

## 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

# Stakeholder Involvement and Interagency Collaboration

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](http://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*.

**For more information:** Contact Steve Preister at the NRCOI, by phone (202-723-0320) or email ([spreister@gmail.com](mailto:spreister@gmail.com)).

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## Assessing and Enhancing the Service Array in Child Welfare

### What is the Service Array in Child Welfare?

Jurisdictions (states, state regions, counties, cities, neighborhoods) are required to have a continuum of services to meet the individual needs of children and families served by their child welfare system. The array of services includes: preventive and voluntary early intervention services; early intervention services for children who have been identified as maltreated or at risk of maltreatment; services for families and children who become part of the child welfare system, including an individualized plan of services and supports that will ensure that the family's children are safe, that they can remain permanently in their home, and that the family members' well-being is enhanced; as well as services and supports to help the child and family exit the system, including family reunification services, services that help establish permanency for the child with an alternate family when reunification is not possible, and post-adoption services.

### How We Can Help Assess the Service Array?

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) can help jurisdictions

assess and develop a plan to expand accessibility and improve the quality of the services provided to children and families in the child welfare system. The assistance, developed and field tested by NRCOI staff and consultants, is a five part process:

- creating a community stakeholder collaborative or building on an existing one;
- completing the service array instrument;
- reporting the results of using the instrument;
- preparing a resource development plan; and
- monitoring the effectiveness of plan implementation.

### Rationale for the Service Array Process

The goal of the process is the assessment of current status of a jurisdiction's service array and the preparation and implementation of a Resource Development Plan. The Service Array Process can help jurisdictions determine what services and supports are available for their families as well as what additional services might be needed.

The Service Array Process may be used for the following purposes:

- to create a service directory for the jurisdiction;
- to assist states in preparing for

the Child and Family Service Reviews, in conducting the Statewide Assessment of the Service Array Systemic Factor, and/or in developing a Program Improvement Plan around the Service Array;

- to help states receiving Federal CAPTA grants meet the requirement to conduct and submit an annual inventory of services in the state;
- to help jurisdictions understand and improve the adequacy of their child welfare service array; and
- to improve collaboration between service providers, or ideally, to create a functioning community stakeholders collaborative as a partner with the public child welfare agency in sharing the responsibility for child safety, permanency, and well-being.

### Community Stakeholders: Key Participants in the Process

For the full process to result in improved child welfare services in a given jurisdiction, community stakeholders must be involved throughout all the steps. Key community stakeholders can include:

- public and private sector providers of child welfare services;

# Assessing and Enhancing the Service Array in Child Welfare

- providers of mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence services;
- educators;
- health care providers;
- court, legal, and law enforcement officials, including CASA volunteers;
- consumers (clients, former clients, youths, foster parents, birth parents);
- other key providers (housing, food resources, transportation);
- representatives of the business, faith, and labor; and communities
- elected officials.

The group needs to be committed to the needs of the community's most vulnerable families and be broad enough to ensure knowledge of the jurisdiction's resources. An existing community group, for example, could be a community collaborative or a group of providers who meet regularly. If such a group does not exist, using this process is a way to start a productive, collaborative discussion. Ideally, this collaborative has some authority and legitimacy to change or influence the service array in the jurisdiction.

## Completing the Service Array Instrument

The actual service array looks different from state to state and community to community. The Assessment Instrument is organized around a continuum of services required in child welfare from prevention to exiting the child welfare system.

There are more than 90 services that fall within one of five categories:

1. community/neighborhood prevention, early intervention;
2. investigative, assessment functions;
3. home-based interventions;
4. out-of-home reunification/permanency services; and
5. child welfare system exits.

No state or community has all of these services, and while all of the services in the array are good strategies, they cannot all be funded. The purpose of beginning with an assessment of the full service array is to define the range of possibilities and create a community-level discussion about the service array.

To complete the instrument, a group of community stakeholders meets and, by consensus, rates each of the services by answering five questions. (A sample of a "Completed Service Sheet" is available from the Resource Center.) This process is an educational experience as participants learn about child welfare services previously unknown to them.

## Preparing a Resource Development Plan, Implementation, and Monitoring Effectiveness

The third, fourth, and fifth steps in the process are to describe the strengths and gaps in the service array and prepare and implement a resource development plan to improve availability, accessibility, and quality of services. This resource plan also includes a description of ongoing monitoring of effectiveness.

**For more information:** Contact Steve Preister at the NRCOI, by phone (202-723-0320) or email ([spreister@gmail.com](mailto:spreister@gmail.com)).

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## Approaches to Collaboration: State-Tribal Partnerships

Tribes have a unique status as sovereign nations, and, as such, Tribal governments need to be granted full status and authority in relationship with the state government. Tribes, then, are not just one of a list of critical stakeholders for child welfare agencies, but independent entities with whom the agency needs to create partnerships.

**State/Tribal agreements:** Some states have formal, written, Tribal/State agreements that recognize and define the role of the Tribal entities in managing child welfare services, and allow federal funds, including IV-E, to be passed through to the Tribes. States that do not have these agreements with their Tribes might consider whether it is possible or appropriate to develop these agreements.

**Other partnership strategies:** Whether or not States have written agreements with Tribes, there are many steps agencies can take to build partnerships with Tribes. Under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), child welfare agencies must ensure notification and communication when Tribal children are taken into custody. ICWA also affirms Tribal jurisdiction over child protective cases involving Indian children, and requires that Indian children be placed with relatives or Native American families. Below are some actions agencies can take to comply

with federal law and to promote quality services for all children:

- Identify all the Tribes in the State and educate caseworkers, supervisors and managers on the State and local level about the Tribes within the boundaries of the State.
- Maintain a centralized, current list of names, addresses, phone numbers of the Tribes, Tribal leaders, and Tribal child welfare directors and staff.
- In States without federally recognized Tribes, identify and work with Tribal agencies or organizations, particularly in urban areas. Similarly, maintain a current list of Native American organizations in the State.
- Involve Tribal representatives in training child welfare staff to stress the importance of asking each new client about Tribal membership regardless of the child's physical characteristics and whether or not the State has any Tribes.
- Listen to Tribes and work to understand the complexity of funding streams and governmental entities that impact on Tribes (federal, state, county, Tribal).
- Work with and invite each individual Tribe rather than only the Tribal associations. Tribes do not speak for one another.
- Enhance policies and processes to ensure better communication among local child welfare staff and Tribes and to consistently col-

laborate with Tribes at the local level (by, for example, establishing a regular meeting schedule between child welfare staff and Tribal representatives).

- Strengthen consultation policies for the child welfare agency to require regular consultation with Tribes (on policy and practice issues).
- Have regular meetings between State child welfare directors and Tribal child welfare directors.
- Hold forums to share data on particular issues and brainstorm barriers and solutions (i.e., recruitment of Tribal foster and adoptive homes).
- Involve Native American organizations in recruitment efforts for Native American families living off the reservation.
- Involve Tribes in Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process:
  - invite each individual Tribe to be represented on broad-based planning groups implementation teams and work groups or committees;
  - meet with Tribes to review statewide assessment and final report data and develop strategies to address issues relevant to Tribes;
  - include these strategies in a strategic plan that is incorporated into the PIP.
- Involve Tribal staff and representatives as members of review teams holding district/local CFSR-style reviews.

# Approaches to Collaboration: State-Tribal Partnerships

- Coordinate with Tribes on training issues; help identify training opportunities for Native American foster parents and staff.
- Train non-Native American staff in culturally competent practices.
- Help fund and support Tribal-led conferences.
- Employ Tribal liaison staff in state agency.
- Employ court improvement specialists focused on ASFA/ICWA compliance.
- Collaborate with and support Tribal applications for grants.

**In Arizona**, AdoptUsKids worked with the state child welfare agency and Tribes to organize a forum on recruiting Native American foster and adoptive homes for children. Nineteen of the state's 21 Tribes participated in the forum where Tribal representatives and agency staff shared ideas about barriers to recruitment and strategies and ideas for making improvements.

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**In Wisconsin**, strategies used to build partnerships with Tribes include:

- working with Tribes to develop a new consultation policy requiring the child welfare agency to consult with Tribes and communicate with them regularly;

- working with the Tribes to implement the priorities they have identified in their Wisconsin Tribal Child Welfare Plan;
- inviting each of the state's 11 Tribes to be part of the development and implementation of the state's Program Enhancement Plan;
- working with the Tribes and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay to create a new Intertribal Child Welfare Training Partnership. This partnership provides training to Tribal child welfare staff and assures that county and state child welfare staff are aware of and adequately implement the Indian Child Welfare Act; and
- employing an Indian Child Welfare Consultant to work with Tribes, counties and state staff on all issues relating to child welfare services for Indian children and their families.

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**North Dakota** has Tribal agreements, which allow it to pass federal funds through to the entities that manage Tribal child welfare cases. In addition, the state has taken the following steps to build collaboration:

- IV-E training funds pass through to The Native American Training Institute, which trains Native

American foster parents and staff; as well as training non-Native American staff in culturally competent practices.

- The director of the child welfare agency meets regularly with the Training Institute and with the Tribal child welfare directors.
- The child welfare agency director serves on the advisory board for the annual Indian Child Welfare conference, and the child welfare agency provides funds for the conference.
- The agency also:
  - supports Tribal grant applications (i.e., national system of care grants);
  - employs a Tribal Liaison in the state agency for coordination and collaboration with Tribes;
  - includes Tribal representatives in regional CFSR-style reviews;
  - provides service grants to Tribal entities for family preservation services; and
  - hired a court improvement specialist to help the agency comply with the requirements of ASFA and the ICWA.

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## Developing Community Partnerships in Child Welfare

### Why are community partnerships important?

The lives and needs of families coming into the child welfare system today are complex and challenging. These families' needs cut across service areas and frequently include services for mental health and/or substance abuse issues, economic support, housing, and others. No one agency or set of services is adequate to restore families to a level of functioning that both ensures their children are safe in permanent homes and enhances the well-being of family members. While public child welfare agencies retain responsibility for child safety, they cannot succeed without all community stakeholders sharing responsibility and supporting these families.

Community partnerships help child welfare agencies respond to families by providing: supports to prevent child maltreatment or its reoccurrence; a range of informal and formal services that work together to share responsibility; and individualized responses to families' strengths and needs. Partnerships result in better outcomes for children and families.

Child welfare administrators and supervisors need to ensure that creating and sustaining community partnerships is a

regular part of the agency's agenda and practice. Workers need the knowledge, skills, and values to create concrete and productive partnerships between the child welfare team, families, community-based service providers (e.g., health, mental health, schools, housing, economic supports), and other community stakeholders (e.g., the faith and business communities, law enforcement and the courts, and neighborhood and civic organizations).

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) defines the continuum and kinds of community partnerships in the graphic on the back of this page.

### How do community partnerships develop?

Community linkages and partnerships develop over several years. Their results and capacity accumulate and move a jurisdiction from less sophisticated community linkages to more

*Partnerships result in better outcomes for children and families.*

sophisticated community partnerships.

For example, if an agency has succeeded at making and using

effective referrals, their next step may focus on developing effective joint case planning with families, other providers, and family supports—perhaps through family conferencing. If the agency already does effective joint case planning, then it may begin work on joint program development.

### How we can help?

The NRCOI helps states develop, maintain, and enhance community partnerships with a range of providers and stakeholders. We also have helped some states prepare for the Child and Family Services Reviews by better engaging community partners.

Our curriculum *Community Partnerships and Linkages: Reaching Out To Work Together* helps front-line workers and supervisors build community partnerships, effective referrals, and joint case planning with the family, other service providers, and the family's network. This curriculum has been used to train the trainers allowing the State to ensure

ongoing training in developing community partnerships.

# Developing Community Partnerships in Child Welfare

Other T/TA we can provide includes:

- We help jurisdictions share organizational infrastructure among public and private provider organizations. Strategies include written memoranda of agreement, joint management information systems, and staff liaisons and co-location.
- The NRCOI assists in creating, maintaining, and enhancing community collaboratives for child protection. In one state we helped create a community collaborative that combined the best in community-based child

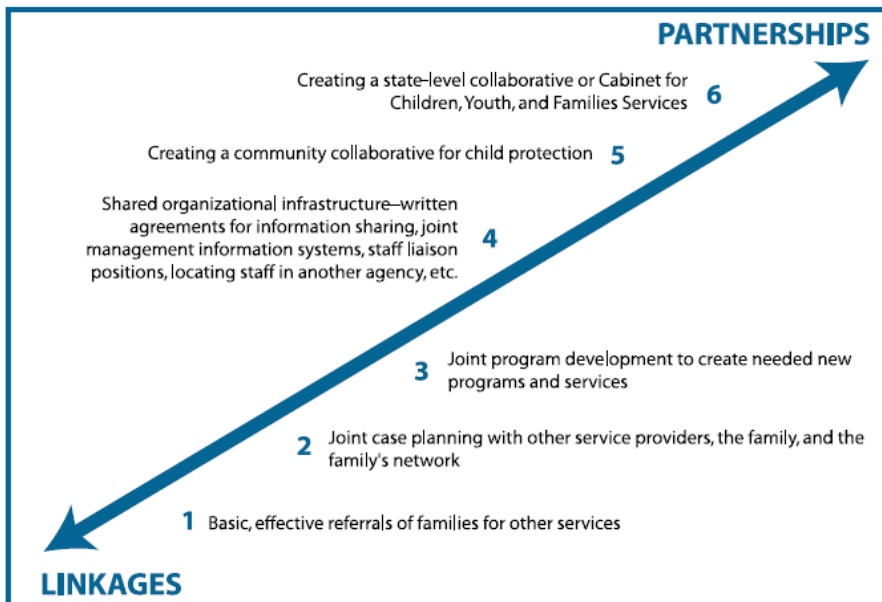
welfare reform with the best in managed-care technologies. Every significant community stakeholder group was engaged and involved in creating the collaborative to deflect children and families from coming into the child welfare system. The state then achieved state-negotiated safety and permanency outcomes at the 96–99 percentile level.

- We have used a “Patch” approach to community partnership and child protection that creates a practice- and results-driven change process accountability for well-being,

safety, and permanency. Named that builds community after a British system of neighborhood services, Patch’s key concept is that effective services must be locally adapted to support the best ways that families care for themselves in particular communities. The neighborhood-based team of public agency staff, family service and support providers, and community-based organizations is central to Patch practice. With community residents and stakeholders, team members work closely with service users and residents to define problems and create solutions that work at multiple levels of the system.

- We can also help create a state-level collaborative or cabinet for children, youth, and families. Local collaboration between different services improves and is facilitated when there is mandated collaboration between public agencies at the state director or deputy level.

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