

## **Strategies for Working with Power Differential with Families**

Power differential is the role difference between two people that results in vulnerability on the part of the less empowered.

Following are some strategies that can guide your work. (See *“Examples of Messages You Can Use to Engage More Effectively,”* in the Resource Section for additional information and examples.)

### Partner with Youth and Families

- ◆ Acknowledge your role is to ensure the safety of the child.
- ◆ Appreciate and respect the self-protection parents use in response to the differential of power; avoid viewing it as non-compliance.
- ◆ Acknowledge the parents’ love for their children and their fear of helplessness in maintaining custody (getting custody returned) because of the threat of DHHS, which has to be seen in the context of trauma history that many parents have experienced
- ◆ Communicate the limitation of workers to the youth and family.
- ◆ Join the family’s perception of their world; enter and partner with them where they are.

### Maximize Physical and Psychological Safety for Children and Families

- ◆ Support the parents being able to care for their child.
- ◆ Involve team members who care for the child and family’s safety (physical and psychological).
- ◆ Provide services and give resources necessary to parent the child safely.
- ◆ Educate the child and family on trauma.

### Enhance Child Well-Being and Resilience

- ◆ Acknowledge that ultimately, if there is a conflict between supporting the parent and what the agency/the court perceives as a risk to the child, our priority is to protect the child.
- ◆ Build on the child’s educational, emotional, and physical well-being.

### Enhance Family Well-Being and Resilience

- ◆ Access the family’s strengths, assets, informal, and formal team members.
- ◆ Access and honor the family’s past successes and areas of resiliency.
- ◆ Recognize and respect the family’s history of trauma.