

2008 CCPRC Meeting
Session 13 (Plenary Session 4)
Friday, August 1, 9:00-10:15 am

Aligning and Evaluating Services and Systems

Description

The challenges families face in negotiating across services, programs and systems can influence family economic self-sufficiency and developmental outcomes for children. This session highlighted federal initiatives designed to facilitate coordination and integration of services and provided examples of mechanisms for coordination including professional development and collaboration between child care and Head Start. The presenters and audience engaged in discussion about what we know and need to know about the effectiveness of efforts to coordinate and integrate services, programs and systems.

Moderator

J. Lee Kreader, Columbia University

Panel Members

Moniquin Huggins, Child Care Bureau, OFA/ACF/HHS
Beth Rous, University of Kentucky
Diane Schilder, Education Development Center, Inc.

Scribe

Tamara Halle, Child Trends

Documents in Session Folder

Discussion Notes

A handout was distributed that illustrated a framework for different aspects of systems of collaboration, each of which warrants study and has associated questions that warrant further research. The handout identifies a general set of questions about the contexts and components of the initiative, the linkages between the components, and the elements of taking an initiative to scale. The handout was developed by Julia Koffman from the BUILD Initiative.

Moniquin Huggins

- The requirements under the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) require coordination with public health, workforce development, public education, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
- A long history of collaboration exists between Head Start and other services since the early 1990s (e.g., health care-related agencies).
- It takes a long time to develop those collaborations.
- They are designed to help States develop coordination at the State level.
- We also undertake coordination at the national level.

- Head Start/child care collaboration—pooling resources to provide comprehensive services.
- Health partnerships—supporting safe, nurturing environments and children’s healthy development.
- State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grants—building comprehensive statewide services and supporting cross-agency collaboration (funded through the Maternal and Child Health Bureau). Focused on building a system of services at the State and local levels.
- Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS) is an interagency collaboration at the national level. The GSGS Early Learning Guidelines (2002) helped align standards for 4-year-olds with children from K–12.
- Expanding opportunities—strengthening States’ abilities to provide inclusive child care for children with disabilities.
- Early Childhood Systems Federal Partners Workgroup—one of most comprehensive collaborations. Building early childhood service systems to address comprehensive health, early care and education, parenting education, and family support services.
 - Six Federal agencies.
 - State teams to coordinate technical assistance (TA) at the national level to support these State team efforts.
- State initiatives.
 - Health consultants.
 - Health and mental health consultants in child care (joint funding to provide TA to States and to provide intensive TA with several States with child care, Head Start, and mental health services).
 - Specialists for infants and toddlers and children with disabilities.
 - Outstationed in child care resource and referral agencies, child care centers, and public health departments.
 - Trained in child care health consultation.
 - Systems-building.
 - 47 States and Washington, D.C., received grants in fiscal year 2007.
 - Coordination across programs.
 - Inclusive child care.
 - Annual training of State teams for the past 4 years.
 - Coordination across Federal agencies to provide ongoing TA.
 - Early childhood teams.
 - Coordination across Federal agencies to provide ongoing TA.
- We always evaluate feedback from grantees regarding challenges and goals.
 - Monthly conference calls.
 - Responsive to grantee TA needs.
- Establish and re-evaluate partnership goals and objectives with Federal partners.
- Inform research.
- “Setting the table and resetting the table.”
 - Setting and resetting small tables in the past.

- Now we are bringing more people to the table, and this process has been successful.
- It takes time to nurture relationships.

Diane Schilder

- History of interagency collaboration.
- Federal legislative role.
 - Head Start.
 - Child Care and Development Block Grant Program.
- Federal interagency task forces and initiatives.
 - Task forces.
 - National Education Goals Panel.
 - GSGS.
- State legislative and policy activities.
- Foundation-supported initiatives and efforts.
 - Pew Charitable Trusts.
 - Carnegie Corporation of New York starting points.
 - BUILD Initiative.
- Research has been conducted on the following:
 - Systems-level alignment (TANF, child care, Head Start, and quality rating systems (QRS) for additional collaboration and alignment).
 - Head Start and child care.
 - Head Start, child care, and prekindergarten (preK).
 - State-level collaboration.
 - Point-of-service delivery coordination.
 - Provider-level collaboration (i.e., program-level collaboration).
- What have we learned? (We have plenty of qualitative case studies but not many quantitative studies.)
 - Alignment requires consensus on goals and objectives.
 - Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are important (for individuals as well as for State agencies).
 - Communication is critical for success; scoring high on communication was strongly related to benefits.
 - Contracts or documents clarifying the action steps are helpful; State ECCS grants needed a signoff from the key State players.
 - Incentives can prompt alignment and systems-building--grants and other collaborations at the State level have often included incentives; additional funding, training, and TA can help prompt collaboration and then can support those efforts once established.
 - Focus on point-of-service delivery is essential; where are services being delivered? As opposed to gathering around a table to talk about how to break down barriers, it helps to focus on point-of-service delivery and think about the clients (children and

families being served) and the specific barriers or opportunities for collaboration and alignment.

- Collaboration is an ongoing process; we have been at this for decades; individuals are responsible for the program changes; programs themselves change over time; policies change; demographics of the client population may shift; because of all these things, collaboration is an ongoing process. It is like gardening, as weeding and caring for the garden are necessary so that the desired outcomes for children and families can be met.

Beth Rous

- State professional development (PD) perspective (early childhood special education).
- 1970s.
 - Model demonstration grants to develop interventions to support young children with disabilities.
 - Leaving United Cerebral Palsy schools to do reverse mainstream settings--getting children from there into first grade.
 - Collaboration with the school system did not go well.
 - Needed money to figure out how to build the relationship.
- 1980s.
 - State planning grants through the U.S. Department of Education.
 - Kentucky got a State grant.
 - Bring agencies to support children with disabilities; emphasis on collaboration with Public Law 99-457 and the Federal Model Demonstration Grant—STEPS.
 - Part C—early intervention and preschool programs.
 - Model Demonstration Grant helped bring State agencies to this collaboration.
 - STEPS—taking the model statewide.
- 1990s.
 - Statewide TA network development.
 - Head Start, new TA network for special education and preschool partners, new TA for special education, and no TA coordinator for preK or kindergarten at the time it was first established.
 - Train-the-trainer institutes. Focus was on transition. Everyone had a stake in the transition.
 - Replicated in other States.
 - State participation in Federal grant initiatives, such as STEPS and the Kentucky Early Childhood Transition Project, SIFT, and SCRIPT.
- 2000—KIDS NOW.
 - New Early Childhood initiative in Kentucky.
 - State transition plan includes a plan for those from prenatal to age 6.
 - Trainer’s credentials and State transition plan; besides just a special educator, we finally got additional partners; first time that we had a State plan that involved all partners.

- Smooth transition across all programs; child-level plans; regional-level plans; State-level plans.
- What have we learned?
 - Need for dual focus: Find a topic that involves everyone and build a system around that (e.g., transition); PD system and focused content.
 - Mix between what I have to do and what I should do (e.g., regulations).
 - Content to require cross-sector presentation and support; States to Regions to local areas; you cannot have one agency tell another agency what they must do.
 - Preservice to in-service approach; have to embed training for preservice training and reinforce that with in-service training.
 - Impact of turnover, priorities, and resources and philosophy.
 - We need buy-in from everyone at the State level.
 - Every time someone leaves a relationship, it is like a divorce.
 - Every time someone new comes into the relationship, it is like starting over with that agency; the new person does not have the shared history; they want to leave their mark on the agency.

Diane Schilder—Policy Implications

- Research and policy challenges and opportunities.
 - Differences in basic terms and definitions exist.
 - Terms within legislation and policy are used differently.
 - Terms across the levels of government are not consistent.
 - “Dosage” of collaboration often is not clear; some groups have just one meeting to develop their contract or memorandum of understanding (MOU); other groups have as many as six meetings to develop an MOU.
 - Opportunities exist.
 - A glossary of key constructs should be developed.
 - What do we mean by collaboration? Is it simply signing a memorandum of agreement or collaboration?
 - Desired outcomes of collaboration can differ.
 - Redefining “eligibility” can help improve the coordination of services.
 - Changing policy context requires ongoing efforts.
 - Smart Start in North Carolina was not specifically developed through collaboration and alignment, but seating the work at the local level can help foster coordination.
 - Support within and across systems is helpful, but we only have qualitative data to support this idea. We need more quantitative data.
 - Limited research exists on the impact of collaboration.
 - How can you undertake impact research on a complex system?
 - Danielle Ewen has come out with reports for Head Start and preK and for Head Start and child care, but these reports break out collaboration between just two agencies or systems and not a full system.

- How do you randomly assign collaboration? It can be tricky. Perhaps Federal grants could look at varying levels of collaboration and alignment to see whether there are varying impacts.
- Process and outcome research is important.
 - Mixed-method approaches offer opportunities.
 - Mini-case studies and followup interviews.
 - Participatory evaluations.
 - Add-on opportunities to look at this piece with respect to ongoing evaluation research. (For example, QRS evaluations could add questions about systems-building.)
 - Outcome research is needed.
 - What are the most appropriate research methods?

Questions and Discussion (Moderated by J. Lee Kreader)

- What have we learned over the past several decades? How have we improved our ways of thinking about and looking at collaborations?
- The BUILD Initiative framework helps us break apart the components and indicators of successful collaborations.
- The lens through which you look gives you positive or negative perspectives on the topic you are studying. We have seen a lot of work on collaboration in many different disciplines.
 - Literature on special needs populations.
 - Literature on embedding a program in a larger context.
 - The need to be familiar with the sectors that we want to cross. We are generally not good at this process and tend to go with what is familiar.
- We need “to place the child in the middle” and circle all the support agencies around them rather than placing one sector in the middle and circling the others around them.
- Looking at it differently involves a lot of conversations.
- At the Federal level, we speak different languages. You have to understand your Federal partner and the rules and regulations that govern your partner. How do you build consensus around service delivery, such as health services and inclusive child care? It takes time for agencies to get to know each other and to build consensus.
- Logic models.
 - It is important to develop a logic model as a tool to identify the desired outcomes for systems-building.
 - Such a model would also help unpack the underlying assumptions concerning the different partners (e.g., seamless service delivery).
 - Key barriers to service delivery should be identified.
- Participatory evaluation.
 - The more that the researcher is involved in developing the logic model, the more likely it is that the evaluation will be on target.
 - Is it really strategic planning? The evaluator can inform the processes and strategies that are intended to lead to the desired outcomes.

- Players need to understand where everyone is coming from.
- What is the degree to which these systems keep track of the barriers to collaboration among the silos of agencies? Legislation requires collaboration, but disconnects exist between the desire to collaborate and regulations that constrain collaboration. How often are these “lessons learned” shared with legislators at the State and Federal levels?
 - There are barriers to collaboration.
 - Head Start tries to dispel myths and to keep track of the barriers with other agencies. Given opportunities to talk with legislators, we can talk about those.
 - Focus groups between State child care administrators and Head Start collaborators seem to be alright with Federal project officers, but Regional coordinators sometimes say that the money from both sources (CCDF and Head Start) cannot serve the same child.
 - The Partnerships, Alliances, and Coordination Techniques module was a National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center effort to promote partnerships at the State level to try to get information out on a regular basis.
 - There are issues involved in lining up eligibility and reimbursements.
 - Relationships are a key focus. There is a great deal of flexibility within Head Start at the Federal, State, and local levels, but the level of flexibility depends on the relationships. What is your goal?
- Unintended consequences of alignment.
 - Sometimes people use alignment as code for deregulation.
 - Quality must be enhanced, not reduced.
- Child care advocacy groups have worked on a list of items that they would like to see happen. They want to get buy-in from as many groups as possible and then take the issue to the legislature.
 - If one person’s barrier is another person’s loophole, it will not work.
 - To produce a document on which everyone could agree would take a lot of work.
- Relationship-building is based on deciphering the self-interests of the people with whom you are building a relationship. We do not seem to find the time to do this, but it is important to check in with people before and after such collaboration-building meetings.

Key Themes

- We have been building collaboration and seeking alignment across sectors and agencies for decades.
- Collaboration and alignment take time and are an ongoing process.
 - Lead people in agencies change due to turnover.
 - Priorities of agencies change.
 - Policies and regulations change.
- Relationship-building is a key issue.
 - Turnover of people representing partners can be a major barrier to progress in building collaboration and alignment.

- Need to have better agreement across the Federal, State, and local levels about how to reduce the barriers to collaboration across sectors.
- Defining terms is important, as different agencies have different meanings of the same terminology. It would be important to develop a document that defines the key underlying constructs associated with collaboration and alignment.
- Keep in mind unintended consequences.
 - We do not want to reduce the quality of care for children. (Some people interpret coordination as deregulation.)
- The research in this area is limited.
 - Mostly qualitative case studies.
 - Mostly looking at the coordination of two systems rather than at a larger, more complex series of systems.
- We need to develop new ways of researching systems-building and the alignment of services.
 - Need more quantitative data on collaborations and partnerships.
 - Need to grapple with how we look experimentally at the different levels of coordination and their effects on services and outcomes.
 - Look for opportunities to add on to existing evaluations (e.g., look at systems-building within QRS evaluations).
 - Develop logic models to identify the common areas of focus (e.g., transitions) and the underlying assumptions of the various partners.
 - Encourage participatory evaluations, with researchers and evaluators involved in identifying the key components of successful collaborations. Evaluators who help build a logic model will also be better able to design the evaluation studies that measure these components of collaboration and partnerships.