



## MASSACHUSETTS FAMILY LEADERSHIP SERIES

**The Family Leadership Series** focuses on supporting families and individuals to live in their communities as naturally and typically as desired. Applications from families with children or adult family members **of any age with any disability** are encouraged. The Family Leadership Series is currently sponsored annually in five different areas of Massachusetts by the regional chapters of Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change.

**The Family Leadership Series** is patterned after successful family empowerment series in Minnesota and New Hampshire. The first series in Southeastern Massachusetts took place from October 1990 to March 1991.

**The Family Leadership Series** has a two-fold purpose. The first is to offer information about “best practices” for people with disabilities. The second is to assist families in creating a vision for their family member and a process to achieve the vision by incorporating that information.

**The Family Leadership Series** is organized into three (and in some regions, four), two-day workshops.

**The Series focuses on:**

**Initiative and Leadership** – family members are given information on the background of the family support movement, leadership, advocacy and the significance of self-advocacy, how to effectively advocate to create change and ways to influence funding and delivery systems.

**“Creating A Vision”** – a number of presenters offer their perspectives on a broad range of topics: Inclusion in schools; supported employment; positive practices; community living and family support. Families are supported to “imagine better” and to create a vision, with and for their family members, that becomes a guide for their leadership and advocacy.

**Policy Making at the Local, State and Federal Level** – family members receive information on how to develop networks with professionals and families, how to access and control resources that affect family stress and satisfaction and how to use legislative change to procure resources.

Food and overnight lodging for each family is paid for by the Department of Developmental Services and other state agencies, organizations and businesses. Respite/child care/nursing for family members is arranged on an as needed basis.

**Families who attend the Series are required to do the following:**

- 1. To attend each of the two-day sessions;**
- 2. To participate in activities/experiences during the sessions and to complete assignments/reading between each session.**

We expect that, upon completion of the Series, families will continue to advocate for and work to create change for their families and will be willing to help other families in their areas to do the same. The Series organizers provide support to families as they continue to do this. Events are held to re-connect the Series participants from time to time.

Families who have completed the Series during the past sixteen years have had a tremendous impact on systems change for families and individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts. Family members have been active in policy and decision making locally, regionally and statewide and some have decided to do legislative advocacy work. Some families have been involved in community organizing and advocacy on a local level. Others have used their talents and skills to create change for their child with a disability and/or their families.

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**“THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE BEAUTY OF THEIR DREAMS.”**

**Eleanor Roosevelt**