

Background to CRU's Family Leadership Development Efforts

CRU exists to support the development of leadership and authentic change in the lives of people with disability. CRU's change efforts are situated within the Community Living Movement or movement for social inclusion. Having a better understanding of what might be possible (a vision of better lives and lifestyles), raised consciousness of what is likely to build alternatives, and a critique of dominant responses to people with disabilities are integral to this movement.

CRU has adopted a theory of change which emphasises a change of heart as well as changes to the structures that limit and oppress people with disabilities. Elements of CRU's change theory include:

- the importance of positive visions and values,
- the importance of being conscious of the impact of low expectations and the attitudes and structures which limit the lives of people with disability,
- the importance of leadership for change,
- the centrality of people with disabilities and their families,
- the building of networks and a positive movement for change,
- practical implementation of positive ideas and genuine innovation in service and community responses,
- fidelity over time,
- safeguarding of what has been gained.

Why Family Leadership Specifically?

Much of the positive change that has occurred for people with disability over past decades has been initiated or sustained by families. Recognising this compels us to invest our (limited) resources into those endeavours most likely to result in positive change for people with disability. In 2012, CRU made a decision to prioritise leadership development for families. CRU's family leadership efforts are designed to invest in parents, brothers and sisters, and extended family members.

Purpose of the family leadership initiative

The purpose of this leadership initiative is to grow a movement of families who are equipped to articulate a positive vision for their family member (and other people with disability) underpinned by clear frameworks on the value of people with disability and their right to enjoy a life in community on an equal basis as other citizens.

Through participating in the leadership program, we hope that over time families will:

- develop a rigorous analysis of the 'big picture' contexts; including history and social patterns which impact on people with disability and families;
- develop stronger networks of support;
- feel strengthened in their vision of what is possible – for their family member and others;
- expand their frameworks on change;
- have opportunities to develop and demonstrate leadership skills;
- be able to positively influence others;
- be able to identify (and be more equipped to act on) issues of strategic importance;
- develop self-knowledge, including developing strategies which help them to sustain themselves and their efforts for change.