

Peer Support Groups for Child Welfare-Involved Families

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Study Purpose

- Examine forms, sources, and specific examples of support which parents were able to utilize to augment their involvement with the child welfare system
- Identify perceptions of impact of these supports
- Identify benefits of CWOP Support Groups
- Identify barriers to engagement for parents

Study Site



The Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP) is a community-based non-profit organization in New York City that aims to organize and empower a parents involved with the child welfare system.

Method

Exploratory Study

Qualitative in-depth face-to-face interviews

- Parent participants (N = 29)

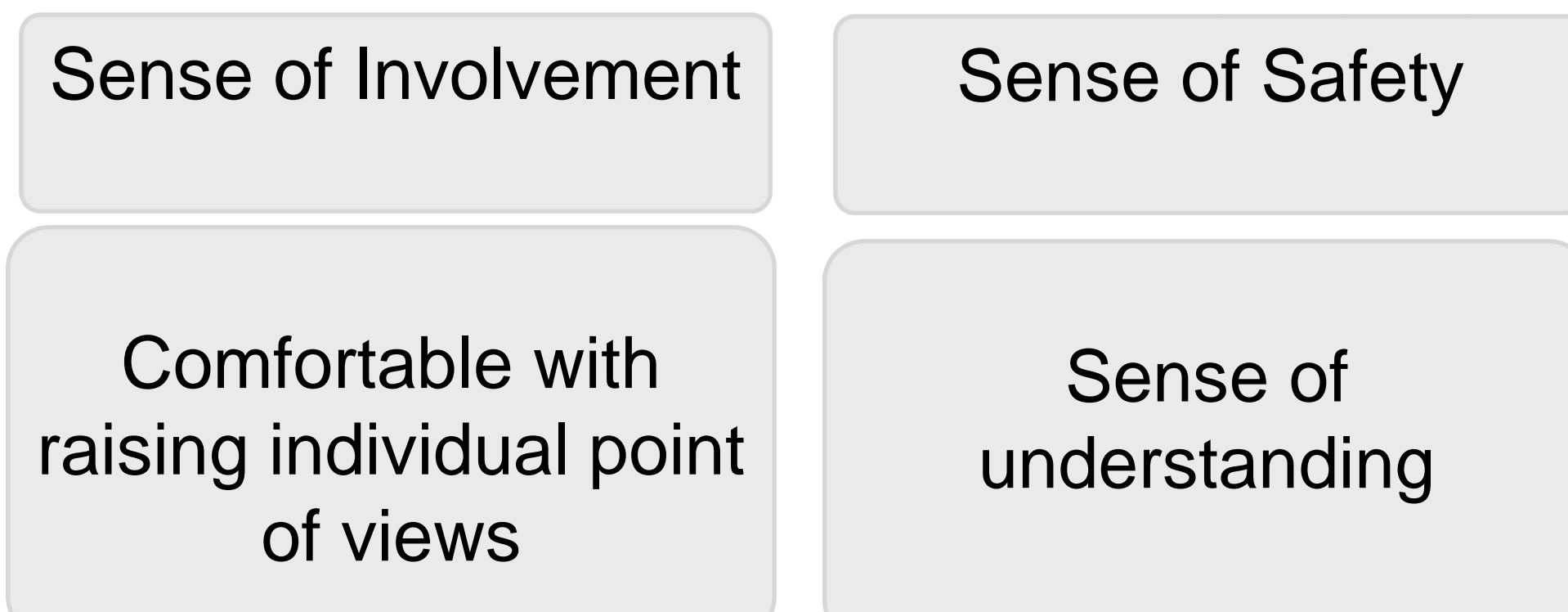
Participants

Gender	N	Percent
Female	27	93.1%
Male	2	6.9%
Total	29	100

Ethnicity	N	Percent
African American	21	72.4%
Latino/a	7	24.1%
White	1	3.5%
Total	29	100

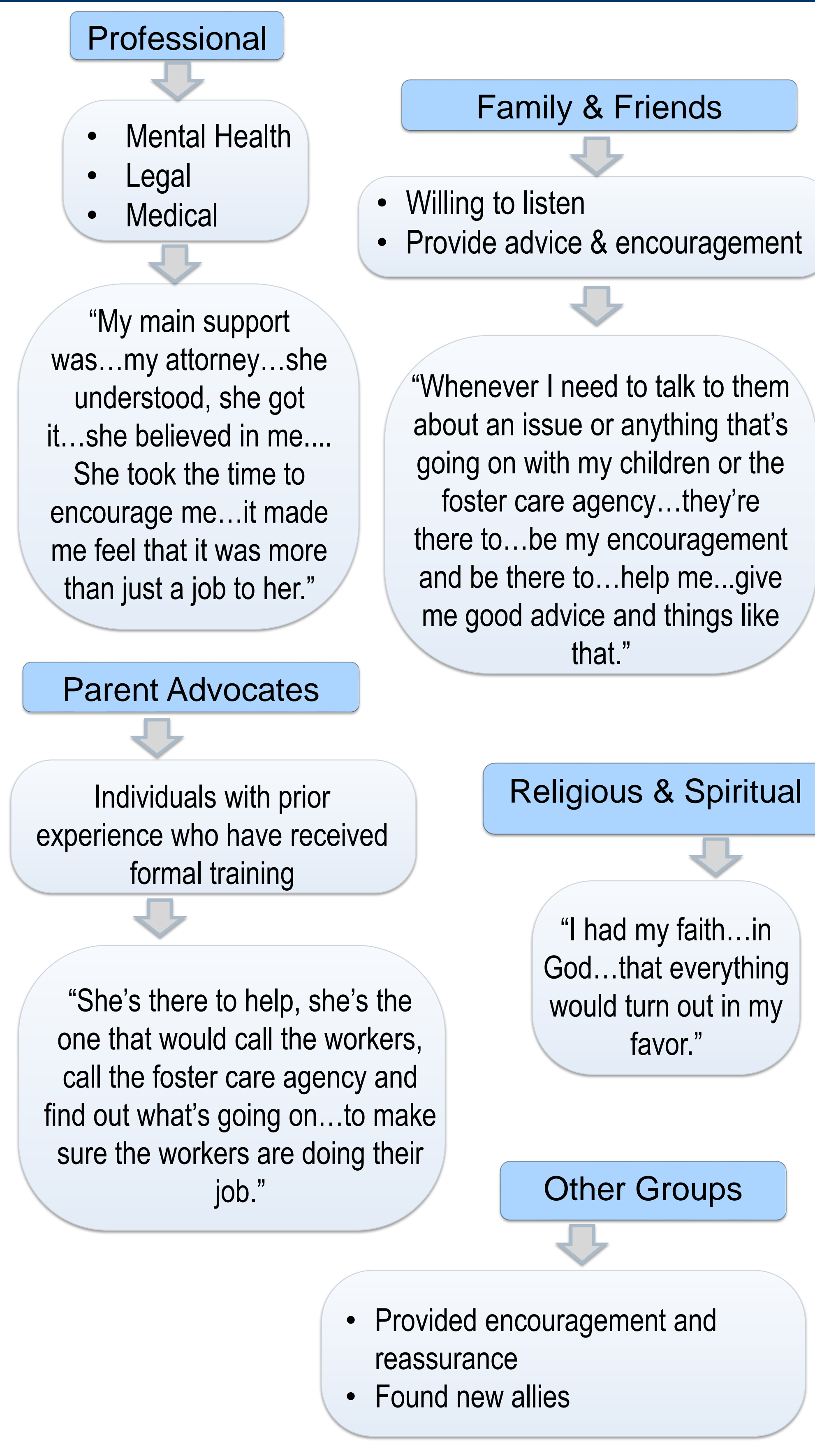
Marital Status	N	Percent
Single	14	48.3%
Married	5	17.2%
Separated	3	10.4%
Divorced	2	6.9%
Unknown	5	17.2%
Total	29	100

Parent Satisfaction with Support Groups



"There's no limit to what you can express, or what you need help in. If they [peers] can do it, they're here for you, they will do it"

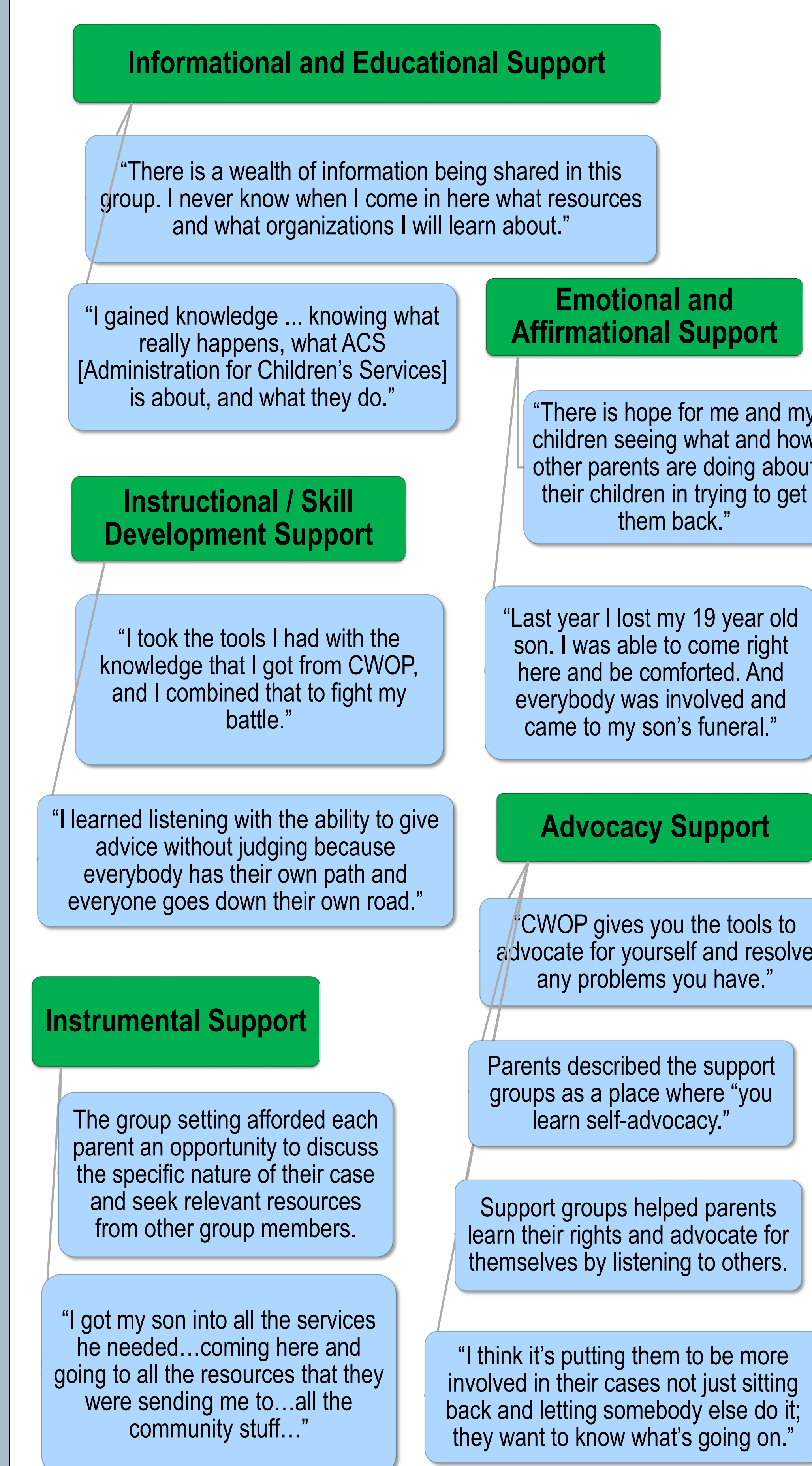
Sources of Support, identified by Parents



Unique Environment of CWOP Support Group



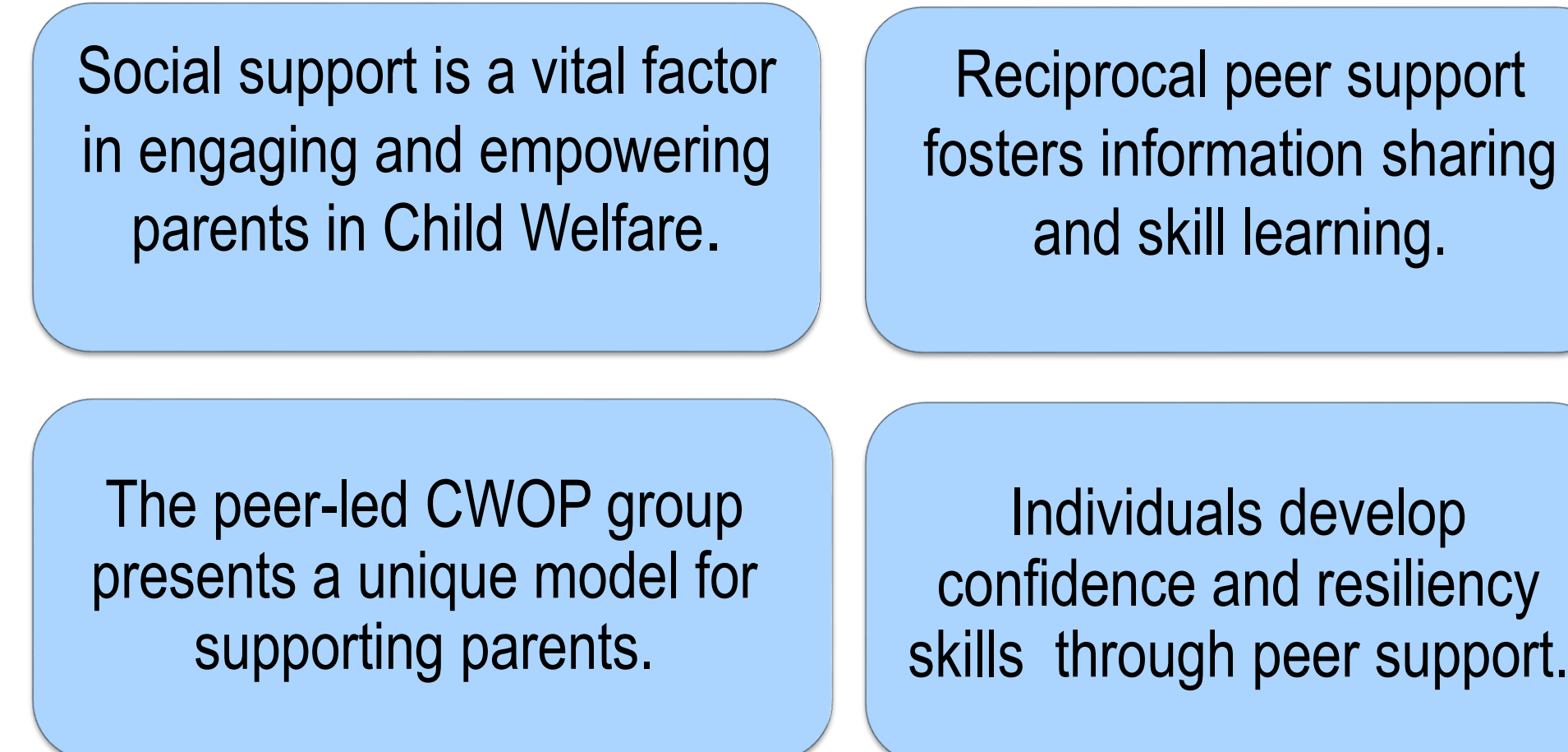
Types of Supports Offered in Support Groups



Suggestions for Improvements

- Greater frequency of meetings
- Replication in other boroughs
- Groups for Spanish-speakers
- Inclusion of children

Implications



Parents gain exposure, skills, and interest in advocacy which yields an impact on micro and macro levels.

Conclusion

- Parents involved in the child welfare system encounter stigma, stress and isolation.
- Peer-to-peer mentorship and group support provides opportunity for parents to learn new skills, connect to resources, and build a social network.
- As parents develop their own capacities, they are motivated to advocate for themselves and others.
- The CWOP Parent Support Group provides a model for peer-to-peer programs with positive outcomes for participants.
- Engaging parents in this way is critical to creating a child welfare system that is more respectful and inclusive of parents.

References

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Cohen, E., & Canan, L. (2006). Closer to home: Parent mentors in child welfare. *Child Welfare*, 85(5), 867-884.