

Parent Leadership Collaborative (PLC) Unites Families and Providers to Build a Better Future for Greater New Orleans

Utilizing "Power in Partnership", PLC invites the community to help reshape early childhood care with dignity, trust, and inclusive collaboration.

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The [Parent Leadership Collaborative](#)

(PLC) is a powerful grassroots movement of parents and caregivers from across Greater New Orleans working to transform early childhood care by placing families at the heart of the decision-making process. Founded

in 2022, PLC brings together a diverse group of parents from all walks of life, cultures, and family structures, unified by one common goal: to ensure that every child—especially those from birth to age five—has access to nurturing, inclusive, and high-quality care that helps them thrive emotionally, socially, and educationally.

“

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*Benita Cochran, Co-Director
of the PLC*

PLC began when a determined group of parents recognized a troubling pattern—although deeply involved in their children's lives, they were left out of the very systems meant to serve them. What would early childhood care look like if parents were at the decision-making table? That question sparked a movement grounded in trust, transparency, and shared vision. Rather than take an adversarial approach, PLC chose collaboration. By building strong, respectful relationships with service providers,

establishing shared values, and co-creating a unique assessment tool to evaluate early childhood programs, PLC has forged a new path forward—one where parents are no longer seen as passive participants but as experts and partners.



**Parent
Leadership
Collaborative**

The Parent Leadership Collaborative, led by parents and caregivers, aims to change that dynamic by reviewing service providers offering early childhood care services, ensuring quality and accountability.

“The Parent Leadership Collaborative is changing the way early childhood care is shaped in the Greater New Orleans area,” said Benita Cochran, Co-Director of the PLC. “We realized early on that being adversarial wouldn’t create long-term change. Instead, we leaned into trust, collaboration, and shared goals. Service providers weren’t just open to our input—they welcomed it. That kind of mutual respect has real power to transform systems.”

Cochran, a proud mother of two daughters and seasoned advocate in Parent Leadership and Language Justice, brings decades of experience and a heart for equity to her role. A graduate of Dillard University and Troy State University, she emphasizes the deeper meaning of PLC’s mission. “This work is about dignity. It’s about acknowledging that parents are experts on their children. When they’re empowered, children thrive—and communities thrive too.”



The PLC champions a set of standards for early childhood service providers that elevate parent engagement by positioning them as decision-making leaders.

At the core of PLC’s work is a parent-designed evaluation tool, developed in partnership with ten local service providers during a successful pilot phase. Each provider found the assessments helpful and transformative proof that when families and organizations work together, everyone benefits. While the tool continues to evolve, its success demonstrates what’s possible when parents are positioned as decision-makers.

“We envision a future where every child in New Orleans can grow up in an environment enriched with care, support, and abundant opportunities,” added Cochran. “Too often, the voices of parents and caregivers—those who know their children best—are left out of the conversations that affect their lives. That’s what we’re here to change.”

PLC’s Steering Committee, composed of 15 diverse parents and caregivers from across the metro area, ensures the group remains grounded in its mission and guided by shared values: empowerment, trust, community, collaboration, and dignity. Together, they have helped shape PLC’s strategy and continue to lead efforts that reflect the real experiences and needs of New Orleans families.

Sherelle Porter, Co-Director and mother of three, including a young son on the autism spectrum, speaks from experience. “I joined the PLC because I needed to know my voice mattered—not just for my son, but for other families like mine. This work allows us to come together, share our experiences, and advocate for better systems with dignity and purpose.” A graduate of California State University with a background in outreach and event coordination, Porter is an outspoken

advocate for inclusive early childhood practices and autism awareness.

The Parent Leadership Collaborative is now calling on the broader community to join them in building a stronger, more inclusive future for New Orleans' children. Community members, parents, service providers, and advocates are encouraged to get involved in a number of ways—from volunteering on parent advisory groups and focus teams to participating in orientations that help organizations become more parent-friendly. PLC also offers support and training for parents who want to become advocates for their children and others.

We recently sent out a [survey](#) to understand the community's experiences, thoughts, and opinions on parent engagement with local agencies. We received over 200 responses and now we working on communicating those responses to our child care providers. “This isn’t just about programs,” said Ty Salvant, co-chair of PLC, “This is about power. It’s about giving parents the tools to lead, advocate, and create change—not someday, but right now.” Together, we can build a New Orleans where every child has the opportunity to thrive and every parent has the power to lead.

Cochran and Salvant, recently interviewed on WWL's Great Day Louisiana, welcome the opportunity to discuss the benefits of the PLC through television and podcast interviews.

To learn more, become a parent advocate, volunteer, or partner with PLC, visit www.parentleadershipcollaborative.org

About the Parent Leadership Collaborative

The Parent Leadership Collaborative is a growing network of parents and caregivers in Greater New Orleans working to ensure families have a say in shaping the early childhood systems that serve them. Through collaborative action, inclusive values, and intentional design, PLC is helping to build a future where every child is supported by a strong family and a responsive community.

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