



# **Families as Leaders A Collaborative Model for Student & Community Success**

**Rosabel Agbayani, MPH**

Family Navigator Program Coordinator  
California Hands & Voices  
Consultant Hands & Voices HQ

**Cora Shahid Executive Director-**  
California Hands & Voices

# Our Time Together

- 20 min – Framework & Systems Vision
- 20 min – Lived Leadership in Action
- 20 min – Discussion & Q&A



# Opening Reflection

When you hear the phrase  
“Families as Leaders”

What comes to mind?



# Steps to Empowering Emerging Parent Leaders

**Start with their “why”**

**Build from their strengths**

**Connect them to mentors**

**Create a safe space for growth**

**Keep the momentum going**

# This Matters

- Families are longterm navigators
- Identity shapes access
- Trust impacts outcomes
- Belonging drives success



# Pillar 1: Lived Experience as Expertise

- Stories inform systems
- Representation builds trust
- Lived experience is data

## Pillar 2: Relational Infrastructure

- Parent to-parent connection
- Mentorship pathways
- Community gathering spaces
- Belonging as foundation



## Pillar 3: Capacity Building

- Knowledge of rights & systems
- Advocacy language
- Confidence development
- Leadership opportunities

## Pillar 4: Shared Accountability

- Compensation for parent leaders
- Shared decision making
- Built-in feedback loops
- Equity-centered evaluation



# Framework to Lived Leadership

From Framework to Lived Leadership

Leadership is relational.

Framework matters.

But leadership is lived.





# Reflection

Where are families involved—  
but not yet leading?

# Lived experience Rosabel

- My Journey
- Raising a DHH Family
- Circle of Change
- Network for Belonging

Lived experience Cora

My Journey

What Family Leadership Looks Like

Barriers to Leadership

What Needs to Change





# Scenario Discussion

A new family enters your system tomorrow.

How do they move from  
Recipient → Leader

Year 1

Year 2

Year 3

# Building Sustainable Leadership

- Budget for engagement
- Formal leadership pathways
- Mentorship pipeline
- Data that includes family voice
- Equity lens in every layer

# Discussion & Q&A

What's Working Well  
in Your System



# Discussion & Q&A

What would it take to truly shift  
power *in your system?*





## Closing Reflection

“When families rise as leaders,  
children don’t just access  
services—  
they access belonging.”

Thank you.