Achieving Permanency Through Interagency Collaboration

Crossing the River

To win, each team must get all of its members to the other bank
If any member gets wet, the team loses
If your entire team reaches the other side, you may eat the candy in the bucket!

Definition from: A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood, April 2005, Casey Family Services in collaboration with California Permanency for Youth Project, Casey Family Program, and Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.
Legal Permanency
Finding youth permanent homes, either through reunification, kinship placement, or adoption

Emotional Permanency
Appropriate, positive connections to adults who support the youth in a real, permanent way.

Permanency Planning
- “A comprehensive and ongoing case planning process directed toward achieving the goal of permanence for children.”
Thorough assessments designed to monitor the performance of State Child Welfare Services

Conducted by the Children’s Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services

Regulations that carry fiscal penalties for non-compliance

Safety • Protected from abuse and neglect • Safely maintained in their home, if possible

Well-being • Families have capacity to provide for their needs • Educational needs met • Physical and mental health needs met

Permanency • Permanency and stability • Continuity of family relationships and connections

CFSR OUTCOMES
Interstate Compact on Placement of Children

The ICPC provides another permanency option for children:...
- Creates a legal agreement between states
- Regulates the movement of foster and adoptive children across state lines
- Requires extensive collaboration between the local agencies and State departments involved

ACTIVITY

Small Groups

- Which type of permanency option does your agency most commonly practice?
- In what ways does your agency promote CFSR outcome measures of permanency for children and youth?
- Which steps of the permanency process can you do on your own, and which ones do you need to do in collaboration with another agency?

Interagency Collaboration

A fluid process through which a group of diverse autonomous organizations undertake a joint initiative, solve shared problems, or otherwise achieve common goals [to find permanence for children].

Adapted from: (Rosenthal, 1995, in Walter and Petr, 2000, p. 494)
In Permanency Planning...

**Interagency collaboration** refers to collaboration “between” staff in two separate agencies (e.g. public and private agencies; agency and court).

**Intra-agency collaboration** refers to collaboration between staff within the same agency (e.g. foster care and adoption; intake and on-going).

What is the recipe for collaboration that improves permanency?

**Ingredients:**
- Each partner contributes
- Brings value and purpose

**Mix:**
- Combined ingredients work together to produce desirable permanency outcomes for children and their families

**Warning:**
- Too much or too little of an ingredient can spoil the overall effectiveness of the product (aka permanency plan)
- Effective collaboration requires each partner to devote time, planning, relationship-building and effective communication with one another for a desirable outcome.

Implications for Practice

**Assessors must be willing to:**
- Enhance their knowledge and skills in collaboration
- Build collaborative partnerships with internal and external stakeholders
- Adopt a flexible, collaborative approach with other service providers to meet the needs of families and children
What's in your mixing bowl?
Write a word/phrase on a strip of paper you think represents a necessary ingredient for collaboration.

Ingredients to Effective Collaboration

Common Vision
Permanency for Kids
Commitment
Communication
Minimize Turf Issues
Adequate Resources
Organizational Culture
Preplanning
Strong Leadership

Circles of Control
No Control
Shared Control
I Control

Developed by the National Resource Center for Youth Development.
"Positive Youth Development: Vital Link" Curriculum.
Barriers to Effective Collaboration

Take a marker and complete the statements on the posters.

Role Confusion
Lack of Participation
Lack of Direct Communication
Lack of Flexibility
Scheduling Problems
Power/Control Issues
Lack of Cooperation
Lack of Mutual Respect
Lack of a Sense of Humor
No Leadership
Resistance to Change
Attitudes

Why Collaborations FAIL...

CHANGE

- Change is inevitable like death and taxes
- Change is hard work!
- No system will ever be ready for change
- People go through predictable steps when change occurs
Common Reactions to Change

Denial  Anger
Feelings Cycle
Acceptance  Curiosity

Three Reasons People Change:

1. They want to change
2. They need to change
3. They know how to change

Organizational Culture

“the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions and beliefs, or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work”
Your organization's visible actions and behavior

Your organization's culture – the unacknowledged forces that drive actions and behavior

Here’s how it really happens….

Stereotyping

Overgeneralization

What’s Your Work Style?

- Supportive
- Emotive
- Reflective
- Directive

HIGH DOMINANCE

HIGH SOCIABILITY

LOW DOMINANCE

LOW SOCIABILITY
Handout 1a

What strengths do you bring to the team?

What characteristics or attributes of others “drive you nuts”?

The Dance of Collaboration

- Shall we dance?
- Who’s gonna lead?
- Wow! We’re dancing!
- I thought I was leading!

Forming
Norming
Performing
Storming

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the barriers to collaboration? Be sure to include cultural differences among agencies.

2. These agencies are in the storming phase. Using handout #10, what strategies should be considered to promote the concept of a shared vision, remove barriers, and facilitate collaboration in this case?

3. How could more attention to the forming and norming phases have prevented the storming phase?

4. What services are needed and which will each partner provide?

5. What role/voice should Tiffany and Mrs. Stevens have in the permanency planning? Who should be on their team? Who should take the lead?
Each smallest act of kindness reverberates across great distances and spans of time, affecting lives unknown to the one whose generous spirit was the source of this good echo, because kindness is passed on and grows each time it's passed, until a simple courtesy becomes an act of selfless courage years later and far away. Likewise, each small meanness, each expression of hatred, each act of evil."

This Momentous Day, H. R. White