

Child welfare matters.

Improving organizations, making a difference



Fall, 2005

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The need for stakeholder involvement is a constant topic of discussion at child welfare meetings across the country. The general consensus among child welfare professionals is that ongoing, active collaboration with a variety of stakeholders is critical. Why? Because public child welfare agencies cannot hope to meet the complex needs of children and families alone. In this issue of *Child Welfare Matters*, we provide some specific ideas and examples of strategies for involving stakeholders in child welfare work.

Your goal is to help children and families. Our goal is to help you.

Much of our resource center work with states and Tribes includes some element of stakeholder involvement, and we have drawn on our experience for this issue's articles. Our website includes more detailed information on our technical assistance related to stakeholder involvement, as well as a number of publications and materials that might be helpful. Please feel free to visit our site (www.nrcoi.org) and contact us with questions or requests for additional information.

We hope you find this issue useful, and we welcome your feedback.

Peter Watson, Director

Stakeholder Involvement in Child Welfare

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.

Why engage stakeholders? 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.

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

Who are stakeholders? A wide range of individuals, groups, agencies and systems can be important partners:

- County agencies
- Children, youth and families served, including present and former clients, youth, and parents and organizations representing them
- Public and private service providers and/or provider associations

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National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

a service of the Children's Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services

Providing free training and technical assistance to State and Tribal child welfare agencies.

Stakeholder Involvement

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- Child welfare agency staff
- Court and law enforcement staff
- Tribes, Tribal agencies or organizations
- Public agencies and providers of mental health care, health care, juvenile justice, substance abuse, domestic violence, and other support services
- Other federally funded services for children and families
- Community representatives, including business/industry/labor; faith based organizations, and professional/civic voluntary associations
- Advocacy organizations—children’s lobbying groups and trust funds
- Elected officials
- Media—newspapers, television, radio

Stages of Collaboration: Agencies should consider the following key stages as they work to expand stakeholder involvement:

- identify needed stakeholders;
- involve them either by inviting their participation or building on existing collaboratives;
- engage stakeholders in an ongoing process, giving feedback and sharing information;
- empower them as full partners, making stakeholder involvement an integral part of agency operations; and
- expand the circle of participants.

Models of stakeholder involvement: As agencies educate others that child welfare agencies cannot be the sole providers of all child welfare services, models of stakeholder involvement—as described below—become more complex and sophisticated.

- **Work groups:** In this most common type of stakeholder involvement, invited or appointed members work in time limited or ongoing groups focusing on specific issues or programs—for example, a task force focused on improving kinship care.
- **Advisory boards or committees:** Members appointed by a government entity or official give input, advice or recommendations, usually on specific issues or programs, such as an Independent Living Advisory Board.
- **Decision making boards or committees:** Members appointed by a government entity or official fulfill a governance role or have the authority to make binding decisions, such as rate setting boards.
- **Convening stakeholders around the service array:** Agencies convene stakeholder groups and give them an ongoing role in assessing and enhancing the service array (see Resources from the NRCOI, p. 6)
- **Community partnerships for child protection:** State and local agencies collaborate with a wide array of stakeholders to build local networks to keep children safe. Examples include:

- The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation sites where state and local governments collaborate with local nonprofit service providers, faith-based institutions, charities, neighborhood associations and community leaders to establish networks of protection and prevention. Some of the initial sites have expanded, and others have adopted the community partnership model (see Iowa Community Partnerships, p. 3).

- The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Family to Family initiative has provided support to many state and county child welfare agencies to build community partnerships, recruit, train and support neighborhood-based resource families, and implement family team decision making to create local networks of support for children and families.

- **Systems of care:** The system of care concept stresses building meaningful partnerships with families and youth at both the service delivery and the policy level, being culturally competent, and integrating care planning and management across multiple levels and systems. Originally developed in the early 1980s for children with severe emotional disturbances, the principles, values and the structural framework are now being applied to other child serving systems. The Administration for Children and Families has funded nine states and communities to develop systems of care and to test their effectiveness in improving child welfare outcomes (see <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/profess/systems>).
- **Aligning collaboratives at the state, the local and the case levels:** To get cooperation among agencies operating as “silos” at the local level, collaboration must happen at the state level. Each plays a critical role: local collaboratives identify service needs and tell how systems are really working, while state level collaboratives see the whole picture, and coordinate and set priorities. Collaboration across these levels supports effective cross system collaboration at the case level, so children and families receive integrated services in day-to-day practice.

Key Factors to Success: A review of the literature (see Resources from the Field, p. 6) and our own experience suggest some factors critical to successful collaboration across all the models:

- Collaboration occurs on multiple administrative levels (state, local and case).
- Efforts build on existing collaborations, and identify how partners can benefit from collaboration.
- Collaboratives develop a shared vision, have clear goals, have meaningful work to do, and evaluate their progress.
- Each member of the collaborative works hard to learn about and understand the other partners (including the terminology they use), fostering mutual trust and respect.
- Direct, open and frequent communication includes informal communication and cross-training.

Community Partnerships in Iowa

The community partnerships initiative works to change the fundamental thinking about protecting children by stressing that no one public agency can safeguard children, but that keeping children safe is everybody's business. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare (www.cssp.org/center), has promoted this approach, and there are now 50 such partnerships around the country. In Iowa, Cedar Rapids received funding starting in 1997 through 2004, and in 2001 additional funding was received to expand community partnerships to five new sites. In 2003 the State legislature provided funding for expansions. As of May 2005, there are community partnership projects in 51 of Iowa's 99 counties.

Community partnerships are a way of ensuring that:

- families and their natural support networks have a role in developing individualized, family-centered case plans; and
- neighborhood and community networks give all stakeholders the opportunity to work together to shape effective supports for vulnerable families and children.

In addition, efforts are made to transform state level policy, practices and culture to support partnerships and to build shared decision making at all levels.

Throughout Iowa, there are decategorization boards, which are local collaboratives that receive flexible funds from the State and are charged with developing preventive, community-based and family-centered services in their

communities. The Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) initiative in Iowa builds on these decategorization boards, providing them with small planning grants to create local shared decision-making leadership groups and develop plans to implement the following four key community partnership strategies:

- An individualized course of action for children at substantial risk of abuse and neglect. In Iowa, this is called Family Team Decision Making. These family team meetings include families, neighbors and social service providers, and the teams develop tailor-made action plans that build on the strengths of families.
- A network of neighborhood and community supports. Each partnership works to organize a network, including: parents, schools, faith institutions, mental health professionals and healthcare providers, substance abuse and domestic violence programs, other providers, police and the child protective services agency.
- New policies, practices, roles and responsibilities adopted by the child protective services agency. This happens both on the local level as workers strive to connect families to the local networks, and on the state level as policy or practice issues that are identified as barriers are addressed.
- Shared decision-making. The leadership group builds bridges between partners in the networks. On the state level, a Community Partnership Executive Committee develops strategies for community

partnership implementation and recommendations for needed policy and practice changes. There are also two regional Community Partnership Advisory boards with broad memberships that coordinate ongoing activities such as sharing practices and peer support across sites.

Some examples of the "bridging" work being done by community partnerships in Iowa include:

- In one project, child welfare staff were not seen as approachable and were not active participants in partnerships. The local shared decision making team planned a neighborhood dinner in a local church, and a carnival of games for families manned by child welfare staff. In another county, members of the partnership got people to write thank you notes to local child welfare workers when they had a positive experience with the system, helping to bridge the gap.
- Through the partnership agency workers can call on neighbors or community resources to help with practical issues like getting rides to appointments or providing child care.
- A representative of a rural ministerial association attends monthly meetings where local providers share information about general needs of families, and brings this information back to the association, so churches can help meet those needs.

For more information, see www.dhs.state.ia.us/cppc or contact Sandy Lint, Community Partnerships State Coordinator at (515) 242-5319 or slint@dhs.state.ia.us

Collaboration in Arizona

In May, 2005, a team of child welfare managers from Arizona's Division of Children, Youth and Families within the Department of Economic Security described their efforts to work collaboratively with stakeholders to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. Below are excerpts from an interview with Katherine Guffey, Child and Family Services Manager, Mark Schwartz, Operations Manager, Esther Kappas, Program Improvement Unit Manager, and David Barnhouse, Federal Programs Manager:

Guffey: How we are framing stakeholder involvement is very important. We are not asking "What do you think our agency should be doing?" but instead "What is your role in bringing about outcomes? What can we do to support you? What can you do to support us?" We are focusing on our roles and on what we can do to support each other as we work towards the same end. Putting the focus on us can lead to finger pointing, and it is not as productive as talking about what we are aiming for together and how we can work together. People get more excited and creative if it is presented not as telling someone else what to do but as "What can I do?"

Schwartz: We have involved a lot of stakeholders through the Governor's implementation of Child Protective Services (CPS) reform. The Governor has taken this initiative with child welfare, and people have been coming forward to assist the agency. Community agencies are really taking responsibility for issues, and starting initiatives where they try to involve us.

Guffey: The Governor's plan for CPS reform involved a lot of people, and representatives from many sectors. The Governor has clout, so if the Governor's office calls and asks you to come to a meeting, you will probably go. The planning process started with a large meeting, then that group broke into areas and developed lengthy recommendations. These were boiled down to some core priorities, and implementation teams were formed including both internal Department staff and external stakeholders.

Kappas: The Governor has also formed at least one community net-

work team in each county. These are less formal than advisory groups, and involve both community members and our staff. These networks have all completed needs assessments, and developed implementation plans around local community needs. A state employee often facilitates these networks, and they have really maintained commitment and involvement on the local level.

Barnhouse: One of the benefits of stakeholder involvement is that these work groups on the state and local levels have often led individuals to volunteer to assist the Division. For example, an artist on one of the committees volunteered to work with ten older children who were open for adoption. They did their own artwork, which then was used on their own child-specific recruitment posters! A lot of stakeholders are thinking—what can I do?—and then coming forward and offering that.

Guffey: We also do a lot of explaining about the federal outcomes—what they mean, and how we measure them. We are working to educate stakeholders about them, and people are starting to use them on their own. For example, we have communicated a lot with the Foster Care Review Board, and in their reviews they have added a new question and a finding on educational needs, and another on service gaps based on the federal CFSR outcomes.

Schwartz: We get a lot of stakeholder input around well-being. For example, the program manager for our comprehensive medical and dental program for kids in foster care recently went into the community to do focus groups to look for suggestions on how to improve the program.

Guffey: We are fortunate because our Program Improvement Plan (PIP) was closely aligned with the Governor's plan. Early on a person from Casey Family Programs who was working on the Governor's plan met with me and asked how they could help, and I said that the Governor's reform plan needed to include the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) outcomes, both because we need to meet them and also because they are good targets for what we want to achieve. He listened, and many of the measures in the Governor's plan are CFSR outcomes—it is really clear that they fit together well. When we did our five-year plan this was very helpful. Things that were being worked on by the implementation teams became part of our plan. So stakeholder involvement in the governor's plan became stakeholder involvement in the five-year plan.

We are working to maintain the stakeholder involvement that the Governor had in her plan. We are building on that good foundation and using some of the same groups of people, and there is a lot of good will.

Guffey: We have so many opportunities for stakeholder involvement that it is sometimes challenging to organize it all. Also, it can be hard to manage. For example, to get broad input from all stakeholders you might end up with a group of 200 people. So how do you make that work? These are some of the challenges, but overall we know we benefit tremendously from stakeholder involvement.

Barnhouse: Stakeholder involvement here is continuous. It happens throughout the year—over all 12 months—and not just as a one-time shot.

Approaches to Collaboration... State-Tribal Partnerships

In an effort to provide information on collaboration with critical partners, we are developing “Approaches to Collaboration” fact sheets—listing strategies and examples—for each stakeholder group or partner. This is the first—check our website www.nrcoi.org for more!

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 collaborate 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.
- 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.

Examples of State-Tribal Partnerships

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.

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; and
- inviting each of the state's 11 Tribes to be part of the development and implementation of the state's Program Enhancement Plan.

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.

Resources from the NRCOI website: www.nrcoi.org

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) can help public child welfare agencies and Tribes engage stakeholders in their agencies, and make the fundamental shift to seeing themselves as catalysts for and partners in collaborative work to improve outcomes. Listed below are some samples. Go to our website for more details.

Service Array: The NRCOI offers a structured process for assessing and enhancing the service array with a service array instrument, forms, and instructions agencies can use to report the results of the service array assessment and produce a resource development plan, and the materials used to train the trainers in this process.

Resources from the Field: New! This is a list of reports, books and journal articles relevant to collaboration in child welfare agencies.

TRAINING CURRICULA

Community Partnerships and Linkages: Reaching Out To Work Together: This one-day curriculum trains child welfare workers and managers to create, use and sustain working community partnerships and linkages for collaboration on the case level.

Bringing Together the Child Welfare Team: This curriculum helps managers, supervisors and staff understand and meet the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). It contains a complete module and training materials on critical collaboration skills.

Coming Soon: Training curricula to assist agencies with the second round of the CFSR process, including a module on engaging community stakeholders.

The Critical Role of Stakeholders in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

My work with state, county and local child welfare agencies over the past four years has convinced me that involving internal and external stakeholders in QI activities bears enormous dividends. Internal stakeholders—staff from throughout the agency—must be involved to make CQI a transformative and ongoing agency approach to the work rather than merely a specific initiative undertaken by a specialized unit. External stakeholders—including children, youth, parents, caregivers, contracted providers and other community partners—bring different and valuable perspectives to the process. They serve as conduits to the larger community, often helping child welfare agencies communicate more effectively about their strengths and engaging the community in efforts to make systemic improvements.

Earlier this year, the NRCOI partnered with Casey Family Programs to develop a new Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). We convened a meeting of national child welfare experts who represented a multitude of perspectives: public child welfare administrators, supervisors, workers and QI staff; constituents served by child welfare agencies, including caregivers and young people; child welfare researchers and academics; and child welfare policymakers. These national experts created a framework to help child welfare agencies develop and implement CQI systems. (You can download the entire CQI Framework from our website at the following URL: <http://www.muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/telefiles/6.09.05.pdf>.)

One critical element that emerged almost immediately is the need to involve stakeholders. The message from our national experts was clear and unambiguous: continuous quality improvement will not be successful unless agencies actively involve internal and external stakeholders at all stages of the process. For example, one of the framework's seven underlying principles focuses on internal and external stakeholders:

CQI is dependent upon the meaningful and active engagement of staff at all levels, children, youth, families, and stakeholders (e.g., caregivers, other public entities, community partners, contracted providers, and courts).

In addition, all of the CQI Framework's six key components include specific details about involving stakeholders in the implementation of comprehensive CQI systems. Stakeholders should participate in the development of outcomes and indicators, receive training in key CQI skills, assist in the collection and analyses of data and information about agency practices and outcomes, and, finally, make targeted recommendations for improvements as a result of these analyses.

The form of stakeholder involvement may vary across agencies, but some typical approaches related to CQI include the following:

- Stakeholders serve on local, regional and state CQI teams that review data and information and recommend programmatic and practice improvements.
- Stakeholders participate as case reviewers on CQI review teams.
- Stakeholders take part in periodic agency strategic planning activities.
- Stakeholders serve on agency advisory boards.
- Stakeholders serve on CQI advisory boards convened to help develop, implement and oversee CQI initiatives.

Child welfare staff understand intuitively they cannot work with families in isolation given the often immense challenges involved. They must engage other government and community systems to help families access the range of services and assistance they need. In the same way, true CQI initiatives focused on improving outcomes for children and families must actively engage the full range of internal and external stakeholders involved in the work to have any hope of success.

Please get in touch if you have any questions or would like more specific information.

Thanks, Peter
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Fall 2005 Teleconferences

See our website for complete descriptions and updates! Register by calling 1-800-435-7543 or online at www.nrcoi.org

Community Partnerships for Protecting Children - October 11

Join us for this call to learn about the community partnerships approach, and to hear about how child welfare agencies are developing and implementing these partnerships today.

Susan Notkin, Director, The Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare

Sandy Lint, Community Partnerships State Coordinator, Iowa Department of Human Services

Other Agency representatives TBA

Child and Family Services Reviews: What to Expect During the Second Round

POSTPONED
To be rescheduled

Staff from the Children's Bureau's National Review Team will overview the expectations for the Child and Family Services Review process as the second round of reviews begins.

Children's Bureau representatives TBA

Engaging Providers in Systems Reform—November 10

Join us for this discussion of the potential of using your purchase of service system as a tool to engage your providers in systems reform!

Representatives of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services

Other agency representatives TBA

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