

Partner Overview

In 2023, Bright Path facilitated a comprehensive series of training workshops and reflective leadership sessions on the science and practice of Coaching for the leaders of Illinois-based sites operating Ladders of Opportunity (LO), a workforce development pilot initiative of the Parent Engagement Institute's nationwide Parent Mentor program. LO provides individualized career mentorship and upskilling to parents interested in supporting students with disabilities by becoming a Paraprofessional in public schools; this provides a career pathway for the parent and economic gains for the family, while addressing critical Paraprofessional shortages in schools.



Prior to the formal engagement, the Director of the Ladders of Opportunity program downloaded from the Bright Path website our [Practitioner Workbook](#). After reaching out for a discovery conversation and attending one of Bright Path's bimonthly Executive Skills 101 webinars, the Director identified the potential benefits to the LO community-based site leaders of learning about and incorporating Coaching practices grounded in Executive Skills and goal setting into their established Paraprofessional upskilling programming with parents.

Partnership Objectives and Deliverables

Ladders of Opportunity engaged Bright Path with clear objectives to train the LO site leaders on the brain and behavioral science of Executive Skills, Coaching practices, and Goal Setting, with a focus on disability justice. The LO Director also requested that throughout the series of training modules, Bright Path work with the Ladders of Opportunity leaders to redesign their program coaching tools and materials to integrate the Coaching language and practices the teams were learning. Finally, the LO Director requested that Bright Path provide implementation support for the LO site leaders as they tested the updated tools and materials and brought the new Coaching practices back to their local teams for implementation.

Bright Path Services

Over four months in 2023, Bright Path led a series of scaffolded training modules to equip LO site leaders with the knowledge, tools, and practices to coach parents pursuing Paraprofessional credentials using a strengths-based, parent-centered model. Modules covered Coaching fundamentals, Trauma-Informed Care, Executive Skills, Motivational Interviewing, and Goal Achievement. Bright Path also partnered with leaders to redesign goal plans and other core tools to incorporate coaching principles. After testing the tools with site staff, leaders participated in four reflective sessions focused on change management and Executive Skills-based leadership. Feedback was consistently positive; one LO leader shared that the training was "incredibly powerful."

Partner Outcomes

LO has engaged over 370 parents, primarily immigrants, with 44.6% earning Paraprofessional credentials and being hired locally. With Bright Path's support, LO began tracking participant progress toward self-identified goals set in their coaching sessions. As a result, 89.1% of LO graduates either achieved or made progress toward goals such as employment, learning English, earning a GED, or attending college.

In 2025, Bright Path reconnected with an LO site leader who had attended the 2023 training and had since scaled Executive Skills-informed Coaching across the nine schools in which her team operates. Her team now checks in weekly with parents on their goals, explicitly celebrates Executive Skills strengths, and uses Coaching to support parents through challenges toward their Paraprofessional credential. She shared, "I love how Coaching highlights and celebrates parent strengths when they're receiving a lot of negative messaging," noting its growing importance amid a more uncertain social and political climate.