



# FAMILY VOICES UNITED

## TOOLS YOU CAN USE

### Constituent Voice in Prevention Services & Child Welfare System Improvement: Organization/Agency Framework & Self-Assessment

The constituent group(s) our organization, agency or program is looking to engage include:

☐ Current/Former youth ☐ Birth Parents ☐ Kinship Caregivers ☐ Foster/Adoptive Parents

LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION	OPENINGS	OPPORTUNITIES	OBLIGATIONS
1. Constituents are listened to	Are you ready to listen to constituents?	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to constituents?	Is it a policy requirement that constituents must be listened to?
2. Constituents are supported in expressing their views	Are you ready to support constituents expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help constituents express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that constituents must be supported in expressing their views?
3. Constituent views are taken into account	Are you ready to take constituent views into account?	Does your decision-making process enable you to take constituent views into account?	Is it a policy requirement that constituent views must be given due weight in decision making?
4. Constituents are involved in decision-making processes	Are you ready to let constituents join in your decision-making processes?	Is there a procedure that enables constituents to join in your decision-making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that constituents must be involved in your decision-making processes?
5. Constituents share power and responsibility for decision-making	Are you ready to let constituents join in your decision-making processes?	Is there a procedure that enables constituents and allies* to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is there a procedure that enables constituents and allies* to share power and responsibility for decisions?

\* Allies = Professional staff, advocates, or other organizational representatives that hold power

Based on Shier's pathways to participation (from [Pathways to participation](#) - paywall)



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### Constituent Voice in Prevention Services & Child Welfare System Improvement: Why it Matters

Engaging child-welfare constituents such as young people in/from foster care, kinship caregivers, foster/adoptive parents, birth parents and community stakeholders demonstrates a deeper commitment to service, by centering those with lived experiences as strategic assets and experts that shape and inform the future of child welfare. Embracing constituent voice is essential to reforming and understanding how the system works to benefit those involved and areas where change is needed. Constituent engagement not only provides the opportunity for families who have been impacted to have their opinions heard and valued, it results in better planning, higher quality decision making and more informed policies, practices, and programming.