

Taking Your Seat at the Table

“If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.”

-Shirley Chisholm



When your family becomes involved with service providers, state agencies, and other professionals, it can be overwhelming. You may feel that you are being talked at and not listened to. Here are some tips from families who have been where you are, on finding the resources you need and getting your voice heard.

1

Stay informed. Educate yourself by reading policies for the agencies you work with. Hold systems accountable if they are not following the rules they have in place.

2

Document interactions and follow up with professionals as needed.

3

Do not be scared to use your voice! Your experience and story matters. Talk to anyone who will listen and those that want to hear from you, such as local government officials, about your experience.

4

Locate resources on your own, then share them with others that need them too. Share by posting them on social media, sharing them with your school district, informing providers you’re working with, and telling others about them.

5

If you can’t find a resource that you need, consider creating it. If a resource does not exist in your community, chances are someone else needs it too.

6

If you do not know something, ask. Never assume. Asking good questions is a key to getting what you need.

7

Find other families in similar situations--people that hear what you are saying and know what you are going through even when you are not speaking. Cherish those people, come together with them, and raise awareness in your community about what you are all passionate about.

Once we are all at the table, we can...

Expand the broader community of love and support available to youth and families, ensure families are aware of key non-governmental resources, and partner with non-governmental organizations to help meet the needs of youth and families in our community.