



Parent Empowerment Program
Columbia University
Families Together in New York State
New York State Office of Mental Health

Who Should Participate In PEP Basic Training?

PEP Basic Training is designed for family peer advocates. These advocates are parents or caregivers of children with significant social, emotional, and behavioral challenges whose role (in a family support program, independent family-run organization, or other setting) is to work directly with families whose children are receiving services to support, empower, educate and advocate with and for them.

What is PEP Basic Training?

The Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) Basic Training is a training and consultation program that was developed over a number of years through the collaborative efforts of researchers, practitioners, parents, parent advocates, and policy makers. PEP is based on a conceptual framework that combines science and advocacy by integrating behavior change theory and principles of parent support to promote parents as agents of change for children’s mental health.

The 40 hour core PEP Basic training is guided by a manualized training protocol, *Improving Children’s Mental Health Through Parent and Community Empowerment*. A book of the same title (Jensen & Hoagwood, 2008) accompanies the training. The parent advocate training manual includes 7 modules (see Table 1 below), each developed to provide Family Advocates (FA) with skills training and content knowledge to effectively engage and empower the parents with whom they work. Training activities include didactic presentations, group discussion and activities, and role plays. Core training is followed by 6 months of consultation conference calls to promote uptake of training content.

Table 1. PEP Basic Training Modules with Descriptions

Module	Description
1. PEP Conceptual Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Principles of Parent Support – Model of Behavior Change
2. Listening and Engagement Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Being present – Active listening skills – Steps to engaging parents in children’s mental health
3. Priority setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prioritizing goals and objectives – Using strategies to overcome barriers to service access and use – Developing actions plans
4. Boundary Setting Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Confidentiality – Sharing personal information – Role clarity
5. Group management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Creating groups – Understanding group development – Group facilitation skills

6. Mental Health System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Understanding the diagnostic process – Information about service options – Preparing parents for what to expect – Collaborating with providers – Specific disorders and evidence-based treatments
7. Working with Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Special education law – Supporting – Partnering with teachers

What makes PEP different?

The training is unique in that it is tailored to the needs of peer family advocates or family partners. Another unique aspect of the training is that it was developed and is delivered jointly by family advocates and clinical partners. This is done to model collaborative partnerships between providers and parent/caregivers, a hallmark of the training.

Clinical Partners are knowledgeable about children’s mental health. They work in practice settings in the community and are champions of family driven care. Family advocates in New York State are typically parents of children with significant social, emotional and behavioral needs who have acquired the training, skills and experience to assist other parents or caregivers of children with mental health illness in navigating various systems to obtain appropriate and effective services. Family advocates work in a variety of settings to provide emotional support, information, advocacy, referrals and, in some cases, care coordination to other families. Family advocates also work to assure that a family perspective informs decision-making at all levels.

What is the PEP Training Initiative?

This is a collaborative initiative of the New York State Office of Mental Health, Families Together in New York State, and Columbia University. The demand for PEP Basic Training is high and growing as communities, providers, and families fully embrace the value of family-driven care and empowerment. PEP Basic Training has been conducted several times and the reviews have been very positive. There is a strong commitment to expanding access to this training and developing regional capacity to support PEP-trained family advocates in their work. As a part of this, a PEP Training of Trainers was held in October 2009. These trainers will be delivering PEP Basic Training across the state beginning in the fall of 2009.

How does PEP fit in to the Family Peer Advocate Credentialing Process?

New York is currently in the process of developing a Credentialing process for Family Peer Advocates. The designation of ‘Family Peer Advocate’ would be given to a family advocate who met (and maintained) certain requirements. The intent of this credentialing process is to formally recognize the expertise of family peer advocates, to ensure all advocates demonstrate core competencies, and to provide opportunities for professional growth and collaboration. The specifics of the credential requirements are still in being considered, but completion of the PEP Basic training will be a core component.

How can I find out more about the PEP Training?

Please contact Anne Kuppinger at akuppinger@ftnys.org.