



Partnerships: *Statewide Enhancement of Local Collaboratives*

Throughout Pennsylvania, several important efforts call for the development of collaborative partnerships, county/community planning, and system improvements to improve child and family outcomes. Many of these efforts are driven by federal and state legislation to improve outcomes within categorical systems, and promote close examination of the quality of services delivered to children and their families.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) has supported community collaborative efforts. The ASFA established national outcome areas of safety, permanency, and child and family well-being and identified seven specific outcomes to be assessed through data collection and case review within DPW's Office of Children, Youth, and Families. The *Federal Child and Family Service Review (CFSSR)* process created by this legislation envisions members of a community working together in response to local outcome data to improve child and family outcomes and move in the direction of meeting federal standards.

Locally the Family Service System Reform Collaboratives work in conjunction with other collaborative partners. These include:

- *Communities That Care (CTC) Initiative and Research-Based Prevention Programs*. Funded through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), these programs require the formation of a community board to develop prevention plans based on risk and resource assessments. Support for implementation of these plans can occur through research-based program grant opportunities that are available to local collaboratives. Currently 128 Pennsylvania communities have CTC grants.
- *State Health Improvement Planning (SHIP)*. SHIP allows the Department of Health and local

communities greater flexibility in working together to develop creative solutions for local health problems. Establishing public/private/community partnerships to develop and implement programs and share accountability is central to this health initiative.

- *Juvenile Justice System Enhancement*. Within the Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC), Juvenile Justice System Enhancement seeks to provide balanced attention to the protection of the community, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed, and the development of competencies to enable juvenile offenders to become responsible and productive members of their communities. These concepts envision new and changing roles for offenders and their families, justice system professionals, victims, and communities.
- *Weed and Seed*. A targeted, community-driven, prevention and change program administered by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Weed and Seed includes intensive law enforcement followed by neighborhood revitalization. There are currently fifteen Weed and Seed communities in Pennsylvania.
- *America's Promise*. A public and private partnership, America's Promise mobilizes communities to build and strengthen the character and competence of America's youth by fostering relationships among corporations, foundations, government agencies and private individuals who are committed to making a positive impact on children in their communities. There are 13 "Communities of Promise" in Pennsylvania.
- *Healthy Community Partnerships*. Supported by the Institute for Healthy Communities, an affiliate of the Healthcare Alliance of

The FSSR initiative encourages counties/communities to rethink and redesign the ways family programs and services are delivered, coordinated, and managed.

Elements of System Reform

- **Governance and Leadership:** Governance is the decision-making process by which a community takes responsibility for developing strategies aimed at achieving desired results for children, youth, and families. Leadership is the catalyst for building and sustaining a shared vision and empowering members of the collaborative to share responsibility for attaining desired results.
- **System Change and Policy Reform:** Fundamental changes in the way that agencies and resources are designed and utilized that support improved outcomes for children and families.
- **Results-Based Accountability, Outcomes and Evaluation:** The process by which a community identifies results to be achieved, links strategies to achieve them, and uses objective data to track progress towards these results over time.
- **Capacity-Building and Service Strategies:** The process of giving the community tools to build capacity and plan and deliver programs, services, and practices which achieve positive outcomes/results for children and families.
- **Financing Strategies and Resource Development:** The means through which a community maximizes public, private, local, state, and federal funding sources to implement service strategies aimed at achieving desired results for children, youth, and families.
- **Communications and Public Will:** The process of building understanding and support from all appropriate stakeholders and community members to implement service strategies and system changes to improve results.
- **Professional Development and Training:** The systemic application of resources to enhance leadership and staff competency, and to build capacity for communities and organizations to understand and apply knowledge, skills, service strategies and system changes to improve results.

Pennsylvania, these community partnerships represent a collaborating group of individuals and organizations striving to improve the health and quality of life in a defined community.

FSSR provides a natural link with the major system improvement efforts listed above and provides communities with a mechanism to move in the direction of meeting federal standards. To ensure that these well-founded initiatives do not contribute to fragmentation of services at the state and community level, counties have focused their efforts

on identifying and building upon the natural links among them.

McKean County is one of several counties which reported significant integration of their community collaborative efforts in 2001-02. For all of the community collaborative efforts which exist within McKean County — FSSR, CTC, and SHIP — representatives report that they jointly plan, implement and fund projects, and share outcomes.

Cambria County also reported that the FSSR board, the CTC board, and the SHIP board jointly plan, implement and fund projects. Cambria County is developing a Child Care Services plan with Child Care Resource Developers funding which will be the basis for future development of children's services programs.

The FSSR initiative encourages counties/communities to evaluate collaboratively their service delivery systems, and assess whether their services are having the desired impact on improving children and family well-being. It has caused them to focus on all-inclusive board structures where partners share the responsibilities for planning and funding services to families, ultimately allowing them to deliver services that are coordinated, user-friendly and comprehensive.

Pennsylvania's Investment Strategy

Family Service System Reform is based on a growing body of evidence that says improving child and family well-being over the long term requires planned change based on the best available local, state, and national data. This change requires that counties/communities and the state design and support collaborative partnerships, identify and invest in effective programs, and make system improvements that will improve the lives of children and their families.

To support local efforts, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, through DPW's Office of Children, Youth, and Families, originally formed a state management team comprised of managers from several state departments to oversee the implementation of Family Service System Reform. As local community collaboratives broadened their strong cross-system representation, the state management team was reorganized in September 1999 into the Statewide Collaborative Board (SWCB).

This reorganization and expansion of membership reflected the guidelines used by communities as they developed their local collaborative boards. The SWCB was comprised of various members from

state-level child and family departments (i.e., child welfare, education, health, mental health, etc.), local county/community leaders, and consumers of community-based services. Co-chaired by the Executive Director of the Governor's Community Partnership for Safe Children ("Children's Partnership") and the Deputy Secretary for the Office of Children, Youth, and Families, the SWCB was designed to support and assist community collaboratives in using community-based approaches to improve measurable outcomes for children and their families. In 2001, the work of the SWCB was formally linked to the Children's Partnership through a newly planned work group focusing on community collaboration and leadership.

Committed to improving child, family and community well-being, the SWCB designed a Collaborative Investment Strategy for use in Pennsylvania that strives to achieve the following vision for families: *"All Pennsylvania children and their families will be healthy, educated, self-sufficient, and living in a safe home and community."*

To achieve this vision, there must be recognition that as county/community partnerships demonstrate success in improving outcomes for children and their families, the Commonwealth will be able to demonstrate improved child and family well-being statewide. To strengthen these essential local/state partnerships, changes in both local and state roles are required.

As the "investor," the state values and supports a continuous learning and improvement environment that uses collaborative partnerships, research in strategic development, and an outcomes focus for defining and measuring progress. Officials within state government thoroughly assess the investment of state dollars before it occurs and then work with local communities to ensure that they define and measure progress to meet with success.

As "implementers," counties/communities must recognize that children and families receiving services are their primary customers and that as families meet with success, stronger, more vibrant communities emerge. To meet with success, local collaborative partnerships must set their goals for achieving the vision based upon the outcomes framework for defining and measuring progress. These should draw upon best-practice and research-based programs, principles, and processes for their change activities. Systems become more responsive and flexible, and families are empowered to succeed at their individual goals.

Desired Outcomes for Children and Families

FSSR focuses on innovative ways communities can more effectively coordinate and organize local resources to achieve results in seven broad outcome areas. Short and long-term outcome examples are listed below:

Prenatal and Infant Health

- Increase birth weights of infants
- Reduce infant mortality
- Increase early entry into prenatal care

Healthy Child Development

- Increase children referred for early intervention diagnostic evaluations
- Decrease number of abused or neglected children
- Increase number of children with up-to-date immunizations

Healthy Youth Development

- Reduce births to adolescents
- Reduce juvenile delinquency petitions
- Reduce adolescent alcohol, tobacco and other drug use

Children Ready for School

- Increase number of children entering kindergarten with appropriate school readiness skills
- Increase Head Start enrollment
- Reduce grade retention in grades K-2

Children Succeeding in School

- Increase number of days of school attendance
- Increase number of youth graduating from high school
- Increase test scores at elementary, middle school and high school levels

Safe Families and Communities

- Reduce abuse and neglect
- Reduce out of home placements
- Reduce crime rates for children and adults

Stable and Self-Sufficient Families

- Increase number of parents employed in work that reflects their vocational abilities
- Reduce child and family poverty

The Collaborative Investment Strategy establishes a framework for improving the well-being of children and families. This strategy provides the opportunity for counties to identify their priority outcome areas and implement research strategies to address their needs. Counties/communities must identify improvements in one or more of the seven broad outcome areas of child, family, and community well-being related to achieving the vision. These outcome areas are:

- Prenatal and Infant Health
- Healthy Child Development
- Healthy Youth Development
- Children Ready for School
- Children Succeeding In School
- Safe Families and Communities
- Stable and Self-Sufficient Families

Achieving success within these outcomes areas is important to all Pennsylvanians. Evaluating this success requires developing appropriate systems for holding programs and system improvement efforts accountable while connecting these activities to community outcomes. This requires developing measurement and accountability at three levels— the community level, the system level, and the program level.

The outcomes framework also has seven system change areas that are recognized as important for improving system performance in achieving better results for children and families. These areas are:

- Governance and Leadership
- System Change and Policy Reform
- Results-Based Accountability, Outcomes, and Evaluation
- Capacity-Building and Service Strategies
- Financing Strategies and Resource Development
- Communications and Public Will
- Professional Development and Training

The Collaborative Investment Strategy also contains givens, assumptions, and core principles that are key to the Family Service System Reform initiative. These include the following:

- *Givens and Assumptions*
 - Achieving the vision statement may require significant changes in the way services are provided to families.
 - Collaboration by system leaders is essential to achieving the vision.
 - Partnership between the state and counties/communities is essential.
 - Citizen engagement is essential to achieving the vision.
 - Change efforts must be outcome and learning-focused.
 - Change and sustainability efforts must build on community strengths.
 - Risk-focused prevention is based on identification of risk and protective factors.
 - Change efforts must include both public and private partners and formal and informal systems.
 - Change efforts can be enhanced by research-based, best-practice models and strategies.
 - Change efforts do not need to tackle everything at once. Progress can be made on a step-by-step basis, based on an overall plan.
- *Core Principles: Families*
 - The family is the center of a child's life, and parents know their children best.
 - Families are unique. Therefore, the supports provided must be flexible, based on common sense, and facilitate positive family decision-making.
- *Core Principles: Services*
 - Services must be community-based, flexible, and family-focused.
 - Programs and services must have clearly defined and measurable outcomes.
 - The needs of children and families must be addressed sooner rather than later, with an emphasis on outreach and prevention.
 - Services and supports must be culturally relevant, encourage self-sufficiency, and address issues of poverty as well as ethnic and cultural diversity.

- Services and supports for children and families must be inclusive.
- Service systems must be simple to understand and access.

In FSSR, there is a fundamental belief that families, communities, and government must work together to ensure child safety and well-being, and that families must be regularly involved in making decisions about protecting and ensuring the safety of their children.

Technical Assistance and Training

As the work of collaborative partnerships evolves, issues emerge that are complex in nature and often driven by local organizational and personal agendas. To advance the work and overcome inherent obstacles, local collaboratives receive access to a variety of technical assistance resources designed to enhance their effectiveness in implementing the Investment Strategy. These include a statewide network of technical assistants (TAs) provided through the Center for Safe Schools and Communities, a Collaborative Assessment Tool (CAT), training opportunities, and parent leadership resources.

The Commonwealth has recognized the value technical assistants play in advancing community collaborative efforts. They are employed by FSSR, as well as Communities That Care, and serve counties/communities within assigned geographic regions. The FSSR TAs assist communities by sharing best practices, organizing regional training opportunities based on local need, facilitating the CAT process and strategic planning on a regular basis, and responding to a wide range of issues that arise daily. The TAs provide an independent, objective and informed voice to the counties/communities.

The CAT is designed to assist with the enhancement of collaborative and system change efforts. Each member of the local collaborative completes the CAT, frequently assisted by one of the regional technical assistants. The TA then tabulates the results and provides a report back to the collaborative. The collaborative uses the CAT results to assess progress and achievements, and then to develop plans and goals for the future.

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Training opportunities for local collaboratives include both annual statewide conferences and regional training programs which are organized throughout the year and based on local need. The Building Partnerships for Stronger Communities Conference is supported annually by the Department of Public Welfare and typically draws between 400 and 600 attendees from across the state. To make it possible for parents and local service consumers to attend as county representatives, DPW has covered the cost for two or more consumers to attend the conference from each FSSR county. At the 2002 conference, a parent/resident roundtable was convened to delineate effective ways of engaging parents/residents in these local collaborative efforts.