

# Summit County FIRC brings leadership training to families



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Vector of Communication Concept

The Family and Intercultural Resource Center is offering a new training opportunity for parents. Teaming up with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, FIRC will host a 21-week leadership course, culminating in a project to benefit the community.

“We’re really excited to be able to offer it in the community,” FIRC executive director Tamara Drangstveit said. “I think it will help develop leadership skills for folks who might not have thought they could lead in that capacity.”

The Family Leadership Training Institute (FLTI) consists of a curriculum that includes an initial retreat, followed by two, 10-week sessions on civic engagement, skill building and public process. The entire program culminates in a community project designed entirely by participants, ranging from creating community gardens and wellness committees to supporting existing organizations.

“I think at its core it’s really about empowering families to recognize what’s possible,” she said. “The individuals can basically create their own project that is important to them, that they think will have a big impact on their families and the community. We will work with community leaders to make sure they have the resources they need to complete it.”

The training is available in Colorado thanks to an inter-state partnership between the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Connecticut Commission

on Children, with several statewide sponsors including the Colorado Health Foundation and Department of Human Services. According to FLTI, three discoveries were made through this collaboration:

Families are eager to learn how to participate in democracy.

Civic leaders and organizations benefit from informed families.

Communities are strengthened when the voice of the family is valued.

The program will be open to about 20 participants, particularly parents or guardians, including grandparents and foster parents. The entire program is free of charge and will include dinner and childcare.

“We’re hoping folks (who) are traditionally underrepresented in leadership conversations will have chance to participate,” Drangstveit said. “If you’re a working parent, you might not have the time to think about how to change the things that your family might struggle with. ... I think families should have a more important voice in this discourse because they really do see what affects them and what affects their children.”

The first 10-week session will serve as an introduction to civic engagement, explaining the decision-making process, school district organization and distinctions between municipal, state and federal government. For the second half of the course, parents will work on developing skills, advocacy and planning a community-based project. The culmination of the institute is the project and graduation at the end.

“Helping families get those skills, that’s what the FIRC is all about,” Drangstveit said. “They already have the skills; they use them every day in relationships with their employers and their kids. It’s just being able to adapt them to work in a different environment.”

## **PROGRAM LAUNCH**

While other Colorado counties have conducted the Family Leadership Training Institute in years past, Summit will hold it the first time from September 2016 to March of next year. Drangstveit said the program caught FIRC’s attention after the Colorado Health Foundation decided they wanted to invest in the strategy about a year ago.

Parent education coordinator Natalia Ruiz will assist the Summit program as the site coordinator; she is currently participating in Eagle County’s FLTI.

“I think it’s going to be a really good fit for Summit County,” Healthy Families Coordinator Matt Madsen said. “We’ve always been looking at ways to increase parent engagement in

the community. ...When the opportunity came up, we jumped at it because this is something we've looked for."

For those interested in participating, applications are due to the FIRC by July 1. Classes will run on Monday evenings from 5-9 p.m., starting Sept. 12, 2016 and continuing to March 6, 2017. Applications may be submitted online at [summitfirc.org](http://summitfirc.org), and interested applicants may contact Ruiz at 970-455-0228 or at [nataliar@summitfirc.org](mailto:nataliar@summitfirc.org).

FIRC is also seeking facilitators for the program — community leaders who will be able to dedicate their time to guide discussion. Facilitators must be able to attend training in Denver from June 23 to 25 and commit to facilitating 10 weeks of evening classes and two full-day outings. Applicants with past facilitation experience and who have worked with diverse groups are preferred, though the class is taught in English.

"It's really working to give people the skills and the voice to be able to be there, in those positions to advocate for themselves and their community," Madsen added

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