



FAMILY COUNCIL MODEL GUIDE SNAPSHOT

*Building Systems That
Work for Families*

VECF's Vision: Every Ready Region creating opportunities for families to offer guidance and input in early childhood decisions that matter most to them.

Through research, family focus groups ([SEEQ sessions](#)), and guidance from regional, state, and national family engagement experts, VECF has assembled best practices into a Family Council Model Guide that can be found [here](#). A snapshot of each major section and the indicators of success can be found below.

CORE COMPONENTS OF DEVELOPING A FAMILY COUNCIL

SECTION 1: PRINCIPLES

A well-defined and impactful Family Council begins with clear principles that articulate your region's family engagement priorities, frame the council's purpose, and communicate the depth of commitment to family voice.

Indicators of Success:

- 3-5 principles for Ready Region family engagement are co-created with parents.
- Principles are highly visible, easy to understand, and readily accessible for all participants.
- All participants regularly reference principles within decision-making.

SECTION 2: FAMILY COUNCIL STRUCTURE

Establishing a strong Family Council will require Ready Regions to consider what structure and practices will work for all families in your region. Factors such as compensation norms, a clearly defined council purpose, responsibilities and other infrastructure decisions are integral to cultivating an environment in which parents will contribute confidently.

Indicators of Success:

- Family Council structure has been identified: purpose, responsibilities, role descriptions, meeting frequency, term limits, etc.
- Job descriptions have been created for organization staff supporting the Family Council.
- Compensation/Stipend Policy has been established and implemented.

SECTION 3: RECRUITMENT

Once principles and the Family Council structure are in place, a recruitment plan that confirms strategies that engage a variety of parents is essential in order to ensure a diversity of backgrounds and experiences are being represented in the Family Council.

Indicators of Success:

- Recruitment goals reflect diverse family experiences.
- Network of culturally and linguistically diverse partners has expanded, and existing relationships have been strengthened.
- Thoughtful support for parent participation has been determined: onboarding plans, compensation, ongoing leadership development, connection to a network of other families, etc.

SECTION 4: PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

An environment that is comfortable, with intentional planning that facilitates participation and engagement of participating families, is needed to assure that families speak up and participate. Consider the physical barriers that can hinder involvement and meet them with proactive solutions, so that your families feel they belong in the council and are prepared for the task at hand.

Indicators of Success:

- Agendas include structured opportunities for parents to build relationships and provide feedback.
- Consistent meeting attendance and participation from parents representing diverse family experiences.
- Strong relationships formed; council members and staff know each other.

SECTION 5: SUSTAINING FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Every parent's time is valuable. Retain council participation through well-planned meetings and processes, and by emphasizing the impact and value of parent contributions.

Indicators of Success:

- Parent perspectives and recommendations produce change.
- When council members complete a term of service, they recommend other parents to serve.
- Parent leadership in the Family Council continuously evolves in response to parent interest, and there is a pipeline of parent leaders ready to serve in formal roles (chair, co-chair, secretary, treasurer, committee leader).

SECTION 6: EVALUATION

Lastly, evaluation clarifies outcomes. As you set your council into motion, incorporate regular evaluation to ensure you're on track to reach the goals set, course correct if needed, and articulate the impact of the council.

Indicators of Success:

- Parents can articulate how their participation is making a difference.
- Feedback from parents is collected regularly, reviewed by staff, and results and subsequent shifts are shared with parents.
- Communication plans include sharing the impact of the council throughout the organization and community.