

TIP SHEET

JANUARY 2017



SOC Lead Family Contact

Hiring the Lead Family Contact (LFC) is a requirement of the System of Care (SOC) Expansion and Sustainability Cooperative Agreements with SAMHSA. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to the value of a family driven system of care for children, youth and young adults with mental, emotional or behavioral health needs. Filling this position with the right person is crucial.

Qualifications of LFC: The main qualification for this position is “lived experience” as the primary caregiver for a child, youth or young adult with behavioral health needs and experience navigating one or more systems for their child. In addition to “lived experience,” it is important that the LFC have additional qualities, such as self-awareness and collaboration skills. The LFC job description template that follows describes these in further detail.

LFC Within the SOC Structure: The position of LFC in the organizational structure of the SOC is critical. The LFC should be part of the leadership or management team and equally important to other leadership positions such as the project director, cultural competence coordinator or social marketer.

Support and Resources: One key role of the LFC is to engage families and prepare them to participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the SOC efforts. To ensure there is family voice and involvement at all levels of the SOC initiative, and to fulfill their role and responsibilities, the LFC requires resources, (i.e. material, workforce and a budget). The LFC also requires support to strategize around any challenges or barriers they encounter in their position or assigned tasks.

How Grantees, States, and Communities Have Filled This Important Position:

Contracting with an existing family-run organization: If there is an existing family-run organization in the state, the SOC site may contract with the family-run organization directly to designate a current senior staff member to function as the SOC LFC or hire a new staff member for the position. There are multiple advantages to this arrangement. The family-run organization may have participated in planning the proposal and already be knowledgeable about the goals of the award.

In addition, the family-run organization has access to families and may easily be able to identify families ready to serve in leadership positions such as participating on committees or in governance, or becoming parent peer support providers. This arrangement also provides financial support and greater visibility for the family-run organization and upholds the organization's sustainability and the expectation of family involvement beyond the funded grant period.

Hiring an LFC as an employee of the state or local government entity: If there is no existing family-run organization, SOC sites may directly hire an LFC. Advantages to this arrangement are that the LFC has close access to the SOC project director and other key staff. Family members hired under this arrangement may feel somewhat isolated. It is important that the LFC have access to support and peer supervision so they are clear about their role and know how to handle task related challenges.

Local or state contracting with a family member to be the LFC: Numerous procedural obstacles in local or state government can impede or prolong the hiring process for an LFC. Some sites have contracted with a family member on a temporary basis when faced with protracted hiring processes.

Hiring or contracting with a family member during the establishment of a family-run organization: Many times, SOC grantee goals include establishing a family-run organization if one does not already exist. For the time it takes to write by-laws, form a board of directors and incorporate the organization, the grantee can play a critical role in "incubating" the family-run organization by employing or contracting with a lead family member while the family-run organization completes the necessary procedures. Once the process is complete, the contract for the LFC can transfer to the newly formed family-run organization.

SOC LFC Job Description:

The SOC LFC job description template provides a starting place for constructing a job description based on best practices for the LFC role as required within the current SOC FOA. This key position should be staffed by one individual with a .75 or 1.0 full-time equivalent position (FTE).

Communities and states have used many different titles for this position, such as *Family Involvement Coordinator*, *Family Support Coordinator*, or *Family Engagement Specialist*. This template uses language from Appendix F of the SOC FOA.

The title selected for the LFC by the SOC community or state should speak to the role of this individual and communicate their leadership status and the equal importance of the role to that of the SOC project director or cultural competency coordinator.

System of Care Lead Family Contact
Job Description Template

Name of Organization

Title: Lead Family Contact

Immediate Supervisor:

Program/Name of System of Care:

Salary Range:

Full-Time/Part-Time:

Exempt/Non-exempt:

Qualifications:

Successful applicant/candidate must be a primary caregiver (biological parent, kinship caregiver, foster parent, adoptive parent) of a child, youth or young adult, who has received or is receiving publicly funded behavioral health services. Experience includes navigating and advocating within child-serving systems such as mental health, juvenile justice, education or child welfare. Minimum GED or high school diploma; reliable transportation and appropriate insurance; ability to maintain a flexible schedule; and ability to travel and be away from home overnight are required.

Knowledge & Skills:

- Strong writing and verbal communication skills
- Computer literacy with Word, PowerPoint and Excel
- Understanding and belief in the SOC values and principles
- Effective advocacy skills
- Public speaking skills and experience teaching/educating in group setting (families, community members, professionals)
- Ability to maintain professional boundaries, behavior, and appearance
- Ability to work with diverse stakeholders to foster partnerships and collaborations across systems, families and youth.

Competencies:

- Comfortable sharing their own lived experience with others
- Awareness that lived experience (positive and negative) fosters personal growth
- Ability to recognize and understand multiple points of view
- Capacity to think beyond their own family needs to understand the perspective and needs of other families as well as the needs of agencies or systems

- Values collaborative partnerships with families and professionals and actively seeks to build them
- Non-judgmental approach that is tolerant of diverse opinions and attitudes of others;
- Team player who works for the benefit of the whole rather than self

Programmatic Supervision: SOC Project Director

Peer supervision should also be included and provided through a family-run organization or by a qualified family leader.¹

Personnel/Administrative Supervision: Agency of Employment

The LFC receives regular programmatic supervision from the SOC project director and personnel/administrative supervision from the hiring organization. In the case of a family-run organization, the supervisor should have experience working in SOC, working with families, and supervisory experience supporting family leaders working in the field. If supervision through a family-run organization is not available, the grantee could hire a family leader, experienced and familiar with the community/state to serve in a peer supervisory/coaching capacity.

Role and Responsibilities:

The LFC is a member of the SOC project director's management team and works in partnership with an existing family-run organization whose mission is to support children, youth and young adults with behavioral health disorders and their families, to fulfill their role and responsibilities. In the absence of a family-run organization at the local or state level with this mission, the LFC, in partnership with SOC key stakeholders, will provide direction for and facilitate the development of such a family-run organization.

LFC Duties May Include:

System Partner

- Participate as a full member of the SOC management team for the SOC initiative to accomplish goals and objectives of the SOC Expansion and Sustainability Cooperative Agreement.
- Promote the mission and vision of the SOC values and principles of family-driven care.
- Support and facilitate families to be engaged in all aspects of the SOC at all levels, including planning, design, financing, outreach, evaluation and implementation of parent peer support services.
- Oversee dedicated funds for family activities, involvement, training, and other necessary tasks including partnering with an existing family-run organization or guiding the development of a family-run organization if none exists.
- Inform the SOC about barriers families may be encountering related to effective engagement, implementation of the SOC services, supports, and/or resources.
- Work with the lead evaluator to ensure evaluation activities are family and youth-driven.
- Work in partnership with the youth coordinator, if one exists, to ensure that family and youth activities of the SOC initiative take place in a coordinated and complimentary way.

¹ For more information contact the Family-Run Executive Director Leadership Association (FREDLA) at 410.746.4538 / info@fredla.org / www.fredla.org

- Work with SOC project director and family-run organization to complete necessary reporting requirements for local, state, and federal stakeholders and funders.

Family Liaison

- Work in partnership with an existing family-run organization and other partners to engage families at all levels of the SOC.
- Reach out to new families through participation in community activities, using social media, hosting family activities, and collaboration with existing community groups including cultural and ethnic groups.
- Participate in planning and implementation of activities for Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day.
- Provide training, support, resources, mentoring and any other assistance families may need for fully integrating into the SOC efforts and in leadership roles.
- Develop and/or facilitate opportunities for families to cultivate leadership skills, understand how to participate in decision-making bodies, and empower families to become involved at all levels of the SOC including design, implementation, evaluation, outreach, service delivery and continuous quality improvement.
- Participate on and support family member involvement and sharing of their expertise in training programs, task forces and committees at a local, state and/or national level that enhance the implementation of SOC for families and youth.
- Participate in the development of parent peer support services, including program design, training curriculum development and hiring, training and supervision of parent peer support staff.
- Promote the importance of access to parent peer support for families enrolled in the SOC.
- Work with project director, key SOC staff, stakeholders (including the family-run organization) and families to develop and implement a sustainability plan to continue family involvement, leadership and the roles developed as part of the SOC efforts beyond the life of the grant. If there is currently no family-run organization, the LFC will work with families in the SOC and collaboratively with the project director, key SOC staff and stakeholders, to provide direction and facilitate a plan for creating a family-run organization.

The National Technical Assistance Network for Children’s Behavioral Health (TA Network) operates the National Training and Technical Assistance Center for Child, Youth, and Family Mental Health (NTTAC), funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Child, Adolescent and Family Branch to provide training and technical assistance to states, tribes, territories and communities funded by the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program (known as “system of care grantees”), as well as jurisdictions and entities without system of care grants, including youth and family leadership and organizations.

This resource was produced by [FREDLA](#) in its role as a core partner in the National Technical Assistance Network for Children’s Behavioral Health.