

Stakeholder Involvement and Interagency Collaboration: An Overview of NRCOI Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA)

What is stakeholder involvement?

Increasingly, child welfare agencies realize they cannot achieve the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being for children by acting on their own. A wide array of “stakeholders”- within agencies, across public organizations, in communities and in families—must join in the work to achieve these outcomes. Many agencies are shifting from thinking about what the child welfare agency can do to what all the stakeholders can do together to improve outcomes. Successful stakeholder involvement means making collaboration and partnerships a way of life for the agency.

The critical importance of stakeholder involvement underlies federal requirements that child welfare agencies actively engage a wide range of partners in developing and monitoring the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and in the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) process. When Program Improvement Plans (PIPs) and CFSPs are developed collaboratively, they provide clear goals and concrete tasks that can be pursued together.

Rationale for stakeholder involvement

Some compelling reasons to engage with stakeholders to improve child welfare services include:

- Collaboration with stakeholders helps build the idea that the entire community—not just the child welfare agency—bears the responsibility for child protection.
- Meeting the needs of families and children exceeds the capacity of any one agency. Hence the child welfare system is much larger than the child welfare agency.
- To make the systemic program improvements that states need and want to make, agencies must work with other groups and individuals who affect outcomes. That is why the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) looks at the state’s entire child welfare system, not just the agency.
- Partnering helps create a constituency to advocate for the needs of children, youth and families, and for agencies providing services.
- Working together enables each agency to meet its own goals and successfully carry out its mission.

How we can help?

The NRCOI promotes stakeholder involvement and interagency collaboration in public and Tribal child welfare agencies as a core strategy for improving outcomes for children and families. We help agencies develop comprehensive, long-term approaches to making collaboration an ongoing practice. Primary areas of training and technical assistance (T/TA) include:

- **Stakeholder involvement in organizational systems:** We provide training and technical assistance to enhance the involvement of stakeholders in child welfare agencies so agencies can make the fundamental shift to seeing themselves as catalysts for, and partners in, collaborative work to improve outcomes. We help agencies and Tribes develop strategies to involve stakeholders in the CFSR process, and in specific organizational systems including:
 - strategic planning,
 - quality improvement,
 - service planning, and
 - training.
- **Service array:** We can help jurisdictions assess and develop a plan to expand accessibility and improve the quality of

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services provided to children and families in the child welfare system. To do this we offer a structured process and a complete set of tools for assessing the service array, compiling and reporting the results, and creating resource development plans. This process helps jurisdictions determine what services and supports are available for their families as well as what additional services might be needed. We help agencies involve community stakeholders as key participants in the process of assessing and enhancing the service array in child welfare.

- **Collaborations with specific partners:** We offer focused T/TA on engaging three critical stakeholder groups whose involvement will be emphasized in the second round of CFSRs:
 - Courts and the legal system,
 - State-Tribal partnerships,
 - Consumers, including youth.In addition, our CFSR Comprehensive Training and Technical Assistance Package includes a module on Engaging Community Stakeholders and Building Community Partnerships.

We also provide information, training and technical assistance on collaborating with other key partners, including county agencies, service providers, child welfare agency staff, other public agencies and providers, community representatives, advocacy organizations, elected officials and the media.

- **Community Partnerships:** We can help agencies develop and sustain productive community partnerships with a broad range of key stakeholders at the case and community levels, making these partnerships a regular part of the agency's practice. We have defined a continuum of community partnerships and help agencies develop local community partnerships.
- **Systems of care:** We help States and Tribes use systems of care models to build a continuum of integrated child, youth and family services. Systems of care provide an organizing framework for system reform and offer a non-categorical approach to improving outcomes.
- **Training curricula:** We provide training curricula and hands on

training and technical assistance in using these resources, stressing a "train the trainer" approach to build agency capacity. Training curricula include *Community Partnership and Linkages: Reaching Out to Work Together* and *Bringing Together the Child Welfare Team*.

Resources

See our website for resources and tools on stakeholder involvement and interagency collaboration:

www.nrcoi.org

Sample resources:

- *Service array tools:* Provides an overview description of the process, and the actual tools jurisdictions use to assess the service array, report the results, and prepare a resource development plan.
- *Stakeholder Involvement in Child Welfare:* Fall, 2005 edition of our newsletter, *Child Welfare Matters*
- Fact sheets, including *Developing Community Partnerships, State/Tribal Partnerships*.

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