

I'VE BEEN IN YOUR SHOES,  
NOW LET'S WALK TOGETHER-  
UTILIZING PARENT MENTORS TO INCREASE  
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND RESILIENCY IN  
FAMILY DRUG COURTS

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## Objectives

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1. Increase participant knowledge surrounding roles, responsibilities and tasks of a Parent Mentor
2. Increase participant identification and implementation of evidenced-based and promising practices used by Parent Mentors to increase child and family engagement
3. Introduce domains of The Child Service Plan that can be completed at any point within the child welfare/reunification process to promote resiliency and assist parents in identifying and meeting child and family needs

# THE FAMILY RECOVERY PROGRAM (FRP)

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- Founded in 2005
- Became an independent non-profit organization in 2012
- Recognized as a National Peer-Learning Court in 2012
- Provides intensive case management and housing support
- Serves approximately 120 parents annually
- Serves 150 children annually
- Offices in Baltimore, Maryland and Washington, D.C.



# THE FAMILY RECOVERY PROGRAM, INC.

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## Our Mission:

“At FRP, we S.E.E. our clients.”

*Strengthen. Engage. Equip.*



At FRP, we **strengthen** our clients by providing them with safe and intensive services.

We **engage** our clients in a holistic array of services matched to meet the needs of their family.

We **equip** our clients with lifelong strategies assisting them in becoming self-reliant as they embark in a drug and alcohol free lifestyle.



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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- Mental Sobriety & Emotional Sobriety
  - State of emotional health that exceeds the achievement of not drinking
  - Deemed “real maturity...in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows and with God”—Bill Wilson, Co-Founder, Alcoholics Anonymous
- Wellbriety
  - Depicts recovery as the ‘pursuit and achievement of physical, emotional, intellectual, relational, and spiritual health
  - “Whole Health”

White & Kurtz, 2006



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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- Recovery Capital
  - Quantity & quality of internal and external resources that a person brings that supports recovery initiation and maintenance







# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Type of Support	Description	Parent Mentor Service Examples
Emotional	Empathic approach, “Person-first” language, concern to increase self-worth/esteem	Peer-led support groups, One-on-one sessions
Informational	Sharing knowledge & information to increase skills (life and/or vocational)	Parenting classes Understanding the ASFA guidelines Reunification groups
Instrumental	Concrete assistance to assist in meeting goals & accomplishing tasks	Child care Transportation Referrals to health & social services
Affiliational	Facilitate contacts with other agencies to encourage social/recreational skills & create community	Recovery Centers Alumni Meetings Alcohol & Drug-Free socialization opportunities

(SAMHSA, 2015)



## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

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- What roles do Parent Mentors play in a complicated service system?
  - Provide information, support and guidance
  - Advocacy and teaching advocacy skills
  - One-on-one support at critical moments as parents interface with the court system
  - Represent a parent's point of view
  - A part of an integrated approach to treatment



## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

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- Roles of Parent Mentors
  - Function as auspices of a court system (parents are offered mentoring services)
  - Can work within the Department of Social Services
  - Independent programs

# THE FAMILY RECOVERY PROGRAM: OUR NEED FOR PARENT MENTORS

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- Parental shame, fear, and stigmas associated with parental substance abuse
- Increase in number of participants who are classified as both High-Risk & High-Need
- Feedback received from parents during FRP Policy Meetings



# FRP'S PARENTS IN RECOVERY TOGETHER (PIRT) PROGRAM

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- Designed to provide support to parents in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction whose children have been removed or are at risk of being removed by the Department of Social Services
- Utilizes a trauma-informed approach to address issues related to client conceptualization, ethics, intrauterine drug exposure, parenting concerns, Motivational Interviewing
- Provides a unique level of peer support based on their own personal experiences & professional training

# FRP'S PARENTS IN RECOVERY TOGETHER (PIRT) PROGRAM

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- Parent Mentors trained in:
  - Promotion of Recovery
  - Removal of Barriers
  - Connecting Recoverees with Recovery Support Services
  - Encouraging Hope, Optimism, and Healthy Living





## FRP'S PIRT PARENT MENTOR CRITERIA

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- A PIRT Parent Mentor must be committed to a sober lifestyle and to raising healthy and happy families.
- A PIRT Parent Mentor must have extensive knowledge of navigating the child welfare system either through personal or professional experiences.
- A PIRT Parent Mentor must have no pending criminal cases or charges.



# FRP'S PIRT PARENT MENTOR CRITERIA & TASKS

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- A PIRT Parent Mentor must maintain professional relationships with their clients and other dependency court parents. Parent Mentors are allowed to meet clients and/or parents at support meetings but should not sponsor anyone involved in the dependency court system
- A PIRT Parent Mentor **must** log and document all communication with clients and client providers. PIRT Parent Mentors must also submit monthly reports for each client, summarizing client and PIRT Parent Mentor activities
- PIRT Parent Mentors are allowed to provide PIRT participants with their FRP cell phone number only



# FRP'S PIRT PROGRAM

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- Provides Peer Support in the Areas of:
  1. Sober Living & Remaining Engaged
  2. Relapse Prevention
  3. Understanding Addiction
  4. Parenting & Family Cohesion
  5. Family Reunification
  6. Avoiding Criminal Activities
  7. Education
  8. Employment



# FRP'S PARENT MENTORS & PEER SUPPORT

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- Provides Peer-Led Support in the Following Groups:

1. Parenting (Circle of Security)
2. Support Groups (WRAP group)
3. Family Reunification (Before, During, & After)
4. Sober Living Activities (Identification & Utilization)
5. Parole & Probation
6. Alumni Support



# FRP'S PIRT PROGRAM EMPHASIS

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1. Keeping Children & Families Safe
2. Parents are the Most Knowledgeable
3. Being Connected
4. Active Involvement
5. Identifying Support
6. Remaining Engaged



# FRP'S PIRT PROGRAM GOALS

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- Increased reunification rates
- Shorten length of time for reunification
- Improved parenting
- Increased knowledge of child development markers



# FRP'S PIRT PROGRAM GOALS

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- Social Support
- Child abuse prevention
- Parent self-help empowerment
- Strengthened parent-child attachment



# THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PARENT MENTORS AND CHILD SERVICES

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- Child Services: Those things which aim to improve a child's functioning and well-being as an individual and as a family member
- Model “healthy parenting while sober” behaviors with parents and their children
- Help parents learn how to effectively communicate with their children and practice healthy emotion regulation to promote family recovery
- Parents are viewed as experts of their families, despite any adversity they have experienced

# THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PARENT MENTORS AND CHILD SERVICES

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- Recognize parents' internal resources and their ability to act on own behalf to receive services
- Maintain accountability for their role in having their child(ren) removed from their care
- Support parents in building relationships with others—expanding support system

# FRP'S PIRT PROGRAM'S FOCUS ON CHILDREN

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- Assist parents in preparing for 'Parenting Time'
- Assist in the completion of Child(ren) Service Plans
  - Educational Goals
  - Emotional Well-Being
  - Physical Health Goals
  - Family Wellness
  - Family Traditions
- Accompany families to necessary educational, medical, dental, and mental health appointments





# PREPARING FOR PARENTING TIME

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- Assist in planning parent-child activities
- Coach parents on best ways to utilize time spent with their child(ren) to create opportunities of child & family engagement
- Transfer of information provided in parent support classes into real-life experiences

# ACCOMPANYING PARENTS TO NECESSARY CHILD APPOINTMENTS

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- Medical
- Emotional
- Educational (IEP, daycare)



# DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE PLANS



- Help parents turn family expectations into S.M.A.R.T. goals
  - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Based
- Takes a holistic approach to child well-being and their recovery process
- Inclusion of Parenting Goals
  - “In 3, 6, 9, 12 months, I would like to be the type of parent who...”

# THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIP: THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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- Upholding ethical principles
- Obtaining client buy-in
- Establishing & maintaining safety
- Combination of meeting concrete needs and utilization of the formal service system



# EXPECTATIONS OF PARENT MENTORS

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- Positively impact parents by:
  - Enhancing child and family engagement levels
  - Decrease positive urinalysis and breathalyzers
  - Decrease incidences of non-compliance
  - Supporting parents throughout their personal recovery process while emphasizing family recovery



# ARE YOU READY FOR A PARENT MENTOR?

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- Organizational Factors Needed:
  - Identify and Obtain Possible Funding Sources
  - Determine Preferred Criteria for Parent Mentors
  - Establish Clear definitions of Roles & Responsibilities with Organization
  - Create/Purchase Parent Mentor Intensive and Comprehensive Training curriculum
  - Identification of Partner Organizations to Collaboratively Create Client Success

# NECESSARY TRAININGS FOR PIRT SUCCESS

- Navigating the Child Welfare System
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Motivational Interviewing
- Clinical Writing and Documentation
- Intrauterine Drug Exposure
- Parent Engagement
- Co-Occurring Disorders
- Ethics



# Benefits

## BENEFITS OF PARENT MENTORS

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- Family unit is the focus of attention, rather than the child or parent alone
  - Main objective is to strengthen the family to function independently (promoting resiliency)
  - Families are engaged in all aspects of the service delivery system
  - Families are linked to long-term to community support



# BENEFITS & CHALLENGES



Benefits	Challenges
Modeling of healthy behaviors	Parent Mentor relapse
“Sounding board for parenting concerns”	Assignment to parents who are the least knowledgeable to the judicial process
Provides assistance to organizational staff	Parents may be unsure of who is the lead on the team
Parents have multiple sources of support	Parents have too much support
Allowance of autonomy & authenticity	Potential for dual relationships
Parent Mentors are willing to learn	Parent Mentors may require numerous trainings
Services provided at a reduced cost	Justification of pay

# WHAT MAKES PARENT MENTORS DIFFERENT?

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- Similar experiences
- Willingness to understand an individual's experience
- Family-centered/strengths-based program
- Feelings of empowerment (Tenant Council, Alumni Meetings, Individual Service Plans)



# WHAT MAKES PARENT MENTORS DIFFERENT?

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- Perception of the helper as having similar stories
- Parents viewed as active collaborators in care
- Empowerment
- Can make home visits and see families in their natural environment





## WORKING IN FRP'S PIRT PROGRAM

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- How do FRP's PIRT Parent Mentors support other staff?
- How do FRP's PIRT Parent Mentors work with partner agencies?
- What type of supervision is provided to support PIRT staff?



## WORKING AS A PARENT MENTOR

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- Why was I interested in becoming a Parent Mentor?
- What are the benefits and challenge of being a Parent Mentor?
- What are suggestions for agencies working with parents involved in the child welfare system?

# THE RESULTS OF FRP'S PIRT PROGRAM

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- Increased levels of program compliance (both FRP and partner agencies)
- Decreased substance use
- Decreased involvement in the criminal justice system
- Self-reported decreased levels of shame associated with parental substance abuse





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