

# **Evidence-Based Caregiver-Provider Partnerships: Working Collaboratively with Families of Children Who Have Special Needs**

## **Program Description**

Over the last several decades, many changes have occurred in the ways caregivers and providers have learned to work together to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. The most notable changes has been the shift from services based solely on professional expertise to services that incorporate the knowledge of caregivers as part of coordinated planning on behalf of the child with special needs. Research confirms the positive benefits of caregiver-provider collaboration in the areas of education, early intervention and medical treatment. Positive caregiver-provider partnerships benefit everyone involved: Caregivers become more involved in their children's service delivery; providers gain more insight into the strengths and challenges of the child and family and children with disabilities feel more supported. This workshop will focus on building a collaborative partnership between caregivers and providers to improve outcomes for children and their families. It will address the prerequisite values and attitudes needed to build such a relationship and the importance of establishing and maintaining positive communication between caregivers and providers. Difficult topics will also be discussed such as communicating difficult news to caregivers, helping caregivers accept their child's diagnosis/disability and helping providers understand the grief process of the caregiver. The role of caregiver and provider in developing successful interventions will be examined. Attention will be given to caregiver and provider expectations and strategies to enhance their communication.

## **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this the workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Define effective collaboration between caregivers and providers;
2. Explain the prerequisite values and attitudes needed to build collaborative partnerships;
3. Outline strategies and interventions to promote and maintain effective partnerships.

## **Target Audience**

Service Providers, Clinicians, Teachers, Families, Community Members

## **Contact Hours**

3.0 hours

## **Agenda**

*Introductions*

*Building a partnering relationship*

*Establishing and Understanding Intervention*

*BREAK*

*Maintaining Effective Communication*

*Group Brainstorming – Coming up with Strategies*

## **Faculty**

**Tamara Norris, MSSW, MPA** is Clinical Associate Professor and Director of the Family Support Program and the Family Support Network™ University Office at the UNC School of Social Work. Ms. Norris has over 25 years of experience developing innovative approaches to improving outcomes for families and children and promoting family support services for families with children who have special healthcare needs. Her passion is building the capacity of communities, organizations, and families to enable children who have disabilities to grow to live the lives they envision. She has administered family support initiatives with state and federal funding in the areas of family navigation; child maltreatment prevention; family support for military families; and emergency preparedness for individuals who have disabilities and their families. Ms. Norris has Master of Science in Social Work and Master of Public Administration degrees from Columbia University.

**Barbara Leach** is a Family Support Specialist and Special Projects Coordinator. She joined the Family Support Program at UNC, School of Social Work in 2005. She has over 30 years of experience as a child and family advocate for families with children who have mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and other special needs. In addition to providing information and referral for families and providers, Ms. Leach serves as a family advisor on multiple state and national committees that work collaboratively to transform systems so that they better meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families. She presents extensively on topics relating to supporting families, family advocacy, family engagement, family/provider partnership, cultural competence, and systems change. Ms. Leach is passionate about lifting the voices of diverse families and to promoting families as partners to co-create and develop services and systems that improve outcomes so that individuals with disabilities can live their best lives – healthy, independent, and self-determined.