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Parent partners: The power of peer support

Parent partners bring wisdom, perspective, and compassion. Casey Family Programs believes strongly that every parent impacted by child welfare should be able to connect with a [parent partner](#) — a peer mentor — from the outset of becoming involved with a child protection agency. [Peer mentors](#) are uniquely positioned to support parents. They share knowledge gained from navigating the child welfare system themselves, overcoming obstacles, and regaining authority in their lives. [Parent partner programs](#) aim to mitigate current and future trauma by helping parents maintain hope, keep their family safely together or reunify safely, and prevent any further family separation.

“Every parent involved with the child welfare system should have access to a parent partner if they want one. Government and agencies can’t keep children safe simply by visiting a child for one hour a month. Parents need to constantly be heard, informed, empowered, and supported to safely care for their children, and ultimately that’s what parent partners are all about. Parent partners is not just a program — they are peer mentors who help keep children safe in their families and communities.”

—David Sanders, Executive Vice President, Systems Improvement, Casey Family Programs

Research demonstrating the benefits of peer mentor programs continues to grow. Parents [often identify](#) their parent partner as the most critical person in their experience with child protection. Programs are shown to increase parents' engagement with professionals who can help strengthen their family, including social workers and service providers. As a result, families remain safely together or safely reunify more often, more children stay with kin when they must be removed from home, and families are more likely to remain together after reunification.



Parent partner programs can take [different forms](#), based on local needs and structures. Some are housed in — or closely associated with — the courthouse, where parent partners engage parents from their first day in court to offer instruction, resources, and hope. Other programs are either embedded in community-based organizations or connected to the child protection agency to walk shoulder-to-shoulder with the parent's caseworker, supporting engagement with parents and success for families. These various models all have been shown to produce positive outcomes in healing and strengthening families.

By delivering demonstrated positive outcomes for families, **parent partner programs are an investment** in preserving and healing families and avoiding future trauma, as well as a fiscal return on investment.



Technical assistance and support for [building and sustaining](#) parent partner programs is available through a [Parent Partner Learning Collaborative](#), supported by the [Children's Trust Fund Alliance](#) and Casey Family Programs.