

# Utilizing Strategic Thinking in Our Child Welfare Work

Jo Ann Lamm, MSW  
Child Welfare Consultant  
March 25, 2010

# Preparation for Strategic Thinking

The **process of strategic thinking** is as important as the content/plan.

Do not begin this if not willing to take risks, relinquish control and embrace partnerships!

Be ready to address sustainability and infrastructure

Identify the drivers and opportunities and be deliberate in challenging how they can **best be used to accomplish your outcomes**. Do not let certain drivers overtake the desired practice and outcomes.

Practice will improve without worrying about what happens if it should all go wrong. But don't be a "Scarlett O'Hara."

# Process for Strategic Thinking

To begin:

- ▶ Articulate what you want to accomplish and why– ex. development of Practice Model
- ▶ Be clear about your intent
- ▶ Engage key partners right away to ensure ownership– front line staff are critical
- ▶ Decide what are the outcomes and vision for Child Welfare?

# Strategic Process

## Drivers and Opportunities:

- ▶ **Desire to change practice** by state and local leadership is the optimum
- ▶ Conducive environment for change
- ▶ Stable leadership at state and local level
- ▶ Hypothesis about effective practice–FCP applying a SOC approach
- ▶ Maximize limited resources
- ▶ CFSR findings to move your change forward– **make it work for you**
- ▶ IVB State Plan submission
- ▶ Legislative Committees, Task Forces, Blue Ribbon Committees
- ▶ Partnerships/Champions

# Strategic Process

- ▶ Use partners to shape change– hands on approach to **all policy and practice decisions with staff**–seek input from families and external partners
- ▶ Hands on approach creates ownership and buy-in
- ▶ Move from philosophical to practice application is the most difficult– it’s too easy to say we have made a change, but we need to demonstrate it with strategies
- ▶ Think about, “What will it look like?”
- ▶ Implement changes in small increments, with flexibility, but with an established completion date

# Strategic Process

- ▶ Parallel processes at both the state and local level for continuous feedback and input from partners
- ▶ Mistakes will be made – constant revisions
- ▶ Realize there are different ways to accomplish same outcome– allow flexibility
- ▶ Support and continuous follow up which addresses infrastructure
- ▶ Message/communication plan– be deliberate in this part of your change

# Future Use of Drivers as Leverage in Strategic Process

- ▶ Use in preparation for CFSR to motivate your change
- ▶ Use the PIP as opportunity to give action (strategies) to your change – be realistic in what can be accomplished in two years, but don't just think about completing PIP, think about outcomes and what you want to accomplish in the long run with a full implementation date
- ▶ PIP should be the means to get to your end–it jump–starts process

# Meaningful Systemic Change

- ▶ Change has ownership and can be implemented
- ▶ Evaluations, CFSR findings and responses from families, staff and partners demonstrate positive outcomes
- ▶ When leaders/champions leave, the change sustains itself