

Promising Practice Brief



Promising Practice Briefs are produced by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities through the UCEDD Resource Center (URC) in conjunction with its network members.

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Pueblo Connections

Pueblo Connections is a collaborative project with Five Sandoval Indian Pueblos, Inc. to provide a comprehensive array of culturally appropriate services and supports for families who have a son or daughter with a disability in one of four pueblos. The project supports the physical space, family support, community education, and referral service to be a comprehensive and positive resource for these children and their families and their pueblo community.

The close-knit community of the pueblo and the vital role families hold in supporting a family member with disability together create a unique environment for outreaching the program, coordinating activities, and building community support. This work is accomplished by the Family Resource Specialist who is both a pueblo resident and a parent of a child with a developmental disability. This individual is trained by the CDD to work directly with families in developing individual family support plans, to be a source for disability information and referral for families, and to provide technical assistance within the pueblo community. Pueblo Connections also provides grants to families to obtain equipment, home modifications, or other items that will support the inclusion of the child with a developmental disability in home and community life or education. The Family Resource Specialist brings a special insight into the cultural values, traditions and mores to best implement the program and build mutual support among the pueblo community.

As a part of Pueblo Connections, each of the four pueblos also has its own dedicated space serving as a Family Support Center where families and other community members can meet with the Family Resource Specialist and obtain information and referrals. A Family Planning Council is also created in each participating pueblo and holds a vital role in the project. The Council consists of 3 to 5 members from the community who have a child with a disability or have a disability themselves. This council plays a significant role in guiding the way program activities will be delivered, such as creating family planning tools that are respectful of Native American communities or in providing guidance for the project's community education activities. Council members bring insight into community needs and their unique perspectives from their own experience with disability. They also foster community support for Pueblo Connections by their participation and endorsement in a community where word of mouth is

one the most effective means of communication.

The program regularly collects input by holding focus groups within each of the pueblos to assess the impact, processes and identification of community needs. The program coordinators draw from what they learn in these forums to modify the program to best fulfill the recommendations of the families and communities they serve. Past suggestions integrated into the program included providing more hours for the family resource specialists, setting up family support groups, and altering interview structures and phraseology to best achieve cultural acceptability. Reports of program performance measures and the findings of evaluations and the focus groups are regularly provided to the program partners by the CDD.

Participants in pueblo focus groups have noted that services are severely limited in the pueblos: there is difficulty recruiting qualified staff, difficulty introducing new programs to the community, and a lack of resources and infrastructure for bringing programs to the community. Pueblo Connections and the Family Resource Specialist offers a promising approach for connecting isolated communities with state and national resources in a culturally appropriate, community-participatory way. This program fosters the finding of the best solutions available to meet the needs of children and families experiencing disability and offers a positive impact on the broader community in which they live.

Why is Pueblo Connections a Promising Practice?

Pueblo Connections was identified as promising in the MTARS evaluation for its innovation in fulfilling the community services core function of a UCEDD, as well as the quality of the program delivery which is marked by continual evaluation, responsiveness to participant input, and respectful methods in serving Pueblo communities. Pueblo Connections was identified as promising during the 2005 MTARS Reviews.

Suggestions for Replicability

The Center for Development and Disabilities offers these suggestions for implementing similar programs in other settings:

- Develop the role of a Family Resource Specialist who can become a peer navigator or cultural broker to the community. This role provides an accessible and trusted support as well as insight to the needs and cultural priorities of the community.
- Include members of the community in the planning and implementation of program evaluation activities. Publicize adaptations or modifications made to the program that were derived from community feedback.
- Partner with the community through the development of local Family Councils. The members of a community council will provide invaluable program recommendations and assistance to the work scope. (Tip: Co-facilitate the meetings with a community member, encourage potluck meal sharing and networking of resources.

For More Information

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