

Transcript

Bill Pollock

This is Show Me Today. This segment is sponsored by EPC Missouri. What if the biggest barrier to helping young people and families isn't a lack of programs but a lack of real partnership? Dr. Elizabeth Wynter says many systems think they're including youth and families, but in reality it's often surface level and that disconnect can impact outcomes in a big way. She's created a guide. It's called the Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide, and she's here to tell us more. Well, Dr. Wynter, thank you for joining us. As the youth-centered consultant behind the Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide, what problems were you trying to solve and why did it matter?

Dr. Elizabeth Wynter

I have been engaged in trying to promote youth engagement for over 25 years. And what I've seen in that time is a lot of organizations try to become more youth-centered and family-driven in their approaches. But I had not seen any process or structure that would ensure that not only did they do the things right, hire the youth and family advocates to support and mentor those in their systems, I've seen them sort of develop youth councils and all of those are great initiatives, but they don't actually drive systems change, meaning how we actually interact with youth and family and how we bring them into decision making about their own lives, but also about how we deliver and design our programs and our policies and our practices. And so the ultimate goal is for them to become real partners in this work. But I had seen, again, I'd seen pockets and good intentions, but I hadn't seen lasting change. And so what I know about how we design programs and how we develop them to be sustainable is to really build on top of an evidence-based structure that would allow the engagement to be embedded across the organization and across systems. And so that's really what we're working towards is to help those that are interested in really driving change in the field, not just but in the field. And hopefully this guide will help them make those long-term sustainable shifts so that they can call themselves youth and family-centered organizations.

Bill Pollock

Who did you design this guide for? Is it just for leadership or can frontline staff, supervisors across the system, can they use it?

Dr. Elizabeth Wynter

So the guide was sort of commissioned, right, developed by the Department of Missouri's Mental Health Early Psychosis Center. And so they were really interested in this work. But as we began designing it, we wanted to make sure that it was a blueprint, not just for those working in the mental health field, but working across systems. And so if you're working in child welfare or juvenile justice or developmental disabilities, This guide is universal. And so I think that's really important. And in that, it's perfect for leaders of organizations that want to drive towards being a youth-centered organization. It's perfect for frontline supervisors who want to evaluate their staff on using youth-centered and family engagement competencies. And so all of that sort of together, and of course, it's great for a young person who has lived experience or a family that has lived experience in our systems to help them know how to drive that change, to help and to co-design change with nonprofit human service partners.

Bill Pollock

You organized this guide using the EPIS framework. For someone hearing that for the first time, how does that framework help organizations actually build engagement? And what does that mean? What does that stand for?

Dr. Elizabeth Wynter

Yeah, so I'd love to talk about the EPIS framework because that's really the foundation that this guide is built on. And I've got to tell you, Bill, in all my years in working in human service systems. I have not seen anything like this. And so personally, I'm so excited because this will be available online for anyone, not just those in Missouri, but anyone across the country. And I really think it can help our organizations take our service delivery up to the next level, right? We're always evolving. And so I'm excited about this. So the EPIS framework is implementation science, right? It's evidence-based. It's the way and the process that we go about to take an idea or a framework and actually build it into our system. And so it begins with the E is for exploration. And that really is how do we assess our readiness? Because everyone is starting at a different place. Everyone is in a different situation. And so we begin to look at what needs to shift, where are we now? And so that's the exploration sort of portion of this process. And then we start with preparation. So we want to build a foundation. We want to create the conditions that will support the change we're working towards. And preparation is key, right? We need to build our plans. We need to figure out sort of how we're going to go from where we are today to where we want to be. And then implementation is putting those plans, right, our plans for how are we going to drive change, how are we going to communicate about the change, and how are we going to evaluate the process. And so that's all part of implementation, sort of testing the ideas and then if they work, right, scaling them broader. And then the last stage for the EPIS

framework is the S and that's sustainment. And so really planning on how do we codify these engagement expectations? How do we make sure that they are in job descriptions and job evaluations and in our team meetings, right? And so all of that is really key. if we want this work to last longer. Now, I will share with you that a lot of people think we can change systems overnight, but the reality is systems change requires time and it requires training. And so that's why this process is really important if we want to drive full wide system sustainable change.

Bill Pollock

One of the biggest barriers that people will feel is, hey, this sounds great, but where do I start and not get overwhelmed?

Dr. Elizabeth Wynter

Yeah, well thank goodness I spent all the years I have working in systems. And I understand that question tremendously because we're always sort of chasing competing priorities and too much work and not enough time. And so it has been designed to be flexible and to really meet organizations where they're at. And so if you want to take on the whole process, There's a wonderful process map and logic model and you can go from today planning out the next sort of three years to make this change. Or if you feel like you're ready and you want to build a youth council or you want to do a readiness evaluation to see where your organization is at in regards to engagement, you can begin there. And so there is the full process and then within the process there are steps and those checklist and forms and templates. And so for instance, if you wanted to start a youth council, there is a form on how to go through that process. There is a template charter for your youth council. There's ideas on how to run focus groups. And so all of that is chock full. Oh, and then the last thing is the field guides. And we'll talk a little bit more about those. But the field guides also are ways that include phrases, right? Phrases to use to shift and engage young people and families at a different level. And so those are the three ways. So the first is the full process. The second is pulling out important charters and templates for certain steps. And then the last is the group of field guides, which are really, what does this look like in practice? When I say youth engagement, what are the phrases? What are the terms? What's important? And what are the pitfalls, things we ought to watch out for so as we go about youth and family engagement, we don't end up re-traumatizing them. And so all of this, again, is just packed full of resources, but you can engage wherever you are at. So don't get overwhelmed by all of the content know that you can step in and find what meets your needs.

Bill Pollock

That's Dr. Elizabeth Wynter on this segment sponsored by EPC Missouri. She has created a guide, the Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide, and we're talking about that now. We'll give you a website where you can download this and learn more, and she's kind of walking us through the steps. The guide includes a full process for shifting practice. Can you walk us through what that process looks like from start to finish in real life?

Dr. Elizabeth Wynter

Yes. So as someone who's done program design, the first thing we do is we develop what's called a logic model. And that really lays out and makes visible the process that we're taking. And what are the interventions we're using? And then what are the outcomes we expect from those interventions? And so that logic model is a great piece, again, for someone who wants to really transform their organization. And it also includes a process map. And so as we think about how long does this take, right, I've put in some draft in there. about sort of what I think is a logical stepped model to go from, again, where you are today to where you want to be with engagement. I think the other thing that's important is following that EPIS model, right? Following that exploration through readiness assessments, following it through preparation, and during that preparation stage, making sure that we have begun at earliest as we can to build teams, implementation teams that include youth and families as well as our staff and leadership, right? We've got to bring the community to solve this issue and we've got to bring those with lived experience and make sure that they're not just at the table, but they are partners in this process. And so that's sort of the process of going through implementation. And then lastly, right, making sure that we are sustaining this. Do we need funding? Do we need new policies? Do we need new trainings? And so all of that really matters. But I think what's important, even if you want to follow the full process, is knowing that it's a stepped model. So you don't have to do everything today, right? That you will do it in the right time, in the right order that is going to be most successful for you all.

Bill Pollock

I'll give you a website here so you can see Dr. Elizabeth Wynter's guide. It's the Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide and you can find it on the website lifelaunchmo.org/professionals. I'll give that to you again. lifelaunchmo.org/professionals. This is Show Me Today, the voice of Missouri.