



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Office of Family Voice



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BUILDING A 21st CENTURY CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

VISION: EVERYONE IN NJ IS SAFE, HEALTHY & CONNECTED



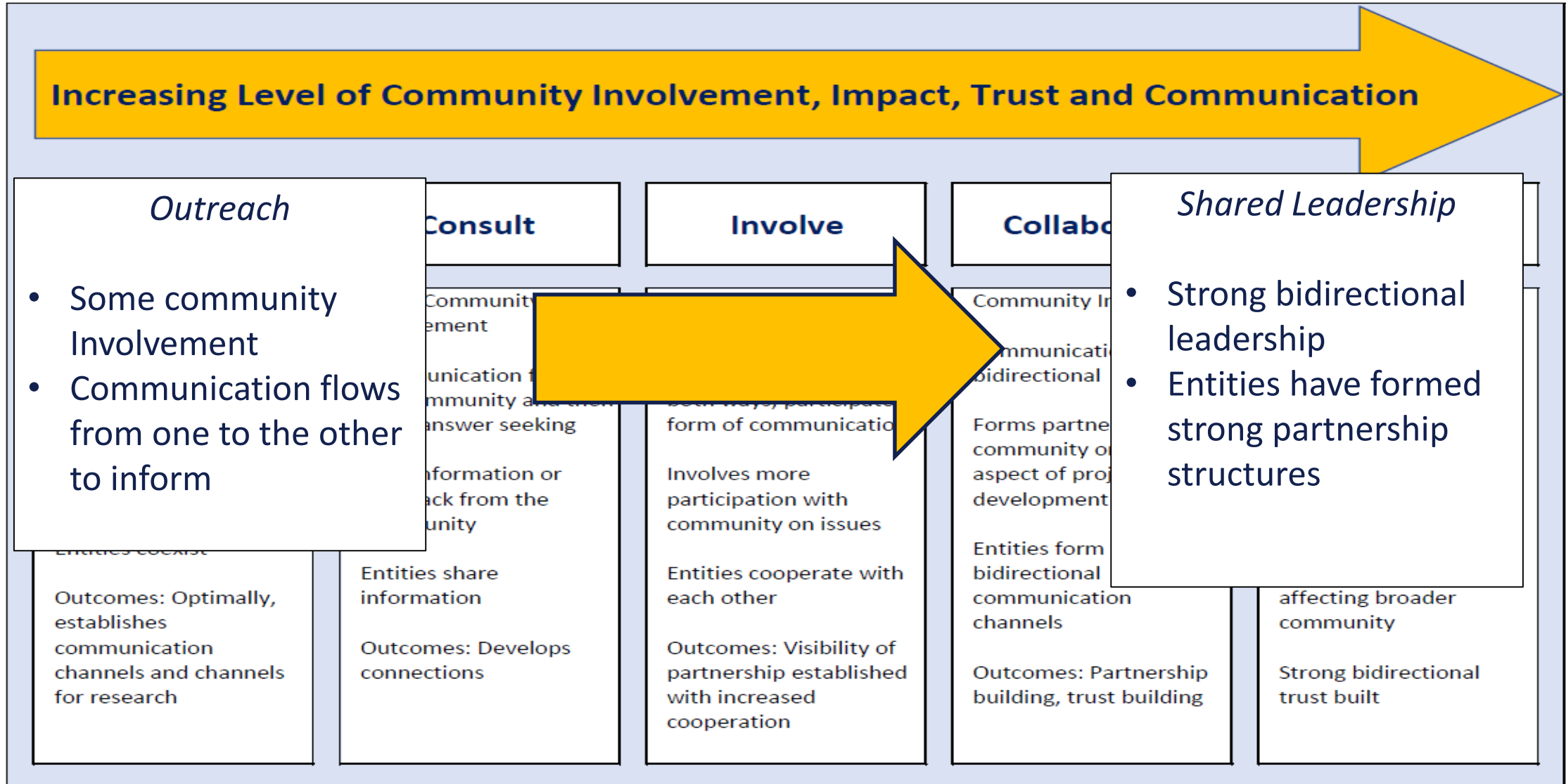
BUILT ON THE VALUES OF: EVIDENCE - FAMILY - COLLABORATION - EQUITY - INTEGRITY

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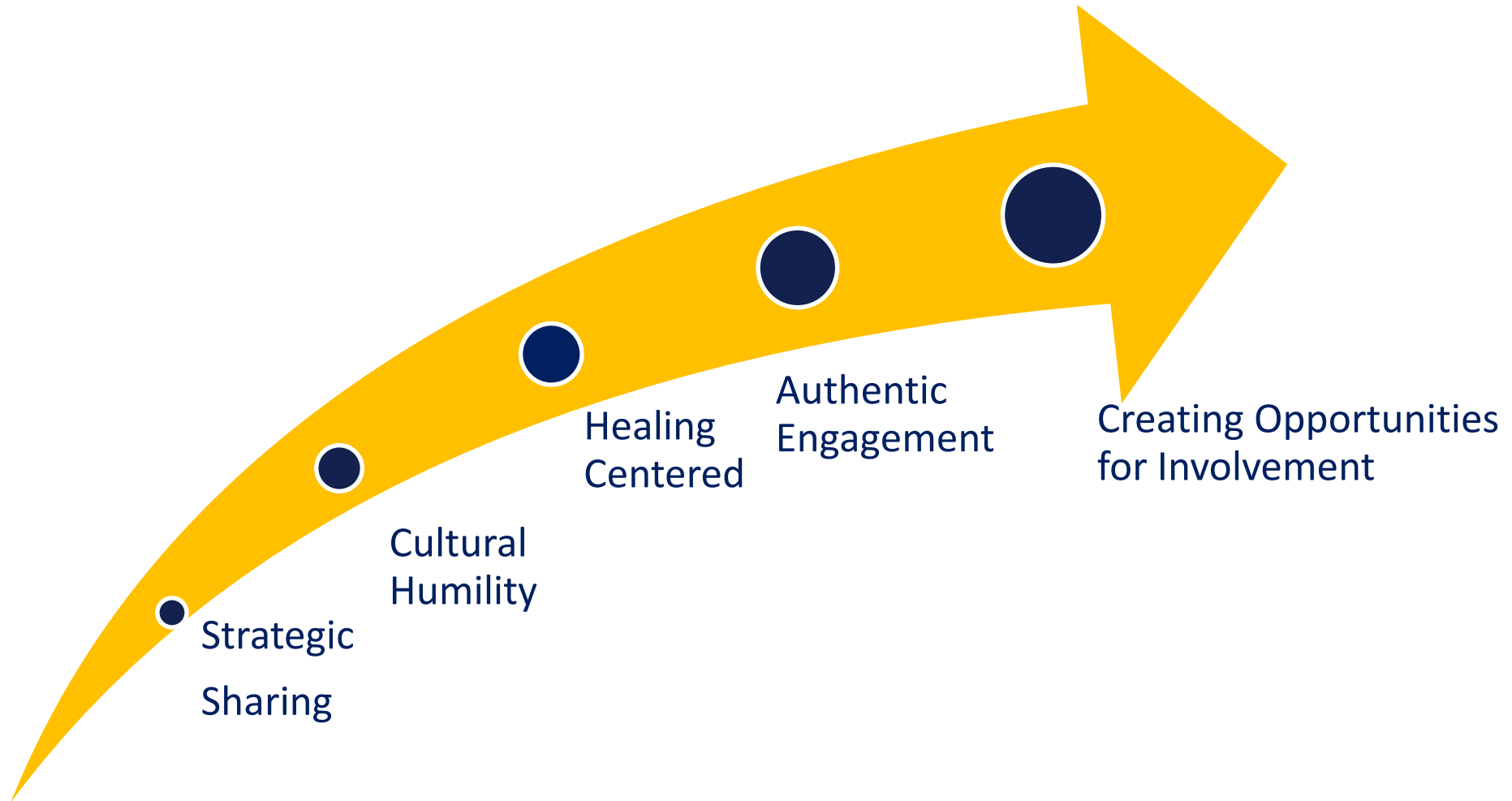


- Allows DCF to collaborate with program participants as consultants
- Provides a resource and outlet for people to engage with the department, organizationally and operationally
- Includes staff with lived experience

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Strategic Sharing

Strategic Sharing:

- Telling your story or parts of it in a way that is meaningful, effective and safe.
- Making sure both the speaker and audience are safe so that the message is effective, and the well being of both parties is protected.
- Minimizing risks to ensure respect for the integrity and authenticity of someone's story.

Cultural Humility

“Cultural Humility is committing to lifelong learning, critical self-reflection, and personal and institutional transformation. Accepting cultural humility means accepting that we can never be fully culturally competent. Cultural humility is the foundation for establishing trust and respectful relationships, and for managing differences and conflict.”

*Embodying Cultural Humility,
Tomás J. Aragon, 2017*

Healing Centered



*The Future of Healing: Shifting from
Trauma Informed Care to Healing
Centered Engagement Shawn A.
Ginwright PH.D*

Views trauma, its causes, and its interventions through **Healing Centered** approaches (not clinical), asset driven, and culturally grounded.

Authentic Engagement

“Authentic Engagement is active, ongoing collaboration of families, youth, and other stakeholders with the child welfare system in a way that recognizes them as equal partners in effecting practice and system change.”

Strategies for Authentic Integration of Family and Youth Voice in Child Welfare

Capacity Building
Center for States

Examples of Authentic Engagement

- **Ineffective or low Impact** – Families and youth are asked to attend a normalcy meeting. Families and youth have no explicit role or voice in the meeting.
- **Limited Engagement** – Families and youth are asked to review and provide feedback on a finished draft or the normalcy policy.
- **Better engagement** – Families and youth participate in the workgroup to develop the normalcy policy.
- **Authentic engagement** – Families and youth participate in the workgroup and provide implementation support.

Opportunities for Involvement



“For states and jurisdictions to truly integrate family and youth voice at the agency level, families and youth must serve on decision-making bodies; inform the development of agency policies, procedures, and practices; and lead trainings for agency staff on family engagement and inclusion.”

New Roles for Families in Child Welfare

Children and Youth Services Review

Williamson & Gray (2011)

DCF Youth Council



Youth council members work in partnership with DCF to achieve Shared Leadership, with the intent to accomplish a common vision and collaborative goals. The Youth Council helps to transform DCF policy and practice and, at the same time, empower youth to act and make decisions on critical issues.

Youth Council Subcommittees

Integration & Collaboration

Council Subcommittees are integrated and aligned into the work of DCF

- Aging Out and Communications Subcommittee collaborates with Communications, Information Technology and the Office of Adolescent Supports (OAS)
- Resource Parent Subcommittee collaborates with the Children System of Care and the Office of Resource Families
- Sibling and Advocacy Subcommittee collaborates with the Office of Strategic Development, CP&P, OAS, and Legal



Fatherhood Engagement Committee

The goal of the Fatherhood Engagement Committee is to improve the Department's approach to involving and engaging fathers.

- The workgroup ensures stakeholder representation for internal and external partners, shares learning and develops recommendations.
- The Fatherhood Engagement Committee elevates the voices of fathers with lived experience.
- System partners are invited to bring their data to assist in understanding barriers to father engagement.
- The Committee is charged with providing updates and recommendations to DCF Executive Management.



Lived Experience Fathers Subcommittee

- The DCF Lived Experience Fathers Subcommittee was formed in August 2019 and is comprised of fathers from across the state. Lived Experience Fathers collaborate directly with the NJ DCF Fatherhood Engagement Committee (FEC).
- DCF Lived Experience Fathers work to transform DCF policy and practice and, at the same time, empower fathers to make decisions on critical issues.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fatherhood meetings are held virtually on the first Thursday of each month.

Next Steps



- Parent Council
- Build a team inclusive of people with lived experience.
- Youth and Family Participation in Qualitative Reviews

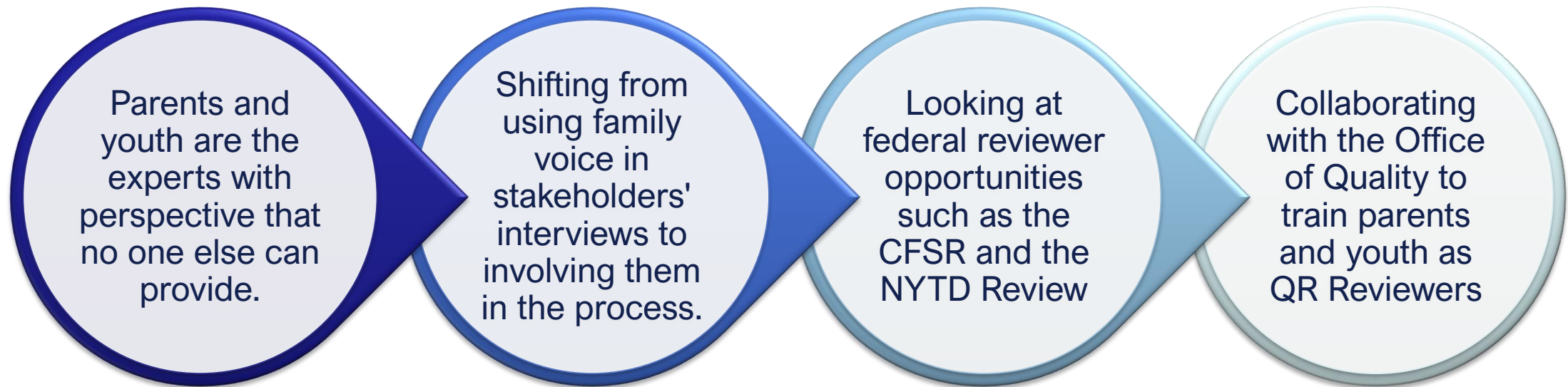
Parent Council

The Parent Council will reinforce DCF's commitment to authentic engagement and shared decision making. The council will empower parents with ongoing and meaningful input and leadership in the policy decision making process.



Qualitative Review

Family Voice is critical to the QR process.
Making changes to strengthen our work with
children and families.





**"THE FUTURE
DEPENDS ON
WHAT WE DO
IN THE PRESENT."**

-Mahatma Gandhi