Parents who choose to get involved beyond the individual care level say there are enormous benefits for themselves, for providers, and for programs serving children and families as a result of their involvement.

**Benefits for Families:**
- It improves services for my child and other children
- It provides an opportunity to bring about meaningful change
- It increases opportunities for me to share information with other families
- It feels good to make a contribution
- It is satisfying to give back to the system
- It provides opportunities to network with other consumers and providers
- It expands my knowledge and skills

**Benefits for Providers:**
- It improves the planning process
- It helps them carry out the mission of the program
- It increases their knowledge and skills
- It helps them do their jobs better
- It brings fresh perspective to problems
- It provides an ally to advocate for better services for children and families
- It increases their empathy for and understanding of families

Before choosing to accept an advisory role – either as a volunteer on a committee, a member of the state Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), or as a parent volunteer for your Early Intervention program – it is important to prepare yourself for the role. Consider asking yourself the following questions before you agree to become involved:

- Will my involvement make a difference for my child and my family?
- Will my participation make a difference to other families in similar circumstances?
- Will my participation have an impact on the way services are being planned and delivered for children and families?
- Do I believe this activity is worth my time and energies?

*Adapted from Thomas, J & Jeppson, E.S. (1997), Words of Advice: A Guidebook for Families Serving as Advisors. Bethesda, MD: Institute for Family-Centered Care.*

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