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... supporting the lifelong well-being of adoptive families since 1991.

### Mental Health and Wellness Commission - Testimony for Parent Lead Support

Brooke Van Prooyen, BS, MSW Program Manager, Adoptive Family Support Network

*Peer Support*

I am a social worker at Adoptive Family Support Network in Kent County where we provide adoption specific education, resource referral and support for families whose children who have suffered from early trauma and neglect. Our Parent to Parent program is a pilot project with the State of Michigan originally intended to bring parent lead support state wide.

*3rd Contract*

Our Adoptive Parent Consultants are trained adoptive parents that have navigated the mental health system themselves and gotten the right support and education to help their adopted children heal from the trauma of early abuse and neglect. They are trained to help parents get to the best adoption focused support groups and parent education. **Often, this is the ONLY support program an adoptive family will need!**

For some families, their adopted child will need more intensive mental health services we will send a referral to ACMH for wraparound services. **Navigation and access to the mental health system is a challenge, even more so if you need trained adoption sensitive supports!** Adoptive Family Support Network will provide an APC from our Parent to Parent program in place of a Parent Support Partner from ACMH. They do this because ACMH knows our APCs have extensive knowledge of adoption specific support and education resources to help the family!

With urgency I ask you to understand the value of parent lead support. I am an experienced social worker. In 2013 I had three Kent County families in post-adoption family services (case management) at the brink of dissolving their adoptions. **It was the parent lead support, listening ear and navigation to effective resources by an APC that stopped those dissolutions for happening!** I have also witnessed parents say something to an APC they NEVER would have said to me as a social worker even know they trust me.

Help families by supporting another trained parent to walk alongside them. They don't always need a clinician, social worker or case manager to move from crisis to stability. Sometimes, we just get in the way! Credentials aren't required after your name to be a strong supportive parent. This is a cost effective way to provide effective service to families! I welcome any opportunity to speak with the Mental Health and Wellness Commission if there is a way we could partner to bring more parent lead support to adoptive families.

Respectfully,

Brooke Van Prooyen, MSW