



# Kalamazoo Wraps News

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH COLLABORATION

April/May 2008

## Why I am Involved in Kalamazoo Wraps

by Jennifer, Parent

I got involved with the Kalamazoo Wraps Parent Advisory Group because I wanted my voice to be heard in the System of Care.

I used to live in Arizona, and I was involved in focus groups and other groups when Arizona was going through changing their System of Care. I saw the difference a System of Care made there, so I wanted to get involved here when I heard Kalamazoo County won a System of Care grant.

I really like being involved in the focus groups at Kalamazoo Wraps and the Parent Advisory Group. I like getting information about different programs in the community and being able to voice my opinion about different services. At PAG, we have provided feedback about Community Living Supports for youth, and about the ways caseworkers use data when working with families.

Parents can get involved in lots of ways. I also attend the Evaluation Workgroup, for example. To me, knowing where the information is coming from and how it is looked at is important. My family is being evaluated because we are using a service, so it's nice to see where my information is going.

One of the biggest things for parents to know, watching Arizona go through their baby steps, is that it's going to take time to see things change, but it's well worth it!

My advice to parents is to make sure that you find ways to advocate for your child by going to different groups, such as the Parent Advisory Group, or other workgroups that interest you, such as the Training & Best Practices, Cultural and Linguistic Competence, or Social Marketing.

Finally, I would also encourage parents to teach your children to advocate for themselves through the Calling All Youth advisory group and other workgroups.

**Parent Advisory Group meetings are held on the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month, 6-8:00 p.m., at the Gilmore Education Center of Bronson Hospital. Child care is provided for free. Please contact us at 269-343-5896 and let us know you are interested in joining us.**

**We welcome all parents who want to have a voice in making positive changes in our mental health system of care for children.**