Worksheet | **Considerations for Assessing Readiness**

These considerations may be used to determine whether an agency is ready to undertake a significant systems change process such as developing a child welfare practice model. Although there is no simple way to define and measure readiness for systemic change, several common readiness domains have emerged and can be organized as organizational readiness (is the State, agency, organization, community, and/or Tribe as a whole ready to make the needed investment in change) and individual readiness (are individual staff at all organizational levels prepared for the change). When reviewing the considerations, do not expect your agency to be fully ready in every domain, and do expect that readiness will change over time.

By using a Likert Scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), you can turn this list of considerations into a checklist for assessing your agency's specific readiness strengths and needs.

The sources used to create this worksheet are listed on page 67.

Assessing Readiness

Organizational readiness:
- Leadership
- Organizational culture and climate
- Vision, principles, goals, outcomes
- Resources, capacity, caseload and workload
- State of practice
- Infrastructure to support the implementation process
- Staffing and preparation of staff
- Involvement of families, youth, external stakeholders and community
- Cultural competence and attention to disparities

Individual readiness:
- Understanding of the practice model
- Stage of staff readiness (pre-contemplation through maintenance)[i]
- Staff skills (clinical skills need to implement practice model)
- Administrative support for staff participation in the development/implementation process

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ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

LEADERSHIP

_____ Key leaders with decision-making authority have been identified to lead the practice model reform.

_____ Agency management or Tribal governing authorities are aware of the practice model reform and accept their role in it.

_____ Leadership for the effort is intentional, committed and will be sustained throughout the process.

_____ Potential challenges (technical and adaptive) have been identified and planned for.

_____ Leaders are engaging agency staff in the work.

_____ Leaders engage a broad array of stakeholders in the discussions, including leaders from partner agencies and families and youth.

_____ Leaders are committed to the principles and approaches that will guide the practice model reform and use them in their own work.

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[i] Individuals who seem resistant to change may simply be at a lower level of readiness. Stages include pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance. Melissa Van Dyke presentation at Atlantic Coast Child Welfare Implementation Center 2010 Forum, *Staying the Course – Laying the Groundwork For Sustainable Systems Change,* June 15-16, 2010, Annapolis, Maryland, Audio available at http://mediasite.umaryland.edu/mediasite/Viewer/?peid=953ae1374092404a8b9e2d8d5e5c39d21d

LEADERSHIP

_____ Leaders are prepared to devote as long as it takes to implement the practice model reform. They understand that system reform is a long-term process and will pace the implementation.

_____ Leaders have the authority and willingness to commit needed resources to the reform process.

_____ The need for change is clear. Data describing the need for change is shared with internal and external stakeholders.

_____ Potential solutions have been considered.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

_____ Budgetary constraints and the economic climate have been considered and assessed (fiscal resources).

_____ The political climate that may support or challenge the practice model reform has been considered.

_____ Local, State, federal, or Tribal legislative or regulatory changes that may affect the practice model reform have been considered.

_____ Political, economic and social opportunities to promote the practice model reform have been identified.

_____ If needed, contingency planning to address resistance to practice model implementation has begun.

_____ There is sufficient support of the need for practice model implementation and sufficient motivation to make the changes.

VISION, PRINCIPLES, GOALS AND OUTCOMES

_____ The agency's mission/vision has been clearly articulated.

_____ The principles and values that will guide the development of a practice model have been clearly articulated.

_____ These principles are consistent with Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and system of care practice principles.

_____ There is consensus within the agency and among stakeholders about the mission/vision and the guiding principles.

_____ If there is not consensus on the mission and principles, there is consensus that they need to be refined.

_____ The mission and principles define where the agency wants to go.They are linked to anticipated outcomes that will occur when the practice model is implemented.

_____ There is a shared understanding of the goals and expected outcomes, and these outcomes are highly valued.

RESOURCES, CAPACITY, CASELOADS, WORKLOAD

_____ There is an understanding of the resources (personnel, fiscal, and time) required to undertake such an extensive change and to develop, implement and sustain a practice model.

_____ The agency is committed to investing the fiscal and staff resources needed to manage the practice model development process.

_____ The agency is committed to investing the resources needed to implement and sustain the practice model.

_____ Agency leaders have acknowledged the time required for staff to participate in the process (e.g., in planning meetings) and to learn new skills (e.g., training, coaching) and will allocate workloads and caseloads to accommodate these activities.

_____ Staff workloads and caseloads are at a level that will allow them to implement the model with fidelity in their daily practice.

STATE OF PRACTICE

_____ The strengths and needs of the current casework practice/model have bee assessed and there is an understanding of what should be preserved and what should be improved.

_____ The agency wishes to promote consistency in practice across all jurisdictions and within all agency programs.

_____ There is an agency-wide interest in providing quality child welfare practice to achieve good outcomes for children, youth and families.

INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

_____ The agency will provide the institutional resources needed to manage the development and implementation process (e.g., space, staffing, training).

_____ Communication mechanisms to support the implementation process have been considered and/or identified (e.g., mechanisms for communication among workgroups and with the core leadership team).

_____ Structural changes needed to develop and implement the practice model have been considered and/or identified (e.g., a core implementation team made up of diverse stakeholders or a cross-system governance structure to encourage cross-system participation in the process).

_____ Modifications needed to align policies, procedures, or Tribal codes with the child welfare practice model have been considered and/or identified.

_____ Data systems to monitor and support accountability for the implementation process, fidelity to the practice model, and impact have been considered and/or identified.

_____ Other current child welfare projects that may support or challenge the implementation of the practice model have been identified and discussed.

_____ A practical and cost-effective process for implementation has been defined; a work plan outlining roles, tasks, and timelines, and a process for reviewing progress have been created.

STAFFING AND PREPARATION OF STAFF

_____ Staff throughout the agency will be involved in the development and implementation process.

_____ Key internal staff who will lead implementation of the practice model have been identified.

_____ Discussion has begun about how staff will be prepared for the changes that occur with the new practice model.

_____ Supervision/coaching/mentoring strategies to support the development and implementation of the practice model have been considered and/or identified.

_____ Training strategies to support the practice model have been considered and/or identified.

_____ Measures and mechanisms for assessing staff performance relative to the practice model approach have been considered and/or identified.

_____ Needed modifications to current staff recruitment and retention strategies have been considered and/or identified.

INVOLVEMENT OF FAMILIES/YOUTH, EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY

_____ Key external leaders (e.g., top-level decision makers across systems, judges, family and youth leaders, community-based organization leaders, providers, ethnic-based organization leaders, etc.) who will support the implementation of the practice model have been identified and engaged.

_____ The agency is committed to meaningful stakeholder involvement and to partnering with families and youth in the implementation process. The agency has considered or has begun engaging parents, foster parents, kin caregivers, adoptive parents, and youth in the process.

_____ For States, discussions have begun about ways to engage Tribal agencies in the development and implementation of a practice model and about strategies for ensuring the practice model reflects the culture and values of the Tribes.

_____ For Tribes, discussions have begun with States regarding how a Tribal practice model may relate to the State's child welfare practice model.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND ATTENTION TO DISPARITIES

_____ The agency has considered and/or identified how the principles, approaches and expressed outcomes of the practice model will reflect the cultures of the children, youth and families served by the agency.

_____   The agency has considered the impact a new practice model might have on racial, ethnic and/or geographic disparities in the child welfare system.

_____ The agency has delineated strategies for promoting cultural and linguistic competence and decreasing disparities as part of implementation of the practice model.

_____ The agency is including cultural representatives in the development and implementation process.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRACTICE MODEL

_____ Staff throughout the agency (all levels, all roles) have been informed of the process to develop and implement a child welfare practice model.

_____ Agency leaders have considered and/or identified strategies to help all staff understand and accept the practice model (e.g., providing information, sharing early successes, seeking input, peer support and consultation).

STAGES OF STAFF READINESS

_____ Generally, individual staff members understand and support the principles that guide the new practice model.

_____ Agency leaders understand that different staff may be at different stages of readiness and do not interpret an early stage of readiness (e.g., contemplation) as resistance.

_____ The agency understands reluctance on the part of some staff and considers how to balance addressing their concerns and slowing the change process down too much.

_____ The agency has begun discussing ways to bring all staff to a similar stage of readiness.

STAFF SKILLS (CLINICAL SKILLS NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THE PRACTICE MODEL)

_____ The agency has identified strategies to ensure staff will have the clinical skills to implement the new model (e.g., training, supervision, and coaching).

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR STAFF PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

_____ Agency leaders support staff participation in the development and implementation of the practice model and have identified ways to provide them with the time needed for active and representative participation (e.g., addressing workload issues).

References

In addition to the published sources listed below, this worksheet was developed using internal resources supplied by National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, the Mountains & Plains Child Welfare Implementation Center and the National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health at Georgetown University.

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Barbee, Anita P.; Christensen, Dana; Antle, Becky; Wandersman, Abraham; and Cahn, Katharine. Successful adoption and implementation of a comprehensive casework practice model in a public child welfare agency: Application of the Getting to Outcomes (GTO) model, *Children and Youth Services Review,* Volume 33, Issue 5, May 2011, 622-633. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091000352X