP team in school; to ask for needs/vs wants.
- Showing parents how beneficial it is to use school/home schedules and picture charts to help their child to learn skills, gain confidence and be successful.
- Helping parents understand what is age appropriate for their child and what is due to their specific disability.
- Mentoring around parenting skills, family values and child behavior management.
- Help obtain funding or donations for specific unmet needs. For example: to safety proof a home so the child could be safe.



# Family Peer Specialists: Families with Children in Middle School

Primarily Children with Learning Disabilities, Verbal and Physical Aggression, Anxiety, Depression, Disruptive Behavior Disorders and Suicide

- Teaching parents about co-occurring disorders.
- Building a bridge between family, school and providers.
- Help family find community or outside activities for the child.
- Help families with addressing bullying in school - both what parent and the child could do.
- Teaching parents “special education” regulations, how to file a grievance.
- Brainstorm and address safety concerns in the home, community and school.
- Helping to find appropriate childcare; completing employment applications, find work.





# Family Peer Specialists: Families with Youth in High School

Primarily youth who have severe anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation; ADHD, Autism, and are socially isolating or are feeling they are not accepted by peers. Also may have juvenile justice involvement.

- Building a bridge between family, school, child serving system providers.
- Teaching parents “special education” regulations, how to file a grievance.
- Connect to natural supports and outside activities for the youth.
- Help families with dealing with bullying in school.
- Assist with teaching life skills, medication management to their youth
- Transition to adulthood: Planning early. Connect to “adult support system”, provide knowledge/information what potentially could be in their future - education, resources, skill building; self sufficiency, or funding for long term placement.





# National Certification & Criteria

The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health collaborated with family organizations, researchers and treatment providers across the country to collect and organize information about the role of parent support services in Systems of Care and other settings.

August 2010, the National Federation began developing a national certification for "Parent Support Providers" with the support of parents from all states, territories and Canada.

The first National certifications were awarded in June 2012.

**Eligibility criteria:** Lived experience, training, and work/volunteer experience.

## **Submission of:**

- ✓ Describe your lived experience & lessons learned 500 words or less
- ✓ Documentation of 88 hours of training in 5 specific domains
- ✓ 1,000 hours related employment/volunteer experience in the prior 5 years
- ✓ Agreement of adherence to the Code of Ethics
- ✓ Passing the national exam

# Advantages of National Certification

Standardization and Certification of Family Peer Specialists adds a level of protection for families receiving services because it has been elevated to a level of accountability and ensures standardization of core knowledge (competencies) of Parent/Family Peers.

**National Certification establishes competency of responsibility to:**

- Ensure consistency of core knowledge,
- Endorse continuing educational development and credibility
- Advance uniform standards and scope of practice
- Promote ethical practices
- Enhance consumer protections and
- Provide recognition of specialty certification

Some states offer their own certification for individuals providing family or parent support. National certification allows for portability throughout all the states as long as requirements are documented in the funding source.

# Adult Services



**Zira Franks MC, BHT**

Program Development Director Adult Services

Family Involvement Center, Arizona

# Adult Services

## The Mission of Adult Services

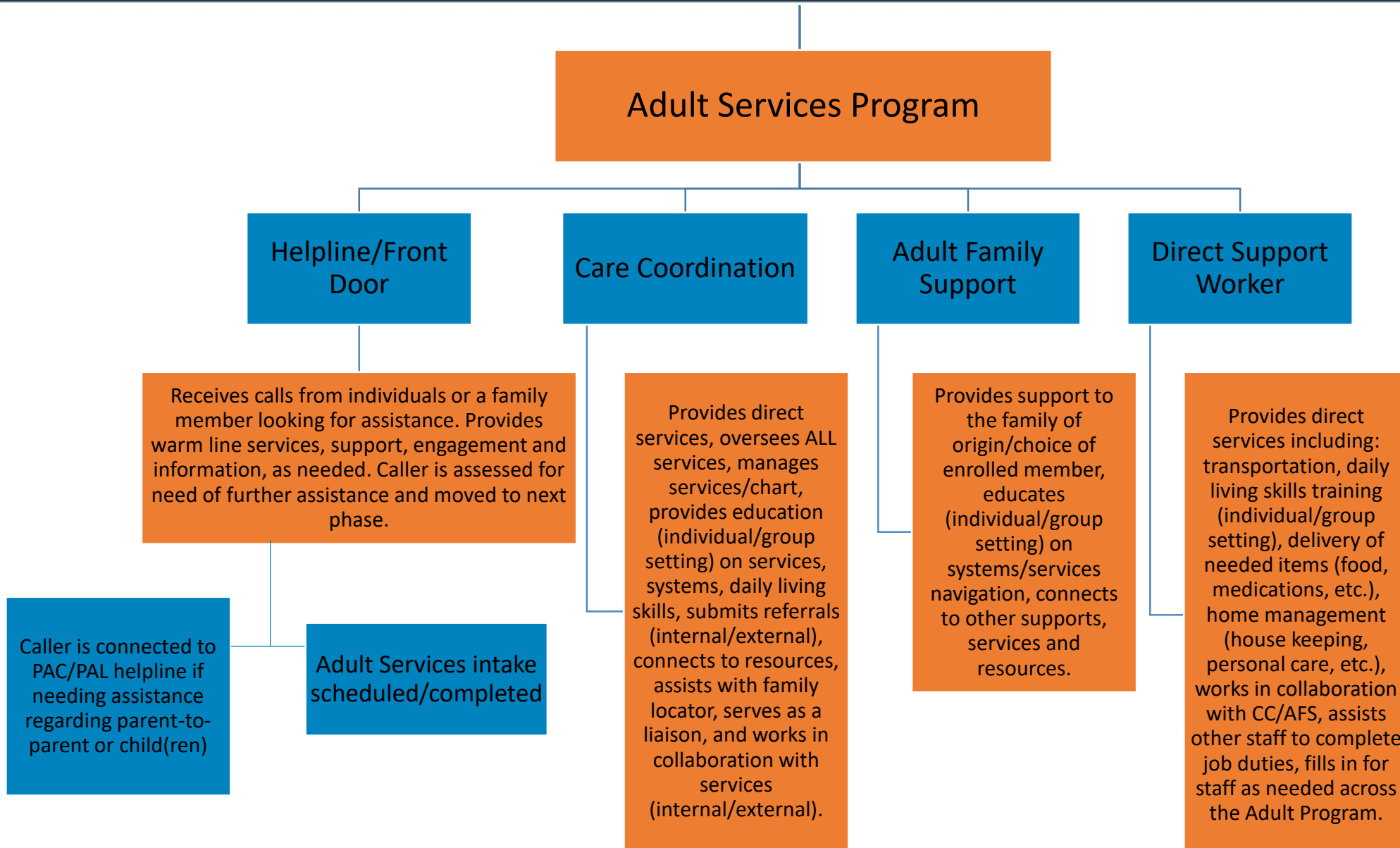
The Family Involvement Center serves adults by providing an array of services such as care coordination and adult family support for the family of origin or family of choice.

## The Goal of Adult Services

To serve adult members and their family with the focus on instilling hope, helping them define, educate, navigate, connect, and empower them on what they need to drive their own success



# Family Involvement Center



# Adult Family Support

**Arizona's definition of Family** - Anyone a person has identified as family (i.e. biological, friends, neighbors, pastors, teachers, or another adult who has a relationship with a person that is not considered a spouse/partner).

**Family Member** - An individual who has lived experience as a primary natural support for an adult with emotional, behavioral health and/or substance use disorders. (*AHCCCS Policy 964 - Credentialed Parent/Family Support Provider (CPFSP) requirements*)

## Adult System vs. Children's System:

**Adult** - A person with lived experience as a primary natural support for an adult

**Children's** - A parent or primary caregiver with lived experience who has raised or is currently raising a child



# Adult Family Support

Skills training (in home and in the community)

Supportive activities

Education - diagnosis, treatment

System Navigation - mental health, DDD, etc.

Long-term care planning

Connection to natural supports

Break isolation



# Training for Credentialed Parent/Family Support Providers

## Family Involvement Center: Family-Run Organization

- PEARLS - (Parent-to-Parent Connection, Empowerment, Active Acceptance, Respect, Linkage, Suspending Bias/Judgement) Credentialing
- NWIC - National Wraparound Implementation Center, Coaching (Supervision) Certification





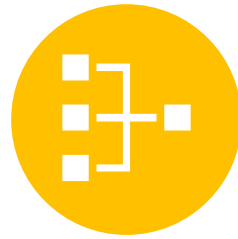
# CPFSP Training Curriculum Standards



COMMUNICATION  
TECHNIQUES



WELLNESS



SYSTEMS  
KNOWLEDGE



BUILDING  
COLLABORATIVE  
PARTNERSHIPS  
AND  
RELATIONSHIPS



EMPOWERMENT

# Supervision and Credentialing

## Supervision of CPFSPs

Supervised by individuals qualified as BHT or BHP

Supervisors trained on knowledge of best practices in providing supervision to CPFSP

Make available to the providers:

- Policies and procedures regarding resources available to agencies for establishing supervision requirements and any expectations for agencies

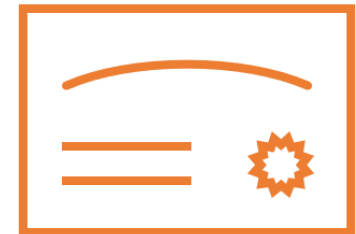
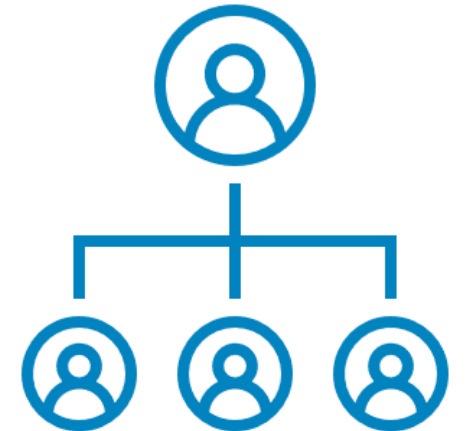
## Exam for Credentialing

Agency can develop a unique competency exam

ALL exams have questions related to the core competencies

Minimum score of 80%

Credentialing does not expire



# Unique Support Needs for Families with Adult Children

- **Family Peers Supporting Families with Adult Children:**
- Assist with transition from the child to the adult system
- Support the family as they navigate the unfamiliar adult system
- Assist the family as they create successful solutions for addressing HIPAA issues



# Presenter Contact Information

**Joy Hogge**, Executive Director

Families as Allies (Mississippi) | <http://faams.org>

(601) 355-0915 tel ext. 12 | [jhogge@faams.org](mailto:jhogge@faams.org)

**Cindy Seekins**, Executive Director

G.E.A.R. Parent Network (Maine) | [www.gearparentnetwork.org](http://www.gearparentnetwork.org)

(207) 213-4513 | [cseekins@crisisandcounseling.org](mailto:cseekins@crisisandcounseling.org)

**Zira Franks**, Program Development Director Adult Services

Family Involvement Center (Arizona) | <https://www.familyinvolvementcenter.org>

(602) 412-4093 | [zira@familyinvolvementcenter.org](mailto:zira@familyinvolvementcenter.org)