

IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY-BASED SYSTEMS OF CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

2005
ISSUE
BRIEF

12

Sustaining Community Based Efforts

INTRODUCTION

Communities throughout the U.S. are implementing a number of strategies to integrate services that result in more family-centered, comprehensive, coordinated, and culturally competent service systems. However, the success of many of these efforts can be hampered by short-term funding or leaders who resign. Keeping sustainability in mind from the beginning helps to ensure that positive outcomes are maintained after the initial funding is no longer available. This issue brief highlights strategies being used across the U.S. to sustain a multitude of community-based efforts.

SUSTAINING PARTNERS

- Identify partners who are passionate about your community who will serve as cheerleaders. This helps to prevent burn out in the rest of the team when it comes to ensuring sustainability.
- Stay alert to adding new partners and strive to look beyond the “usual suspects.” New partners bring fresh ideas, help maintain enthusiasm, and avoid efforts turning stale.
- If it’s a challenge to get a needed agency to join in your effort, consider inviting mid-level staff if top level leaders are unable to commit. Ask a parent representative to invite reluctant agency partners.

• Be willing to participate in someone else’s agenda. For example, schools or Vocational Rehabilitation may have their own agenda on transition to adult life. Title V can support their efforts by promoting the importance of health in contributing to the successful transition to adult life.

• Sustaining membership on interagency councils requires that leadership needs are program-based rather than personality-based. Partnering agencies can establish procedures for designating participants and ensuring consistent involvement

• State and federal legislators make valuable partners in sustaining systems efforts, and they have a strong vested interest in the community which prompts them to want to be involved. Regular, consistent contact is important. Invite legislators to your community meetings, include legislators as members of interagency councils; and ask them for letters of support. Hold legislative forums and educate legislative aides about your community.

• Ensure that the rich diversity of your community is represented, particularly any historically under-represented and newly emergent groups.

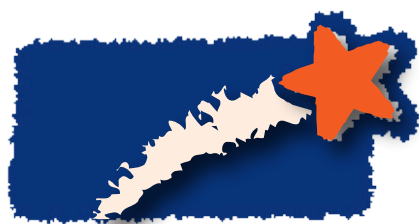
• Think beyond traditional service providers in the community. Expand the vision to include representatives from libraries, churches, and recreation centers.

SUSTAINING PLANS AND STRATEGIES

• Develop strategies that foster collaboration via day-to-day direct service and administrative activities. Provide training to new employees about your community collaborative efforts and establish multiple opportunities for interaction.

• Remember to revise action plans as the needs of the community evolve. For example, increased numbers of minority community leaders require that implementation strategies respond to changing needs. Bilingual providers, cultural brokers, and culturally competent outreach efforts may be needed.

• Dedicating funds to sustain the infrastructure for coalitions and councils is necessary. Agencies should come to expect to contribute funds to pay for secretarial time to record meeting minutes, contact members, etc.



Champions for Progress
A Community of Learners

- State CYSHCN programs are building sustainability into their action plans by asking regional offices to implement parallel local strategies. For example, each regional office can be expected to establish and maintain an active interagency council which must include family representatives.

- Develop training materials that can be used to orient new members to the council.

- Develop training materials that can be used to train new families and providers.

SUSTAINING COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESOURCES

- States such as New York have worked hard to train family leaders, and they're now working toward developing family leadership training policies to sustain the supply of active, effective partners.

- Providers can incorporate cultural competence into job descriptions, training, and in their program evaluations.

- States such as New Hampshire that release Requests for Proposals to communities require the measurement of family satisfaction and use of a continuous quality improvement process, thus ensuring that the communities are being continuously responsive to the needs of families.

- In states like Wisconsin, the policies for the CSHCN regional offices require that CSHCN works collaboratively with community stakeholders.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED TEAMS

As part of a series of Multi-state meetings hosted by the Champions for Progress Center in 2005, state CSHCN staff, family representatives, and other partners discussed the topic of how to sustain community-based efforts. The following questions, based on the work of Tom Wolff, can be used by interagency state and community teams in order to build more sustainable systems of services:

1. Thinking about the sustainability of successful community based efforts in your state, what comes to mind, specifically when you think about the history, future and sustainability of these efforts?

2. Are there parts of what you do that have been institutionalized or adopted by other organizations or systems in your community that help sustain the original effort?

3. Does your state have examples of communities that have been successful in fostering community engagement, ownership and/or changing community norms?

4. Are there policies being created to maintain community accomplishments? Do you take a pro-active stance in generating a policy agenda?

5. What resources/supports have you pursued or gained for your community to sustain and institutionalize your work and what types of support are available to assist communities in finding additional resources for their work?

Useful Links and Resources:

Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu/>

National Center for Cultural Competence, tools and processes for self assessment: <http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/nccc/>

Real Clout: A How-to Manual for Community Activists (1999) by Judith C. Meredith, Catherine M. Dunham. The Access Project.

Sustainable Communities: <http://www.moea.state.mn.us/sc/index.cfm>

Sustainable Communities Network: <http://www.sustainable.org>

Sustainable Measures: <http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/>.

Tom Wolff and Associates: www.tomwolff.com



Champions for Progress
A Community of Learners
champions @ championsforprogress.org

The work reported in this document was supported through a cooperative agreement (#U42MC00241) from the Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal & Child Health Bureau to the Early Intervention Research Institute at Utah State University