

The NCIC is one of five Child Welfare Technical Assistance Implementation Centers established by the Children's Bureau in October 2008. Our role is to support and facilitate communication and networking across public child welfare systems and to provide resources to support intensive implementation projects that improve the quality and effectiveness of child welfare services for children, youth and families. Each Implementation Center is regionally-focused, serving two of the ten Federal regions. The NCIC will work with the States, Territories, and Native American Tribes in Region 1 (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut) and Region 2 (New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands).

We are members of the Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance Network and will work collaboratively with the National Resource Centers and other members of the Network that are also providing assistance to child

welfare agencies. Our work will be guided by, but not limited to, the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) findings, related Program Improvement Plans, IV-B Child and Family Services Plans, State strategic plans, and the System of Care (SOC) framework. The NCIC team will work with child welfare leaders and managers to:

- improve the quality and performance of child welfare services, based on organizational needs identified and prioritized by the child welfare agency;
- provide expertise and resources to enhance, rather than duplicate, agency capacity to effectively implement and sustain systemic change;
- facilitate communication and peer-to-peer networking across State and Tribal child welfare systems;
- institutionalize child welfare principles, policies, and evidence-based or promising practice models; and
- build and contribute knowledge about effective implementation in the child welfare field.

NCIC Activities and Resources

A member of the NCIC team will serve as the primary point of contact for States, Territories, and Tribes to provide information about and connection to Implementation Center activities.

- A Kick-Off Regional Forum in Spring 2009
 - A 2½-day meeting will include agency leaders, managers, and ICWA representatives from each State/Territory.
 - Experts will speak on leadership and systemic change.
 - Implementation project tools and processes will be presented and discussed.
- Formal Peer Networking Opportunities
 - Regional peer networks will share implementation experiences and provide mutual aid and problem-solving.
 - Topic-driven networks might be within the NCIC regions only or part of a multi-region peer network.
 - Support will be provided through conference calls and site visits.

- Intensive Implementation Projects
 - Selected jurisdictions will receive resources, intensive technical assistance, and support for long-term implementation projects, lasting 2 to 4 years, intended to achieve sustainable system change.
 - Selections will be based on a process and criteria described in a Request for Applications (RFA), to be released in conjunction with the Regional Forum. The NCIC plans to enter into formal agreements to fund two projects, beginning July 1, 2009, and additional projects in subsequent years based on agency needs and readiness.
 - Project phases will include Pre-Project Needs Assessment, Project-specific Assessment & Planning, Implementation, and Sustainability Planning.
- Engaging and Supporting Tribes
 - Outreach will be targeted to Tribes.
 - A dedicated regional gathering for tribes will be held in 2010.
 - Leadership will be provided by the Indian Child & Family Resource Center.

For further information, contact: Susan Kanak, Project Director, 207-780-5840, skanak@usm.maine.edu

Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, PO Box 9300, 34 Bedford Street, Portland, ME 04104-9300
Tel.: 207-780-5810 • Fax: 207-780-5817 • TTY: 207-780-5646 • web: <http://ncic.muskie.usm.maine.edu>

Keys to Effective Implementation

Across the numerous theories describing effective, sustainable systemic change and implementation, there are several commonly identified elements:

- **Leadership Commitment and Executive Sponsorship:** Involvement of the commissioner and his/her executive team is critical to establishing a vision, creating a sense of urgency about the project, and authorizing project managers to carry it out.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** Throughout the process, planfully involve internal stakeholders (including middle managers, frontline supervisors and social work staff) and external stakeholders (including service providers, oversight agencies, schools, courts, youth advisory groups, university partners, juvenile justice agencies, etc.).
- **Family Engagement:** Support families in playing a significant role in project design and implementation to help ensure the project is designed to meet their real needs in a culturally responsive manner.
- **Culture and Climate:** Conduct an environmental scan of organizational culture and climate to understand potential sources of support, readiness, acceptance, resistance, and other reactions.
- **Communication:** A communication plan focused on clear, consistent and frequent communication is an important component of the implementation plan.
- **Cross Functional Project Team:** Create and authorize a cross-functional implementation team or taskforce to guide the project, manage its details, and solve problems that risk impeding success.
- **Operational Details:** Pay thorough attention to the operational details and processes required to align/re-align practice, policy, training, quality assurance, and personnel to support and sustain change.
- **Organizational Structures:** Align organizational structures to achieve horizontal and vertical integration.
- **Resources:** Secure resources for extra costs, effort, equipment, materials, access to expertise, and training for new organizational roles during the project.
- **Ongoing Commitment:** Sustained change requires ongoing resources and support providing time, scheduling for coaching, participatory planning, exercise of leadership, and evolution of teamwork.
- **Frequent Monitoring and Evaluation:** Assess progress and impact and disseminate findings through a clear feedback loop to ensure fidelity to the new practice or program and to guide adjustments needed to sustain the systemic change.