

# Best Practices for Parent Engagement in Youth Programs

Samantha Mullin  
Samantha.Mullin@lvhn.org

Margaret A. Hadinger Ed.D.  
Lehigh Valley Health Network, margaret\_a.hadinger@lvhn.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlyworks.lvhn.org/research-scholars-posters>

---

## Published In/Presented At

Mullin, S. HadingerM. (2019, August). *Best Practices for Parent Engagement in Youth Programs*. Poster Presented at: LVHN Research Scholar Program Poster Session, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, PA.

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by LVHN Scholarly Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in LVHN Scholarly Works by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact [LibraryServices@lvhn.org](mailto:LibraryServices@lvhn.org).



# Best Practices for Parent Engagement in Youth Programs

Samantha Mullin\*

Mentor: Margaret Hadinger, Ed.D.

Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania

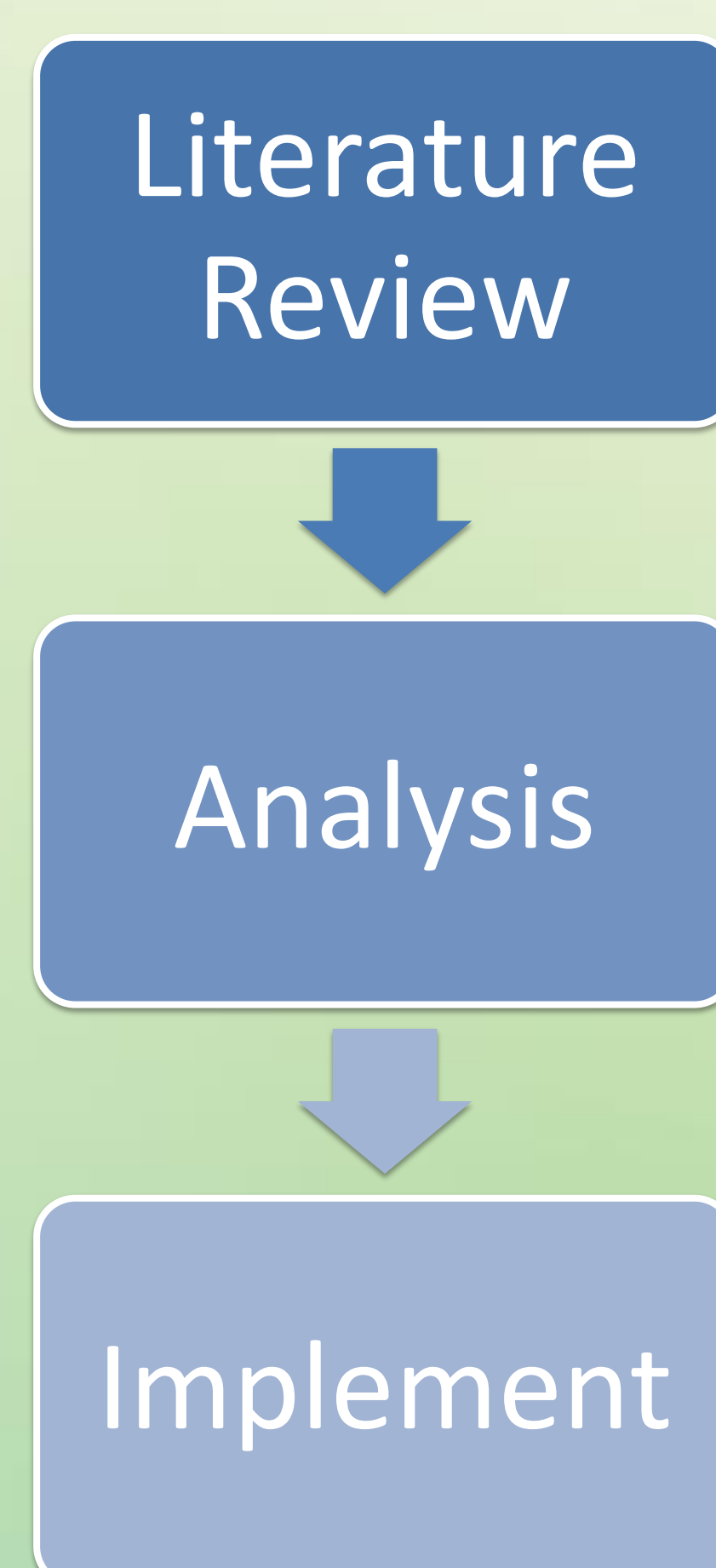
## INTRODUCTION

- Youth programs that provide a hands-on, work-based, and interactive form of education can positively influence a student's future career aspirations
- Parents have a greater impact on their child's education--they are in *constant* contact with their student while youth program leaders *currently* affect the student's perception of education (1)
- Parent engagement is defined as parents and staff working together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of children and adolescents (4)

### Challenges:

- Urbanization affects children when they are faced with the repercussions of high-poverty areas, such as substance abuse, community violence, racism, etc. (3)
- Mental health of urban African American and Latino youth can be compromised, especially when there is a lack of supportive resources for the affected population (3)
- Minority or low-income parents are underrepresented in parent involvement in schools and youth programs (1)
- Parents may be embarrassed about their own educational level or linguistic abilities and may have a lack of understanding about the structure of the school or program(1)
- More importantly, parents of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minority students can and do make the most positive contribution to their child's educational advancements (1)

## METHODS



## RESULTS – Best Practices

### 1. Educate parents on their role in education

- Emphasize that parent involvement is needed and valued
- Communicate that parent involvement and support makes a significant difference in their child's education
- Parents do not need to be highly educated or have lots of free time to be engaged and have a positive impact on their child's education
- Parents interact with their student on a daily basis so their attitude toward education is the most important

### 2. Inform parents of their students' program expectations

- Parent workshop/shadowing day
- Weekly parent newsletter
- Welcoming orientation
- Personal videos sent from mentors and students

### 3. Offer all materials in the primary language of the families

- Partner with Interpreter Services to accommodate ESL families
- Acknowledge cultural values
- Handouts

### 4. Meet them in the middle

- Find a place outside of the program location, such as home, community park, religious institution or grocery store
- Recognize technology access of the population
- Expand event invitation to all family members i.e., other guardians, grandparents, siblings, etc.
- Accommodate different schedules, preferences, and capabilities
  - Offer child care services (e.g. Lehigh Valley Children's Center)
- Comfort and confidence will increase parent participation

### 5. Offer networking events

- Family Night – one night a week during the program
  - Allow parents the opportunity to learn more about the program and the department in which their student is working
  - Support parents in building a social network of other parents and employees

## DISCUSSION

### Benefits of Parent Engagement:

- Allows parents to extend their own knowledge to help child (1)
- Contributes to growth of parents' ability to serve as resources for their child with regard to academic, social, and psychological aspects of their youth development (1)
- Increases parents' own skills and confidence which could lead to furthering their education or upgrading their jobs (1)
- Helps students expand career aspirations/postsecondary plans (1)
- Creates a direct line and flow of communication between the parents and the youth program coordinators (2)
- Allows the parents to understand and become educated on their role in their child's education and the program in which their child is participating (1)
- Creates a welcoming and comfortable environment for the parent, especially when they feel that they are needed in their child's growth and development (2)

### Future Directions:

- Implement 5 "Best Practices" into the Summer Work Experience (SWE) program – LVHN partners with Building 21 Allentown High School to bring rising seniors into various departments throughout the network to gain exposure to work-based, interactive skill development

## REFERENCES

1. Cotton, K., & Wikelund, K. R. (1989). Parent involvement in education. *School improvement research series*. 6(3): 17-23.
2. Barton, A. C., Drake, C., Perez, J. G., St. Louis, K., & George, M. (2004). Ecologies of parental engagement in urban education. *Educational Researcher*. 33(4): 3-12.
3. Alicea, S., Pardo, G., Conover, K., Gopalan, G., & McKay, M. (2012). Step-Up: Promoting youth mental health and development in inner-city high schools. *Clin Soc Work J*. 40(2): 175-186.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018, August 7). *Parent Engagement in Schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Department of Education for their help and support, and The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust for support of the LVHN Youth Programs.