

"Treat Me Tenderly" Patient Experience in Oral Health Policy


Kaylan Szafranski, Health Policy Director

NC Child



NC Child's Mission Statement

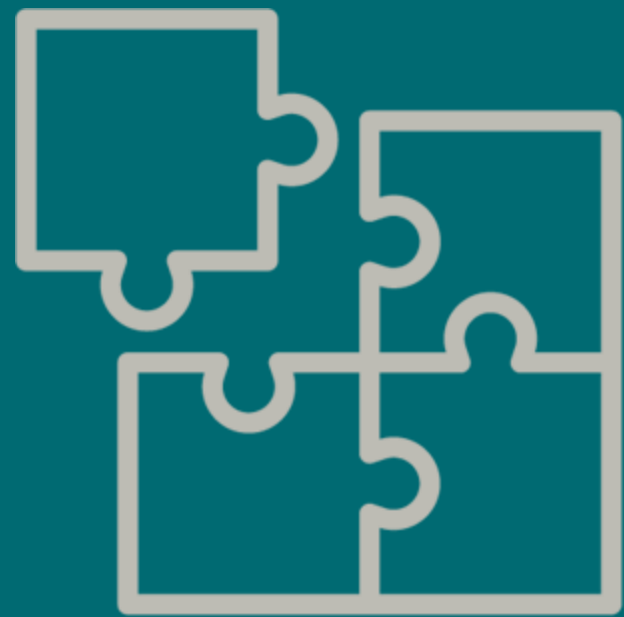
NC Child builds a strong North Carolina by advancing policies to ensure all children—whatever their race, ethnicity, or place of birth—have the opportunity to thrive.



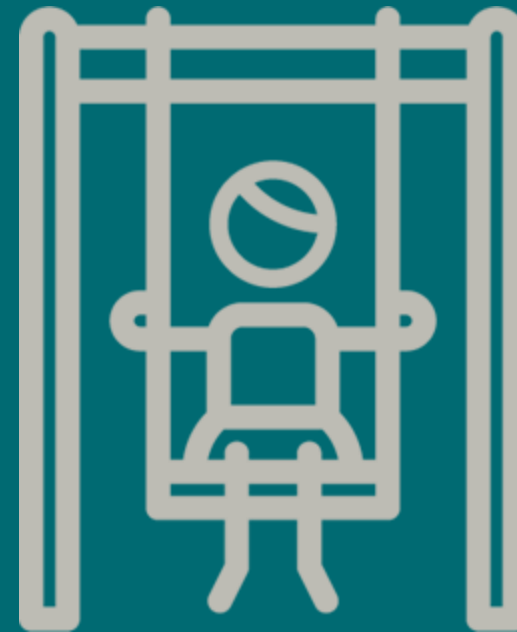
Policy Areas



Family Economic
Security



High Quality Early
Childhood Education



Healthy
Children



Nurturing Homes
& Communities



Parent Advisory Council

- Established in In 2019
- Ensure that the voices of parents and caregivers are included in decisions about changes to North Carolina's Medicaid and Health Choice programs.
- Provides opportunities and resources to build advocacy skills and navigate the state's changing health care programs.

Importance of Lived Experience

"Without lived experience, not only can we not understand what a person has been through, we simply cannot judge them by the same standards we judge ourselves...When we judge others by the same standards we use to judge ourselves, we are in essence saying "only my experience matters and not yours."

-Aditi Subramaniam, Ph.D.




Data in All Forms




Tooth Dismay: A New Look At the Data on Children's Oral Health in North Carolina

In 2019, children enrolled in Medicaid receiving at least one preventive dental service:

Only **25%** of infants ages 1-2
56% of children ages 3-5



only **7%** of Pregnant People enrolled in Medicaid used their dental care benefit in 2019.



NC Child
The Voice for North Carolina's Children

“There just isn’t much here in Watauga county for dentistry for Medicaid. No one takes it except the Health Department, and they only work on emergencies and specific cases.”

.....
- Mom of two children with special needs

NC
Child

“I truly hope that every dental practice gets training to help those with special needs. I feel that no one should feel left out or different, especially a child. Dental care should be equitable care.”

.....
- Mom in Wayne county

NC
Child

“Emergency dental treatment is extremely expensive, and having Medicaid and not being able to use it, obviously greatly affects our family.”

.....
- Parent in Union county

NC
Child

Stories Told: Quality Care



Methodology:

Providers

- Conversations
- Survey
- Feedback Loops

Patients

- Survey
- Follow up Interviews
- Feedback Loops

Partners

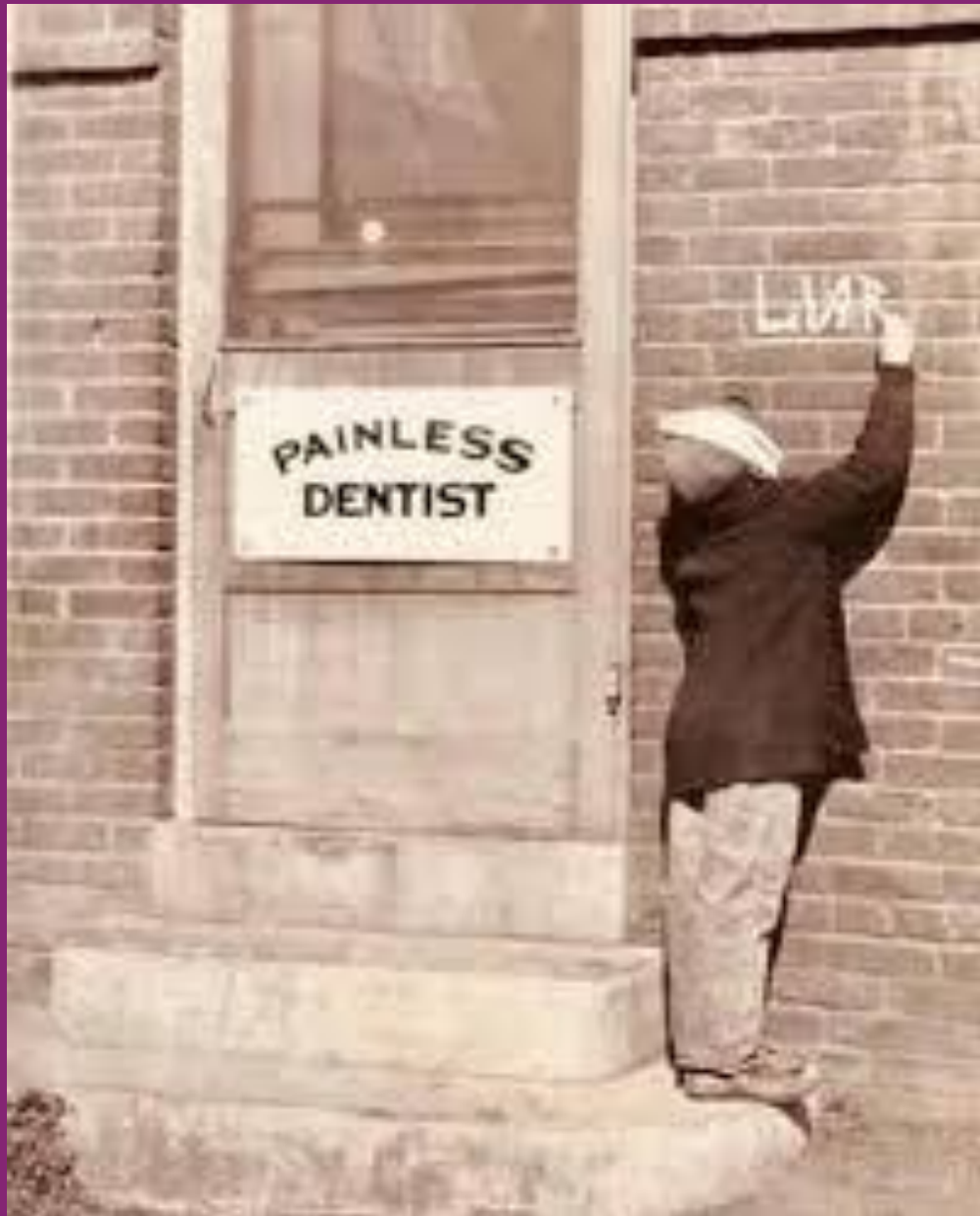
- Methodology
- Findings
- Lessons Learned/ Best Practices

Key Themes: Providers



- Patients only come when acute care is needed
- Patients want to be healthy but there are A LOT of barriers
- Patients on Medicaid don't value the care because it's free
- Staffing shortages make it difficult to spend adequate time with patients
- It's difficult to provide patient education when their behaviors don't change
- Lack of integration with physical health care is a huge barrier to patient access and retention

Key Themes: Patients



- Long wait times and denial to be seen
- Transportation issues (particularly in rural counties)
- Fear and shame (this is a BIG one)
- Accommodation issues
 - Language
 - Special health care needs
 - Facilities
- Culture
 - "The denture norm"
 - Cultural attunement of providers

Quality:

High quality oral health care improves health through accessible and routine services that follow a clearly communicated, individualized treatment plan. High quality care is realized through thorough, professional, gentle provider interactions and addresses prevention and acute needs, resulting in overall improved health and wellbeing.

Value:

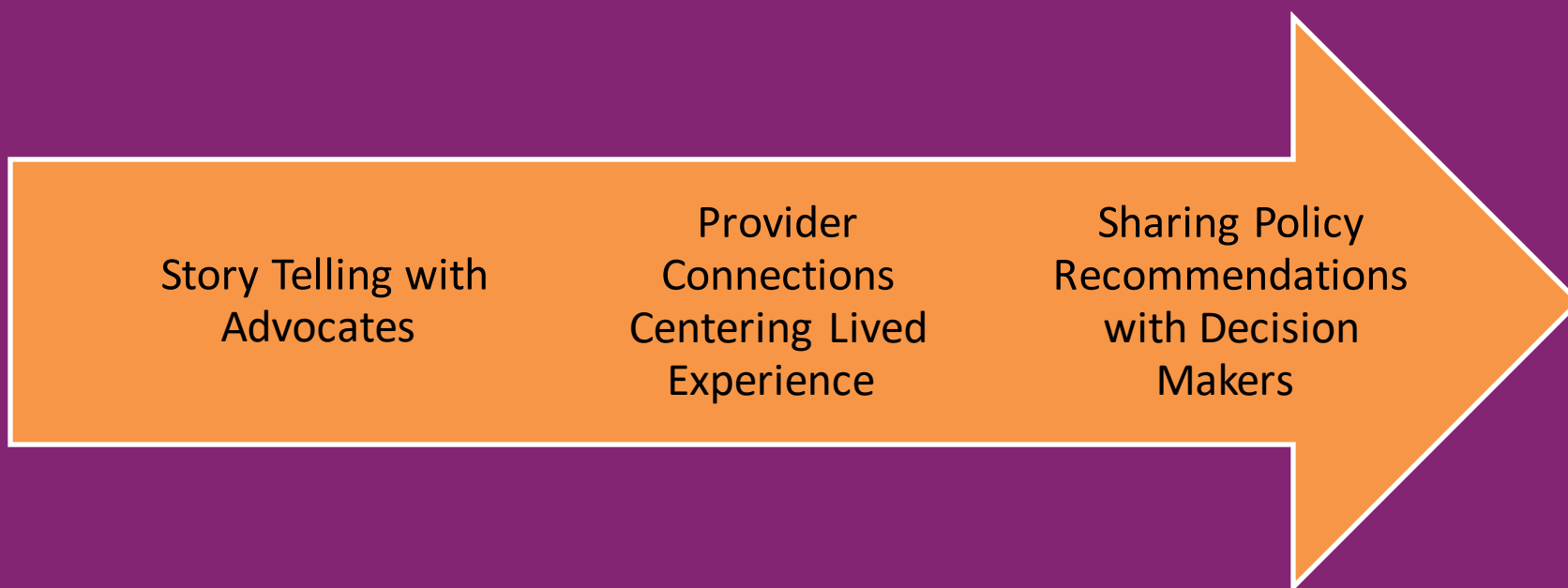
Care feels valuable when needs, including accommodations, are met through timely, thoughtful, responsive interactions with providers and staff.

"My expectation for good care...just treat me tenderly. That's all I ask, treat me tender."

A (real) Seat at the Table



Making Space



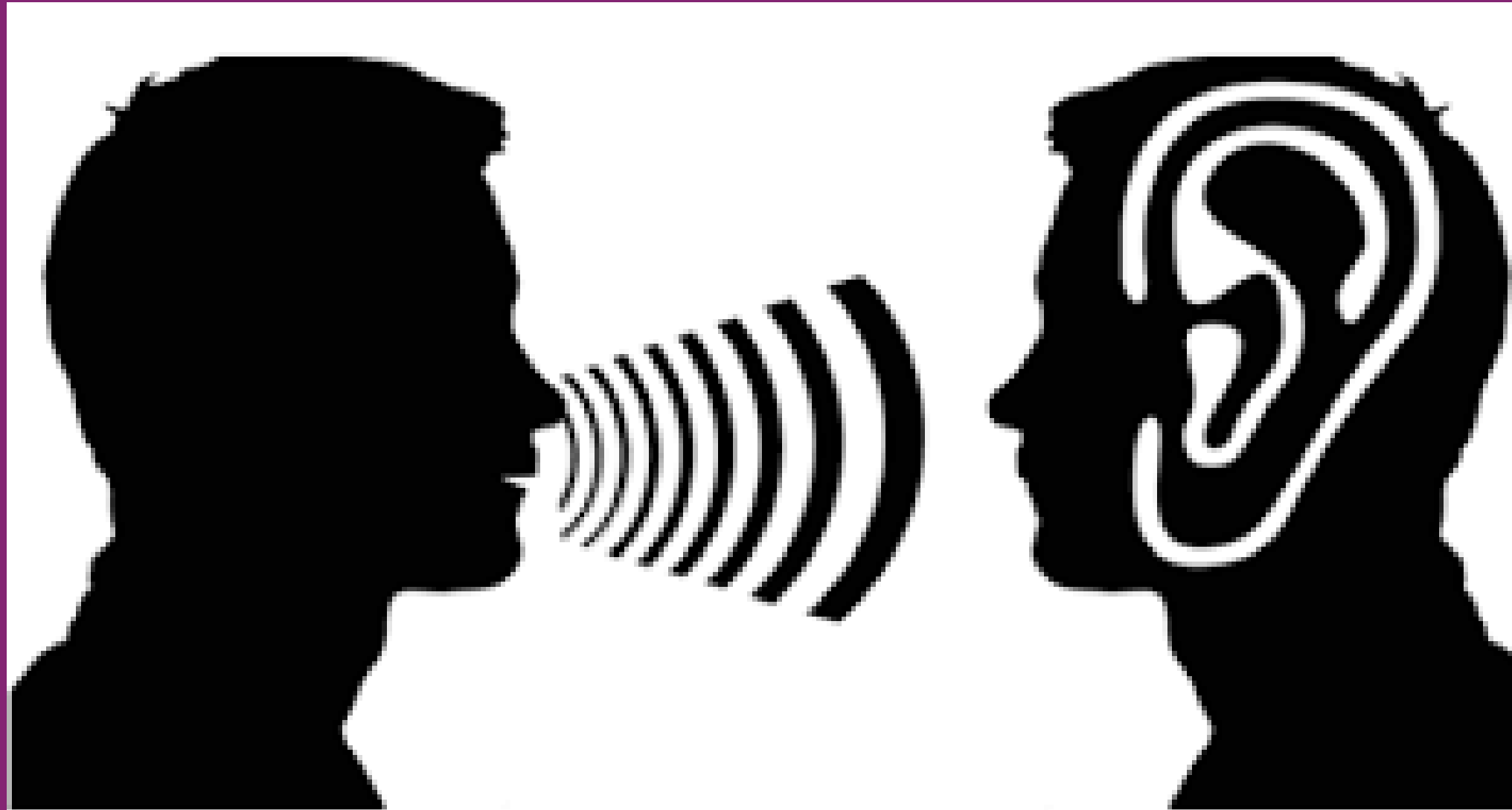
Lessons Learned



Take it from me...

- Clear is kind, unclear is unkind
- Find trusted partners, especially those within the community to check you
- Make it personal
- Be goo, not steel

Above All Else



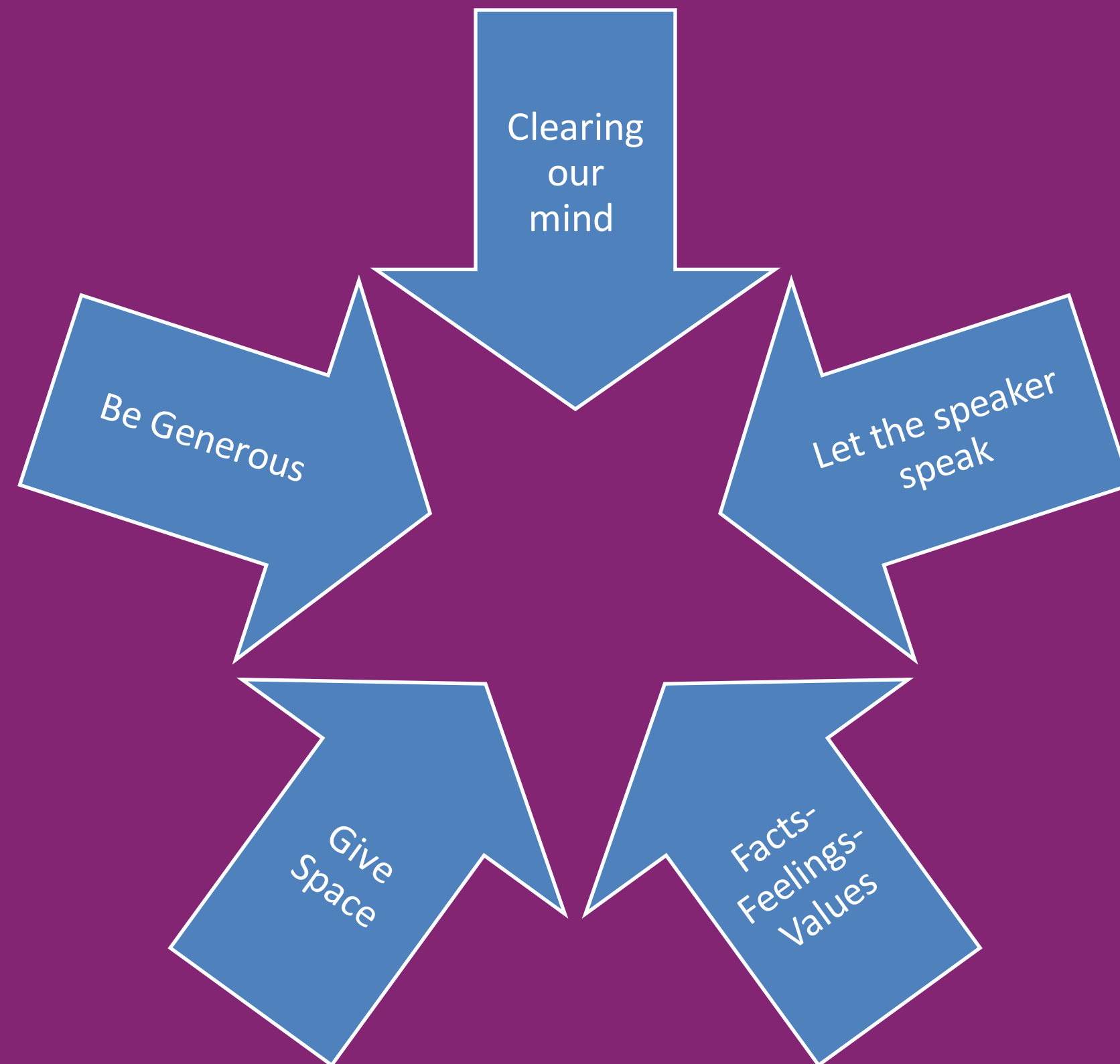
Best Practices



Key Takeaways

- Relationships are essential
- Be prepared to slow way down
- Create shared language
- The right messenger: it goes both ways
- Feedback loops, forever!
- Pay. Them. For. Their. Expertise.

5 Steps to Listening with Purpose



Questions?

Kaylan Szafranski

Health Policy Director
NC Child

@NCChild 

Kaylan@ncchild.org

