

Community Partnerships for Child Protection

What is the community partnership approach in child welfare?

The Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare (CCPCW) of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) is supporting an innovative approach to child protection. This approach aims to keep children safe and support families by building partnerships among the public child welfare agency, community-based organizations, and neighborhood residents. CCPCW works with several communities around the country in which partnerships of public and private agencies, professionals, and residents work together to help prevent abuse and neglect, respond quickly and effectively when it does occur, and reduce the reoccurrence of child maltreatment through tailored family interventions.

Because so many families are struggling with multiple issues, the community partnership approach also addresses the overlap of child maltreatment, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, and poverty. Staff from child protective services and partner organizations are all trained in the same practice skills to engage and assess families and facilitate family team meetings. A variety of providers and the family's support network attend family team meetings. They all participate in developing the case plan, com-

mitting their own resources (such as substance abuse treatment) so that the child protective services worker is not left alone to seek out needed services.

This approach has four core elements:

- Individualized services build on strengths and address each child's and family's specific needs.
- Child welfare agency policies and practices support the community partnership approach by enabling staff to work more collaboratively with families and other agencies, helping staff become more connected to the neighborhoods they serve, and providing more intensive services to families who have been repeatedly reported for child maltreatment.

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- Local residents, service providers, and other community leaders share in making decisions about service priorities and the direction of the partnership.

Why is the community partnership approach important?

The community partnership approach provides a framework for those states seeking to change their policies and practices to achieve the federally mandated outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being for children. Beginning in federal fiscal year 2001, states have worked with the federal government to take part in the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR). This review process comprehensively assesses seven outcomes in child welfare as well as seven systemic factors that are critical to an effective child welfare system. Through the CFSR, many states realize that they need to improve their service delivery (engaging and assessing families, develop-

ing and implementing individualized service plans, and linking and working with community-based agencies to support the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and their families) as well as the infrastructure to support family-centered and community-based service delivery. The community partnership approach provides strategies for addressing these areas. States may choose to incorporate this work into their Program Improvement Plans.

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How we can help

Technical assistance for states interested in implementing the community partnership approach can be provided by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and the Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare in the following areas:

- helping states select localities to launch a community partnership approach;
- assisting localities in selecting and forming partnerships through interagency agreements and protocols, joint training, and engaging key stakeholders;
- arranging for peer support from administrators/practitioners from jurisdictions that have already implemented partnerships;
- training on engagement of family members as planning partners;
- training on developing and implementing individualized service plans based on a comprehensive family assessment and a collaborative family team meeting process;
- developing a strong and inclusive local governance body; and
- helping states and localities assess their current practice and develop other strategies for self-evaluation.

For More Information

Contact the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, 1-800-435-7543
e-mail: helpkids@usm.maine.edu



National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

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