

**2005-2006 Family Faculty Program**  
**A Collaborative Endeavor Between**  
**Parent to Parent of Vermont**  
**&**  
**University of Vermont Dept of Pediatrics**

**FAMILY FACULTY MANUAL**

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## **Introduction:**

Welcome to the ILEHP Family Faculty program. We are delighted to have you working with us and we hope you will enjoy your experience this year. The following information is intended to explain the program in more detail and provide helpful tips about how to keep things running smoothly.

Above all, remember, we are always available to answer questions, offer suggestions or talk about some of your observations and experiences. We encourage you to call or email anytime.

## **Competencies:**

Central to the concept of the Family Faculty program is the belief that children with special health needs and their families have much to teach health care professionals and allied health trainees about living with chronic conditions.

Your family has been selected to work with a pediatric resident and a VT ILEHP trainee because we believe you possess the qualities necessary to be an effective teacher. We know you are eager to share your experiences and your perspective in order to enhance the training of professionals who will soon be working with children with special health needs.

Trainees will be spending time with you in a variety of settings. Through this and other aspects of the program they will be expected to develop specific competencies in family centered care. These include:

- Recognizing that children are members of families within communities
- Recognizing personal biases and beliefs regarding family, parenting, and disability so as not to impose those beliefs on others
- Understanding the relationships between family members and family subsystems
- Recognizing the sequence of challenges, growth and changes that occur in families as they progress through the life-cycle
- Understanding the family is the constant in the life of the child and recognizing families as experts on their particular children.
- Recognizing the family is the locus of decision-making related to the child with special needs and that each family member has strengths and abilities that impact decision-making.
- Understanding the family's right to ask questions and challenge professionals
- Recognizing the tensions that exist in practicing family centered care

- Listening to the concerns and priorities of families
- Providing opportunities for family members to acquire new knowledge, skills and confidence in promoting the health of their children
- Communicating with families in a culturally competent manner, respecting educational, ethnic and economic differences
- Creating parent professional partnerships
- Advocating for families

### **Time Commitment**

Expect to spend about 4 hours/month with your trainee from September through January. During this time he or she will be making regular visits to your home, speaking with you on the phone, and/or accompanying you to school meetings or health-related appointments with physicians or allied health professionals. The goal is 20-25 hours of interaction over the first semester.

During the second semester your trainee will begin to work on a Service Learning project, which both of you have discussed and developed together. This will require about 15-20 hours of the trainee's time. Depending on the nature of the project, the home visits may increase, decrease, or stay the same.

### **The First Meeting**

Trainees will phone or email their families during the first two weeks of September to arrange the first home visit. The ILEHP Family Support Faculty member will accompany the trainee to your home for the first visit.

The purpose of the first visit is simply to get acquainted, and to discuss schedules and times of the day and week that might work best for future visits. You might want to give the trainee some background information about your goals, strengths, interests and priorities as a family. Why are you volunteering for this program? What do you hope to get out of it? It also helps to clarify the best means of communicating- do you prefer phone or email or both? At the end of this visit you will want to schedule another time to meet later in the month.

## **Family and Community Visits**

You and your trainee will discuss what kinds of experiences might provide the trainee with the best learning opportunities. To some extent this will depend on the trainee's personal, educational, and professional background, as well as her goals for the future. Each trainee will have completed a self-assessment in family centered care, so he or she will be prepared for this discussion. Trainees will probably have some ideas, but you can probably come up with things they never considered. Remember, you are there to help them understand the family perspective. There are many ways to do this!

After some discussion, the two of you will decide on some combination of home visits and community experiences that are both educational and not overly intrusive for you and your family.

This might include the more obvious things such as IEP/IFSP meetings, doctor visits, and therapy appointments as well as more informal and casual experiences. Going with you and the kids to the grocery store, or the playground, or planning for and hosting a birthday party together can be equally informative. If you need help thinking of activities, you might consult the parent List Serve (starting in October) to get some ideas of what other families are doing, or call the ILEHP Family Support Faculty for suggestions.

## **Monthly Phone Calls/E-mails**

Trainees are required to keep in touch with you between home visits. (This is their responsibility and not your obligation to track them down.) However, families and trainees are both quite busy. It can be hard to connect sometimes. E-mail works well for some families. Others prefer the phone. If it suits your style, you might want to establish a regular time of the week to touch base if you do not have a face-face visit scheduled. If you are not hearing from your trainee on a regular basis, please let the Family Support Faculty know.

## **Family Faculty List Serve**

This year we are starting a List Serve for family faculty. We hope this will help you get to know one another and provide a convenient way to share tips and strategies for working with trainees. We expect the List Serve to be operational by October. We'll keep you informed about how to sign on to the List, as we get closer to that date.

## **Thursday Evening Seminars**

There is a graduate level seminar in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, required for all trainees, and open to other interested students through Continuing Education. The seminar is listed as CSMI 311, in the Fall, and CSMI 312, in the Spring.

All family faculty parents are invited to attend these lectures from 5-8pm in the Waterman Building on the UVM Campus. (The room number changes each year, but we will keep you posted on the location.) The five competency areas addressed are: neurodevelopmental and related disabilities; interdisciplinary process and collaborative teaming; cultural competence; family centered care; and leadership in Maternal and Child Health.

These weekly seminars often consist of lively discussion, great guest speakers, state-of-the-art research information, and informative readings. Even though 5pm is perhaps not the most “family centered” time to attend a lecture, many parents have enjoyed participating. In the past, students have been quite appreciative of parents who attend because they often contribute such valuable information to the discussion. Your presence makes the topic quite real, rather than purely academic.

## **Service Learning Project**

During the second semester the trainees will begin work on a Service Learning project that provides something of value to you and your family. This can take a variety of forms. The important thing to keep in mind is that this project:

- Promotes learning through active participation in the experience*
- Provides structured time for students to reflect by thinking about and discussing the experience*
- Provides opportunities for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations*
- Extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community*
- Fosters a sense of caring for others*

You and your trainee should begin discussing ideas for this project in October and have a tentative plan in place by November. The project might be a natural extension of what was learned during the first semester, or it might be something related, but completely different. It should be something that can be accomplished in 10-15 hours and can be completed by the end of April.

## **Closure**

Some trainees and families become quite close during this experience. By the end of the year, you have spent a lot of time together. You have shared very personal details about your lives- your hopes, your fears, and your inner-most thoughts. Because of this strong attachments can develop.

It is important to keep in mind that this experience is part of a structured training program and when the academic year ends it will be time to say goodbye to the trainee. It can be helpful to think about your last visit ahead of time so that it doesn't just sneak up on you. This last visit usually occurs at the end of April or early May.

## **Role of Family and Trainee**

Families who participate in our Family Faculty programs are seen as experts in the field. You have been chosen for this role because we believe you have the necessary qualities to be an effective teacher. At the same time, we know many of you lead busy, complicated lives. We try not to place too many additional demands on your time. However, we think of you as ambassadors of Parent to Parent in this role, and because of this we respectfully ask that you demonstrate the following in your interactions with trainees:

Commitment to Learning

Ability to Give and Receive Constructive Feedback

Effective Interpersonal and Communication Skills

Efficient Use of Time and Resources

Problem-solving skills

Accountability

Responsibility

Ability to Maintain Confidentiality

Trainees are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times, although they are placed with your family in the role of a learner, not as a professional.

We hope this experience will challenge some of their assumptions and stimulate their thinking. We want them to learn many things, among them: to recognize some of the tensions that exist in practicing family centered care; to recognize the family's right to ask questions and challenge professionals; to understand the family is the locus of decision-making and that each family member has strengths and abilities that impact that decision-making; and finally, to recognize the sequence of challenges, growth, and changes that families experience across the life cycle. Throughout all this learning, we ask them to remain respectful and non-judgmental in their interactions with you and your family.

Should any issues arise between you and your trainee please don't hesitate to contact the ILEHP Family Support Faculty for assistance. We are here to support you in any way we can, but we can't always do that unless we hear from you!

### **Confidentiality**

From time to time we will invite you to discuss your mentoring experiences as a group. We have also created a List Serve for you to use in exchanging ideas or brainstorming solutions with one another. Please use only first names of trainees in these discussions, and please respect the confidentiality of the group when sharing experiences as family faculty.

### **Checklist for First Home Visit**

- Think about a few key points you want to make, but don't feel you have to cover everything at once. This is just the beginning of a long relationship and there will be time to discuss things in depth as you get to know one another.
- Don't feel you need to do anything special for the trainee's visit. You are not acting as a host/hostess in this role. The trainee is there to learn from you, and in this case your home is the classroom.
- Discuss schedules and ways of keeping in touch. Do you prefer e-mails, phone calls at work/at home, pager, etc? Which times of day are best/worst to call? Are you a morning person or a night owl? Try to be specific and clear because scheduling is often the most complicated part of this experience.
- Are there any house rules or cultural practices that you want the trainee to be aware of? (For example, dietary beliefs, rules about TV, etc)

- Are there any parking or safety issues the trainee needs to know about?
- Do you have any upcoming special occasions, appointments or meetings that you think the trainee would really benefit from attending? If so, perhaps you could flag those dates now so the trainee can attempt to block out time to attend with you.
- Schedule the date, time and place for your next call or visit.

### **Safety Issues**

If you anticipate a situation where your trainee might be alone in your home with your child or children it's important to share any information he or she might need to know so that your child is safe at all times. Does your child tend to wander or bolt? Do you keep certain doors locked at all times? Are there any food allergies? Phobias? What are bedtime and naptime routines? Do you have alternative communication systems in place? Who should the trainee contact if you can't be reached? (We will provide you with a form for filling out this information. The trainee can then keep a copy to refer to at another time.)

University policy prohibits trainees from transporting children in their vehicles. While this may be an inconvenience it is non-negotiable for liability reasons.

### **Family Stipend**

We are fortunate to be able to offer participating families a \$500 stipend for the 2005-2006 academic year. The stipend will be paid in three installments in September (\$200) December (\$150) and April (\$150). For accounting purposes we need to document this payment and so we will ask you to complete a simple form indicating your participation in the VT ILEHP program.

Should your family need to withdraw from the program, the stipend will be discontinued.

### **Difficult Situations**

Occasionally things come up that complicate the experience. The following tips may help you avoid some of these possible pitfalls:

- Evaluate your match early in the relationship. If it doesn't feel like a good fit and you don't think you will be able to work it out, let the Family Support Faculty know. Sometimes we can intervene to improve things and other times we need to find

the trainee a different match. Don't take it personally and please don't wait too long if it just doesn't feel right.

- Practice habits of good communication. Sometimes the failure to communicate can seriously undermine the relationship. You can do your part by returning calls and emails promptly, and giving trainees plenty of advance notice if there is a change of plans. Trainees can sometimes get very stressed around deadlines and other commitments beyond the family practicum experience. Ask them if there are certain times of the year when they might need greater flexibility in scheduling visits with you. Check with your trainee occasionally to see how the experience is working for him or her. Is there something else she'd like to know or experience? How might you provide that for her? On the other hand, protect your boundaries. Don't feel you have to answer any and all questions if you're not comfortable discussing certain topics.
- Use the support available to you. Please keep in touch with the Family Support Faculty. Share your questions, concerns, funny stories, observations and comments. We value your suggestions and we will use them to continue to improve the program. The best email address to use is [Nancy.Abernathey@uvm.edu](mailto:Nancy.Abernathey@uvm.edu) If you need to reach the trainee regarding a last minute schedule change you can contact the VT ILEHP office at 656-0204 or email [Kerstin.Hanson@uvm.edu](mailto:Kerstin.Hanson@uvm.edu) She may be able to locate the trainee on short notice.

*Thank you, and have a wonderful time.*