

Building Ongoing Stakeholder Involvement in Program Improvement and the Life of the Child Welfare Agency

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**TELECONFERENCE/WEBINAR
ON MAY 6, 2010
2:30 – 4:00 PM EASTERN
THE NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE
RESOURCE CENTER
FOR ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT**

Why Stakeholder Involvement?

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- Meeting the needs of families and children exceeds the capacity of any one agency.
- To make the systemic program improvements that states need and want to make, agencies must work with other groups and individuals who affect the child welfare outcomes.
- Collaboration with stakeholders helps build the idea that the entire community—not just the child welfare agency—bears the responsibility for safety, permanency, and well being.

Why Engage Stakeholders? (continued)

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- 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.

A Guiding Principle for Collaboration: The Principle of Participatory Design

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- All work with stakeholders needs to be guided by the principle of participatory design.
- The principle: the people who have to do the work should be involved in designing and implementing it.
- Wikipedia provides a definition: “Participatory design is an approach to design that attempts to actively involve all stakeholders (e.g., employees, partners, customers, citizens, end users) in the design process to help ensure that the product designed meets their needs and is usable.”

A Guiding Principle for Collaboration: The Principle of Participatory Design (continued)

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- **This principle is consistent with the concept of the parallel process in child welfare: we need to treat our stakeholder partners with the same respect, participation, and empowerment as we want them to do with the children and families they serve.**
- **Whom to involve in the participatory design process: participation should be as broad as possible—anyone who will be affected by the results should be involved.**

How to Improve Collaboration with Stakeholders: Begin with Assessment (Eco-Map)

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- Some of you (when you were in social work school) learned how to use Eco-Maps to assess your clients' social support system.
- They can be used as well to assess the child welfare agency's current relationships with its community stakeholders.
- So when you want to improve your agency's collaboration with stakeholders, you should begin with an assessment.

Using Eco-Mapping to Assess Current Relationships with Stakeholders

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- On your webinar screen, you'll now see a blank Eco-Map. Conduct this assessment with a representative group of your agency colleagues.
- Place your Agency in the largest circle that is in the middle of the Map.
- In the surrounding circles, write in the names/agencies/organizations of key stakeholders who are critical current or potential collaborators.
- Come to a consensus as a group about your current collaborative relationship with each stakeholder.

Using Eco-Mapping to Assess Current Relationships with Stakeholders (continued)

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- After you discuss the current relationship between your agency (NOT you as an individual) and another agency or organization or network and have reached a consensus about the current relationship, draw one of the following kinds of lines between the two circles:
 - A solid line means a strong, existing, positive relationship.
 - A dotted line means a so-so or weak relationship.
 - A crossed line means a conflicted relationship.
 - No line means no current relationship.

Drawing Meaning from the Completed Map

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- Once the Eco-Map is completed, use the assessment to draw meaning and to develop a plan to improve collaboration.
- With your colleagues, talk about “Where are there dotted, crossed-out, or non-existent lines?” “What do these mean?” “What conclusions can we draw?”
- Then begin developing a plan to improve collaboration.

Developing a Plan to Improve Collaboration

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- For all the agencies with dotted lines, crossed out lines, and no lines, ask these questions:
 - What do we know about the “culture” of each of these agencies?
 - How can we use this knowledge to prepare to “join” the agency staff more successfully?
 - How can we demonstrate to each agency’s staff why they, too, can benefit from collaborating with our agency?
- Use this discussion and information to develop a plan with action steps, tasks, intended effects, persons responsible, and timelines.

Structures/Models of Sustaining Stakeholder Involvement

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- After you have worked to improve collaborative relationships, you will need a structure to sustain stakeholder involvement.
- There are many different structures/models, each with advantages and challenges.
- Choose and create the structure that will best serve the kind of collaboration you are after.

Structures/Models of Sustaining Stakeholder Involvement (continued)

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- **Here are some different structures/models:**
 - Work Groups with a specific stakeholder group for a specific task (e.g., Courts/CIP Collaboratives).
 - Work Groups on a specific topic (e.g., improving service array).
 - Advisory Boards.
 - Decision-Making Boards.
 - Community Partnerships/Systems of Care.
 - Quality Improvement Structures.
 - Ongoing Planning Structures.
 - Case Level: Permanency Teams
- **You will hear about some of these from our panelists today.**

Stages of Collaboration

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- **Identify needed stakeholders.**
- **Involve them—invite their participation or build 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.**
- **Expand the circle of participants.**

Factors in Successful Collaboration

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A literature review and experience suggests some factors critical to successful collaboration across all the models:

- Collaboratives develop a shared vision, have clear goals, have meaningful work to do, and evaluate their progress.
- Efforts build on existing collaborations, and identify how partners can benefit from collaboration.
- 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.
- Collaboration occurs on multiple administrative levels (state, local, and case).
- A structure is essential.

Now We are Going to Hear from the Expert!

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- Iowa
- North Carolina
- Utah