



Empowerment Skills for Leaders

A Guide to Leadership Portfolio Development and Peer Advisement

Welcome to the *Empowerment Skills for Leaders* Series!

This series is a unique collaboration between family-serving agencies, RCMA and St. Petersburg College to further support families through strengths-based family development. *Empowerment Skills for Leaders* is a companion curriculum to the Family Development Credential course taken by thousands of family workers in New York State and hundreds in the State of Florida and other States. The series teaches leaders to practice the same principles of family development with staff that workers use with families.

Preliminary research on the FDC has shown that families, workers and agencies all benefit from skills and competencies workers learn while earning the FDC.

The *Empowerment Skills for Leaders* Series will help you learn key concepts of the family development approach to support workers as they assist families in setting and reaching goals of healthy self-reliance.

To earn the Florida Family Development Leadership Credential, you must attend the course sessions and prepare a Leadership Portfolio that is reviewed by RCMA. To help you prepare the portfolio, a colleague in your class will be your peer advisor for this process.

Peer advisors help each other plan portfolio assignments and offer strengths-based feedback on learning projects.

The Family Development Leadership Portfolio consists of:

1. **One independent learning project for each chapter** of the *Empowerment Skills for Leaders* text (Suggestions are listed at the end of the chapter or you may develop your own project);
2. **Written strengths-based feedback from your peer advisor** on each independent learning project;
3. A **Leadership Empowerment Plan** that identifies a leadership goal and outlines steps to achieve it.
4. A **Reflection on the Leadership Empowerment Plan written one month** after to reflect on your progress and the outcome of the plan, challenges encountered (and how you responded), and any future actions you might take as a result of the plan.

Here are some frequently asked questions:

What is an Independent Learning Project?

Independent Learning Projects are activities you plan and complete to demonstrate your understanding and knowledge of the family development principles or practices presented in that chapter. At the end of each chapter of *Empowerment Skills for Leaders*, there are “Ideas for an Independent Learning Project” and a blank Independent Learning Project Plan. After each chapter, you meet with your peer advisor and develop a project based on ideas presented in the chapter or you can create your own plan.

At the end of each chapter, you and your colleague take turns serving as each other’s peer advisor (e.g. you assist your

colleague with developing an independent learning project and then she/he assists you).

The peer advisor's role is to:

- help his/her colleague develop a plan for meaningful, manageable independent learning project;
- confirm that the project involves an activity (something to do) that demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the chapter's theme and content;
- anticipate potential obstacles and help consider ways to addressing them to successfully complete the project.

After each independent learning project, prepare the Independent Learning Project Plan form and be sure to include the following:

1. Describe the project including the date, participants, the setting, and any other work you prepared (e.g. interview questions, copies of forms, meeting flyers, etc...)
2. Write a reflection on this experience that includes the steps taken, strengths you learned about yourself, challenges encountered (and how you responded) and any future actions you might take as a result of the project.
3. Discuss the independent learning project with your peer advisor and ask her/him to reflect and write strengths-based feedback **to you** about the plan, its outcome and strengths she/he observed in you as you completed this project.

May I work with the same peer advisor for each chapter?

Yes. However, we recommend working with a different peer advisor for each chapter. Working with different peer advisors will provide a wider range of feedback on your learning projects. Since supervisors from diverse agencies often attend the course, you may also have the opportunity to learn informally from another peer advisor. You are welcome to talk with your leadership instructor about this option and as a group, make a decision that works in the best interest of providing you with well-rounded peer advisement.

The final component of the Leadership Portfolio is the **Leadership Empowerment Plan**. To develop this plan, first reflect on your own strengths and challenges as a supervisor. Then, choose several family development concepts presented in the text and develop a short-term goal that requires practicing these concepts in your work. Next, identify steps you will take (and steps your peer advisor can support you with).

Then, prepare the Leadership Empowerment Plan Form with your peer advisor and implement the plan for one month. After one month, write a reflection on the progress of your Leadership Empowerment Plan, the strengths you developed or learned, any challenges you encountered (and how you responded) and consider any future actions you might take as a result of the plan.

The Family Development Leadership Portfolio is similar, in many ways, to portfolios that frontline workers prepare to earn the FDC. Your leadership instructor can answer any other questions you may have.

Congratulations on taking this important step to enhance your skills through the *Empowerment Skills for Leaders Series!*