

# BUILDING A BETTER COLLABORATION

FACILITATING CHANGE IN THE COURT  
AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM



NATIONAL  
COUNCIL OF  
JUVENILE AND  
FAMILY COURT  
JUDGES

TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE  
BULLETIN

*VOLUME VIII  
NUMBER 2*

*APRIL 2004*



*Technical Assistance Bulletin* is a publication of the Permanency Planning for Children Department of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The document was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation or the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Reproduction of this publication for non-commercial education and information purposes is encouraged. Reproduction of any part of this publication must include copyright notice and attribution to:

Dobbin, S.A., Gatowski, S.I., & Maxwell, D.M. (2004). "Building a Better Collaboration: Facilitating Change in the Court and Child Welfare System," *Technical Assistance Bulletin*, Vol. 8(2). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.

© 2004, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. All rights reserved.



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

*est. 1937*

# **BUILDING A BETTER COLLABORATION**

---

## **FACILITATING CHANGE IN THE COURT AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**

**SHIRLEY A. DOBBIN, PH.D.**  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

**SOPHIA I. GATOWSKI, PH.D.**  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

**DIONNE M. MAXWELL, PH.D.**  
ASSOCIATE RESEARCH SPECIALIST

**PERMANENCY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN DEPARTMENT**  
**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES**

Mary V. Mentaberry, Director  
Permanency Planning for Children Department  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

Honorable David B. Mitchell, Executive Director  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
P.O. Box 8970, Reno, NV 89507

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES  
PERMANENCY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN DEPARTMENT**

**PROJECT STAFF**

**Shirley A. Dobbin, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Director  
Research and Development Division

**Sophia I. Gatowski, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Director  
Research and Development Division

**Melissa M. Litchfield**  
Assistant Research Specialist

**Dionne M. Maxwell, Ph.D.**  
Associate Research Specialist

**Jason A. Oetjen**  
Staff Research Specialist

**Rochelle A. Fahlgren**  
Administrative Assistant

**Mary V. Mentaberry**  
Director

**Cheryl Davidek**  
Assistant Director for Administration

For information about this project, please contact:  
Permanency Planning for Children Department  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
P.O. Box 8970  
Reno, NV 89507

Tel: (775) 327-5300  
Fax: (775) 327-5306  
E-mail: [ppcd@ncjfcj.org](mailto:ppcd@ncjfcj.org)

For more information about the Permanency Planning for Children Department,  
please see [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have been possible without the generous support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Through its support of this project, as well as the funding provided to support an earlier project to develop court performance standards in child protection cases, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation has demonstrated its commitment to improving outcomes for the nation's abused and neglected children. The Permanency Planning for Children Department of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges sincerely appreciates the support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and their ongoing efforts to improve outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system.

This research would not have been possible without the assistance of hundreds of system professionals in the six project sites. The project staff would like to thank each of the system professionals who took the time to meet with us, participate in interviews and focus groups, and share their experiences, thoughts, and advice on the process of systems change.

We would especially like to thank each of the Model Court Project Site Lead Judges who shared their leadership and systems change experiences, frustrations, challenges, and accomplishments with us and who provided the necessary level of leadership, support, and guidance in our work in each of their jurisdictions.

Alexandria Model Court, Honorable Stephen Rideout, Lead Judge

Buffalo Model Court, Honorable Sharon Townsend, (Former) Lead Judge

Charlotte Model Court, Honorable Louis Trosch, Lead Judge

Cincinnati Model Court, Honorable Thomas Lipps, Lead Judge

Cincinnati Model Court, Honorable David Grossmann, (Former) Lead Judge

Cincinnati Model Court, Honorable Carla Guenther, Lead Magistrate

Los Angeles Model Court, Honorable Michael Nash, Lead Judge

San Jose Model Court, Honorable Leonard Edwards, Lead Judge

The process of systems change is a daunting and challenging task. In each of the Project Sites research staff had the privilege to meet with, interview, and observe committed professionals from throughout the child welfare system who have dedicated their professional lives to improving system outcomes for vulnerable children and families in their respective communities. Their commitment is commendable and serves to inspire us all.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1:</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2:</b>	<b>The Victims Act Model Courts Project and the Packard Project.....</b>	<b>5</b>
	The Victims Act Model Courts Project.....	5
	The Packard Project .....	5
	Site Selection.....	5
	Data Collection Procedures.....	6
	Analysis .....	8
<b>Chapter 3:</b>	<b>A Framework for Systems Change: The Law, The Best Practices, and The Theory .....</b>	<b>11</b>
	<u>The Law</u> : The Adoption and Safe Families Act and Court Oversight.....	11
	<u>The Best Practices</u> : The Key Principles of Permanency Planning1 .....	11
	<u>The Best Practices</u> : The <i>RESOURCE GUIDELINES</i> and a Culture of Problem-Solving .....	12
	<u>The Best Practices</u> : The Model Courts – A Model for Systems Change .....	13
	<u>The Theory</u> : Understanding Court-Agency-Community Collaboration as Learning Organizations.....	14
	Some Core Philosophies as a Starting Point.....	15
	Key Features of a Learning Organization .....	15
	Systems Thinking .....	16
	Shared Vision .....	18
	Personal Mastery.....	18
	Mental Models.....	19
	Team Learning .....	21
	Creating a Learning Organization: Common Core Themes Across Project Sites .....	22
	Creating a Learning Organization: Identifying Facilitating Factors Across Project Sites .....	22
	A Note on Diversity and the Learning Organization .....	24
<b>Chapter 4:</b>	<b>Effective Leadership to Support Systems Change .....</b>	<b>27</b>
	What are the Components of Effective Leadership to Facilitate and Support Systems Change? .....	27
	Leader as Designer .....	27
	Leader as Steward.....	27
	Leader as Teacher .....	28
	Models of Leadership .....	29
	Judge as Leader.....	31
	Shared Leadership .....	33
	Sharing Leadership / Sharing Power .....	34
	Challenges of Leadership: Understanding the Importance of Management vs. Leadership .....	37
	Challenges of Leadership: Limited Time to Make Meaningful Change .....	39
	Challenges of Leadership: Dealing with Politics and Conflict.....	39
	Challenges of Leadership: Transitions .....	41
	Transition Strategies.....	43
<b>Chapter 5:</b>	<b>Creating a Collaborative, Problem-Solving Culture .....</b>	<b>51</b>
	Creating a Collaborative, Problem-Solving Culture.....	51
	Who are the Stakeholders?.....	52

	Four General Types of Stakeholders.....	54
	The Scope and Structure of Collaborative Groups.....	58
	What Collaborative Structure is Right for Your Community?.....	66
	The Evolution of Collaborative Teams .....	69
	Creating a Shared Vision.....	75
	Encouraging Personal Vision.....	75
	From Personal Vision to Shared Vision.....	76
	A Framework for Developing a Shared Vision .....	78
	The Evolution of the Team: Communication, Dialogue, and Team Learning within a Collaborative Culture .....	78
	Dialogue vs. Discussion .....	79
	Five Basic Protocols for Skillful Discussion.....	79
	Preparing the Ground for Skillful Discussions.....	80
	Building Consensus in a Collaborative Group.....	83
	Building Consensus Phase by Phase .....	84
	The Fallback Position: What Happens When You Cannot Reach Consensus? .....	85
<b>Chapter 6:</b>	<b>Strategies for Effective Meetings and Good Communication .....</b>	<b>89</b>
	Strategies for Effective Meetings and Good Communication .....	89
	Tips and Reminders for Effective Communication .....	93
	Communication Strategies .....	93
	Communication Skills .....	93
	Communication Barriers .....	93
	Discussion .....	94
	Constructive Feedback.....	94
	Conflict Management.....	95
<b>Chapter 7:</b>	<b>The Need for Good Data and Performance Measurement to Support Systems Change .....</b>	<b>99</b>
	The Learning Organization and Measurement.....	99
	Understanding the Multi-Layered Nature of Evaluation .....	101
	Using Logic Models to Guide Evaluation and Measurement Efforts .....	102
	The Importance of Sharing Evaluation Data with Stakeholders.....	103
	The Challenges of Performance Measurement .....	105
<b>Chapter 8:</b>	<b>Strategically Planning for Change.....</b>	<b>111</b>
	Strategically Planning for Change.....	111
	Basic Guidelines for Successful Strategic Planning and Implementation .....	111
	Forward Thinking – Working Backwards .....	112
	Developing a Strategic Plan .....	112
<b>Chapter 9:</b>	<b>Sustaining the Change .....</b>	<b>119</b>
	Putting it All Together: Sustaining the Change in Learning Organizations .....	119
	Sustaining Momentum Once You Have Begun the Change Process.....	120
	The Dance of Change.....	122
	Closing Notes.....	127
<b>Appendix:</b>	<b>Snapshot of Collaborative Accomplishments in the Project Sites.....</b>	<b>A-1</b>

# **BUILDING A BETTER COLLABORATION**

---

**FACILITATING CHANGE IN THE COURT  
AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**



## INTRODUCTION

Juvenile and family courts and child welfare agencies have increasing responsibilities in child abuse and neglect cases resulting from federal child welfare reform laws and national reform initiatives such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA), the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, and the President's Adoption 2002 Initiative. Courts and child welfare agencies face challenges in trying to implement these federal laws and initiatives that have shortened timeframes within which they can achieve placement in safe, permanent, and loving homes for children involved in the child protection system. These institutions are facing increased pressure to be more effective, more efficient, and more responsive to the needs of abused and neglected children and families in crisis, in less time and with limited, and often decreasing, resources.

Merely engaging in typical practice and adopting a "business as usual" approach is no longer acceptable in these times of change, nor is it appropriate. Significant systems change is not only necessary, it is imperative if juvenile and family courts, child welfare agencies, and their community of stakeholders are to meaningfully improve the lives and futures of the nation's most vulnerable children.

In this environment of shifting demands and decreasing resources, evolving knowledge, changing legislation, and increasing accountability, the courts, child welfare agencies, and communities:

- *must* collaborate to improve the child protection system and ensure better outcomes for children and families;
- *must* bring multiple stakeholders to the table and involve them in a strategically focused collaborative process;
- *must* develop mechanisms and procedures to track progress and outcomes, ensure efficient and appropriate use and management of resources (whether dollars, people, or programs), and assess compliance with statutorily and federally mandated outcomes and time lines;

- *must* become problem-solving, proactive organizations that strategically and collaboratively work toward an improved child welfare system and better outcomes for children and families; and
- *must* undergo a fundamental paradigm shift that changes the way they work individually and in concert.

Without a doubt, creating a successful systems change collaborative, and enhancing organizational and system effectiveness, is a challenging task. The process of engaging complex and traditionally autocratic organizations such as courts and child welfare agencies raises issues of turf, trust, and politics. But, aligning disparate goals and practices, ensuring shared responsibility and accountability, building consensus, coordinating resources, facilitating shared leadership, and mutually defining and measuring outcomes are critical components of an effective systems change process.

*Enhancing organizational capacity and developing an effective and sustainable collaborative, as well as institutionalizing a collaborative problem-solving process, is absolutely critical to child welfare reform – especially given the current legal, social, and funding contexts.*

Achieving significant, meaningful, and sustainable systems reform is a daunting task. Jurisdictions across the country continue to struggle with how to begin and sustain systems change efforts in order to meet the demands of ASFA and achieve better outcomes for the children and families they serve. For most of the institutions and agencies involved in child protection, working collaboratively and strategically is a fundamentally different way of problem-solving – a fundamentally different way of doing business. The difficulties and challenges inherent in building a collaborative are often unrecognized and underestimated, both by those engaged in the process and by those who help facilitate and support the process.

Because of the critical need for courts, child welfare agencies, and communities to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and families, it is vital that a framework for

successful court-agency-community change efforts is clearly articulated and the tools, strategies, and understanding necessary to develop such collaborative efforts are shared among jurisdictions.

- ◆ What are the components of effective leadership to facilitate and support systems change?
- ◆ How do you create a collaborative, problem-solving culture?
- ◆ How do you bring together different institutional partners to engage in a process of systems change?
- ◆ Who are the key system stakeholders? Who needs to be at the table and how do you get them there?
- ◆ What do you do with stakeholders once they are at the table? How do you manage the dynamics around the table?
- ◆ How do you build a common vision for systems change and facilitate consensus-building?
- ◆ How do you hold effective and meaningful collaborative meetings?
- ◆ How do you strategically plan for change?
- ◆ How do you articulate goals, define outcomes, and measure change over time?
- ◆ How do you manage transitions and sustain change efforts over the long-term and in the face of new challenges?

This *Technical Assistance Bulletin* is designed to provide the reader with a framework for thinking about the questions listed above and engaging in systems change. Drawing heavily on proven theories of systems change and organizational management, the *Bulletin* outlines the key elements and strategies that support effective and sustainable systems change and uses the experiences of Project Sites to illustrate ways in which these theoretical concepts can be implemented in the real world of child welfare reform.

This *Bulletin* is designed to be useful for collaboratives at any stage in the process of engaging in systems change efforts. For jurisdictions that are in the preliminary stages of

developing a plan for systemic reform, this *Bulletin* serves as a roadmap to guide the planning and implementation of such an effort. For those jurisdictions who are already engaged in collaborative efforts to bring about change, this *Bulletin* serves as a benchmark against which to compare their own efforts and experiences in order to refine and improve their current efforts. And, for those jurisdictions who are already far along in their collaborative efforts in creating systems change, this *Bulletin* presents tools and other useful information to sustain change efforts.

*“Our collaboration can be described as a committed core group of people who are willing to work together and respectfully to make a difference ...everyone has a strong desire to make this system better ...everyone shares the same vision for systems improvement.”*

*Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site*

*“Collaboration improves professional and personal relationships, allowing us to address problems early on, and generate better results - the collaborative interaction generates more resources, funding, energy for change, and creative solutions to problems.”*

*Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site*

*“The progress we have been able to make through collaboration is amazing...we function as a cohesive core committed to the same mission instead of various groups working independently ...there’s a lot of power to effect lasting change in that.”*

*Stakeholder, Alexandria Project Site*



Each of the chapters presents concepts from the organizational and systems change literature and research relevant to the specific topic of

the chapter. Then, how these concepts have been implemented in the Project Sites (and in some cases how they have not been implemented) is discussed. Examples of collaborative accomplishments in the Project Sites are also included in the Appendix of the *Bulletin*.



*Chapter 2: The Victims Act Model Courts Project and the Packard Project*

*Chapter 3: A Framework for Systems Change*

*Chapter 4: Effective Leadership to Support Systems Change*

*Chapter 5: Creating a Collaborative, Problem-Solving Culture*

*Chapter 6: Strategies for Effective Meetings and Good Communication*

*Chapter 7: The Need for Good Data and Performance Measurement*

*Chapter 8: Strategically Planning for Change*

*Chapter 9: Sustaining the Change*

*Appendix: Snapshot of Collaborative Accomplishments in the Project Sites.*



At various points throughout the chapters the reader is directed to the PPCD website for “tools” that will help guide collaborative reform efforts. These tools include sample collaborative meeting agendas, sample training programs, strategic planning forms, collaboration exercises, and links to other helpful resources.

One may wonder why it is important to understand systems change from a broader, theoretical framework. After all, we know from a decade of work within the Model Courts that meaningful systems reform can occur if you have a strong judicial leader, if you identify core best practices and guiding philosophies, if you bring multiple stakeholders to the table and engage them in reform efforts, and if you take concerted steps to sustain change. Once you know that, why do you need to learn about organizational management and systems change theory?

Because, when you better understand the general theory of systems change, it “normalizes” the process and enables you to approach systems change in a more coordinated and strategic way.

- Systems change is a process. Like any process, the process of systems change is

filled with stops and starts, road blocks and challenges, diversions, and missteps. This is a normal part of the process; it is to be expected. Rather than feel defeated or frustrated by the challenges and resistance encountered along the way, you should celebrate them and learn to use them. They are signs of change – they are evidence that the system is moving.

- Systems change is people-driven. Organizations and systems are not “things,” they are a collection of people organized in some form for some purpose. Without people, the system does not exist. Once you understand that systems change is a people-driven process, several realities of systems change become visible.

First, in trying to change a system, we are not trying to change something “out there” that exists independent of us. We are changing us – the people that create and enact the rules, policies, structures, procedures, and practices that may need to be changed. We need to focus on changing people – their attitudes, behaviors, expectations, understandings, interactions, and so forth. We need to engage people – their hearts and their minds -- in the change process.

Second, systems change is an emotional process and likely to be filled with emotional swings at the individual, institutional, and systemic levels. It is necessary to expect and anticipate the emotionality of the process and learn how to manage interactions in a productive way. This is especially true when the reforms and innovations being adopted may be perceived as threatening to people’s jobs, positions, status, authority, resources, and routine.

Third, because systems change is a people-driven process, significant change is possible. It is a hopeful, although often frustrating, process. Never underestimate what a group of committed, talented, and engaged people can do to achieve a vision they all agree on and are committed to realizing.

Fourth, people are creative. Harnessing that creativity, by bringing many different perspectives and talents to the table and

forcing the system to think outside itself, is critical for meaningful and sustainable change to occur. Many of the challenges faced along the path to change that cause the most frustration are “people challenges,” they are derived from emotional reactions to change; and they are normal and to be expected. They are signs of change – they are evidence that the system is moving.

- If the system is moving, it is important to make sure it is moving in the right direction. We need to move the system in a coordinated and strategic way. Not only do we need to see the “big picture” *vision of change*, but we also need to see the “big picture” *process for change*. We need to understand how to ready the system so that change can occur. We need to maximize opportunities and enhance strengths and growth factors. We need to use different practices and goals, disagreements, and divergent thinking as opportunities for learning and growth. We need to make sure that we are honestly and fully identifying and understanding problems, challenges, and poor practices to ensure that we are appropriately crafting solutions that fit *real* problems and result in *real* changes.

Over the course of this project, we talked to people throughout the child protection system about their systems change efforts. A common observation, especially from the judges leading the change effort, was *“I know what it is I am supposed to do, it is the **how** I am supposed to do it that is the challenge.”* An understanding of the key elements and basic concepts of organizational management and systems change theory helps answer the question of how to do it. Such an understanding provides the “big picture” process for change.

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*  
—Margaret Mead

**THE VICTIMS ACT MODEL COURTS PROJECT**

One of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges’ (NCJFCJ) Permanency Planning for Children Department’s (PPCD) major initiatives is the Child Victims Act Model Courts (VAMC) Project, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice. This nationally recognized project seeks to improve courts’ handling of child abuse and neglect cases by producing replicable innovations in “Model Courts.” A total of 25 Model Courts, representing urban, suburban, and tribal jurisdictions are currently participating in the Project and are working collaboratively with their social service agencies and other systems professionals to achieve improvement goals.<sup>1</sup>

The Child Victims Act Model Courts are both advocates of, and models for, change. Working closely with the PPCD and with each other, and drawing on the best practice principles of the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES*<sup>2</sup> and *ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY GUIDELINES*,<sup>3</sup> the Model Courts are continually assessing their child abuse and neglect case processing, focusing on barriers to timely permanency, developing and instituting plans for court improvement, and working collaboratively to effect systems change. Each of the Model Courts is committed to taking a “hard look” at how well their court process is working in everyday practice; how well their court is meeting federal and statutory requirements; how well their social service agencies are meeting the needs of their clients; and how well the child protection system as a whole is meeting the needs of the children and families it serves.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to underscore the meaning of the term “model” within the Model Courts Project. The use of the term “model” is not meant to imply that the Model Courts have achieved ideal practice or created the perfect system. Rather, the Model Courts are serving as *models for facilitating systems change*. In an environment of shifting demands and resources, changing legislation and

accountability, as well as evolving knowledge, reform efforts cannot occur in a vacuum, nor can they be static. Indeed, reform is an ongoing and evolving process. Although each of the Model Courts is focused on specific child-based and systemic outcomes, each is also focused on ensuring that a collaborative process is in place so that reform efforts are ongoing and, to every extent possible, proactive rather than merely reactive. Regardless of which stage of systems change they are currently in, each Model Court is contributing to an evolving knowledge base of *how* to change a complex, interdependent, and highly politicized child welfare system.

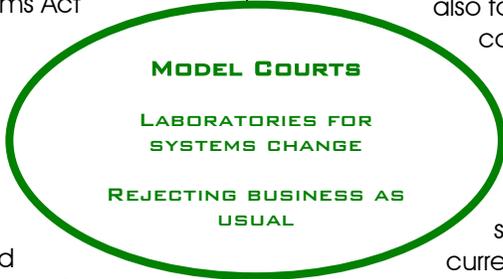
**THE PACKARD PROJECT**

With the generous support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the PPCD conducted a study of the collaborative structures and processes in six Model Court Project Sites. Specifically, the study:

- Identified the components critical to effective change at work in each Project Site, including formal, informal, internal, and external system components critical to the change process;
- Identified practical, concrete strategies which enhance the effectiveness of inter-organizational collaborative groups; and
- Assessed the outcomes of the change process, both objective outcomes related to ASFA mandates, as well as organizational outcomes of special significance to systems professionals.

**SITE SELECTION**

Researchers selected six Model Courts of the national VAMC Project for participation in the Packard-funded study of collaboration. Since building organizational capacity for change and developing an effective multi-agency collaborative is a developmental process, Model Courts at different stages in their systems change efforts were selected as study sites. These Model Courts served as natural comparison sites to each other and served to highlight the challenges addressed at each



stage of the systems change process (e.g., courts at earlier stages of their reform efforts were addressing issues of stakeholder identification, trust-building, and consensus-building; courts at later stages were dealing with issues of institutionalization and sustainability of change efforts and outcomes). Project Sites also had to have been participating in the national Model Courts Project for at least two years to be included in the study (i.e., two years prior to the Packard Systems Change Project inception date of October 2001). This requirement was necessary as a key goal of the study was to share “lessons learned” from each Project Site’s experience with collaboration. Thus, sites needed to have had enough experience with collaboration to share information about its development, implementation, and outcomes. Project Sites were also selected to reflect a range of larger and smaller jurisdictions, and differing court and child welfare agency structures.

**DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

In order to assess the collaborative process and organizational capacity for systems change within each Project Site, the following data gathering strategies were used:

***(1) Semi-structured Interviews with Model Court Lead Judges and Other System Leaders***

Semi-structured interviews with Model Court Lead Judges and other identified system leaders were conducted by project staff. Because of each Project Site’s participation in the VAMC Project, “Lead Judges” and other system leaders were known to project staff. In some cases, additional or “new” system leaders were identified by the Lead Judge for project staff to interview.

Since multiple interviews with single individuals were necessary to collect the information needed for this project, interviews were conducted both in-person and by telephone. With respect to leadership, interview questions focused generally on leadership style and specific leadership tasks; the perceived role of judicial leaders in systems change and how that role is realized in day-to-day efforts; strategies

for managing the politics of leadership; the opportunities and constraints created by the judicial canons of ethics; challenges inherent in transitions of leadership and strategies to overcome those challenges, including steps to prepare for, and ease, transitions; lessons learned, both in terms of leadership specifically and systems change more generally; and advice to other judicial and system leaders. Model Court Lead Judges and other system leaders were also asked to discuss their vision for reform, including how that vision was developed and how it is reflected in reform efforts and communicated across multiple stakeholders. Systems change leaders were

asked to provide a brief history of improvement efforts in their jurisdiction and the role of collaboration in those efforts, including how the collaborative began and evolved, and how effective they perceive the collaborative process to be (i.e., in terms of specific initiatives as well as overall changes in court and agency “culture”). Interviewees were also asked to identify any unintended consequences, both positive and negative, of the collaborative process.

Lead Judges and other systems’ leaders were asked to describe the structure and development of their inter-agency advisory group. For example, interview questions addressed the membership composition of the group, which stakeholders are and are not represented and why; the decision- or policy-making authority of group members and of the advisory group as a whole; the frequency of meetings and the scheduling process; the length of time meetings typically last and how meeting time is managed; the agenda-setting process, including how topics are selected and submitted to the advisory group; and the process of outreach to other system professionals, including practical and procedural strategies for dealing with difficulties encountered when bringing disparate groups together (e.g., turf issues, political pressures, organizational differences in structure, size, complexity, responsibility and authority, culture, and differing definitions of effectiveness and success).



### *(2) Semi-structured Interviews with Representatives of Key Stakeholder Groups*

The Model Court Lead Judges and system leaders interviewed in the first stage helped to identify other stakeholders to be interviewed. Project staff also used their knowledge of each Project Site to identify other appropriate people to interview about the study topic.

During semi-structured telephone and face-to-face interviews, representatives from key stakeholder groups were asked to discuss their perceptions of the leadership in their site and leadership effectiveness; their vision for reform, including how that vision was developed and how it is reflected in reform efforts and communicated to multiple stakeholder groups; perceptions of how well the collaborative relationship among the court, agency, and community is functioning, how well it facilitates systems change, and how it might be enhanced; perceptions of success in achieving systems reform (i.e., specific initiatives as well as overall changes in court and agency “culture”); lessons learned, both with respect to individual agencies specifically and to systems change more generally; and advice to other jurisdictions.

Stakeholders were also asked to discuss the evolution of the collaborative process and to assess whether this process has increased inter-agency communication and coordination, the ability of individuals to effectively network across organizations (e.g., the degree to which individuals know more people in other parts of the system and have the ability to pick up the phone and know who to call), and the degree to which each group understands the roles, responsibilities, and constraints of other system stakeholders.

### *(3) Surveys of Key Stakeholder Groups*

Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholder groups were supplemented with an on-line survey. Using a “snowball sampling” approach, individuals who had already been interviewed were asked to recommend others who might be knowledgeable about system change efforts and collaboration in their jurisdiction to receive an invitation to complete an on-line survey. This survey asked respondents to describe their role and responsibilities in child abuse and neglect case handling; their

experience with collaborative efforts; who participates in collaborative groups; who sets, distributes, and controls the agenda; the level of formality and degree of participation at collaborative meetings; how disagreements are handled and consensus is built; and the mission or vision for the collaborative group.

### *(4) Focus Group of Key Stakeholders*

In some Project Sites, focus groups with key stakeholders were convened to explore, in more depth, the issues raised during the interviews and online surveys. Focus group participants were selected on the basis of interview or survey responses, or at the suggestion of Model Court Lead Judges or other system leaders.

### *(5) Observation of Multi-Agency Advisory Group(s) over a Series of Meetings*

Project staff observed the multi-agency advisory group, and other collaborative groups in each Project Site. Using standardized observation forms, observers noted the nature of discussion and assessed the interactional dynamics among group members (e.g., level of involvement in discussion, level and nature of debate about issues). Observers also assessed the degree to which the Model Court’s vision for reform is reflected in the meeting discourse. Particular attention was paid to how the meeting time was managed, agenda items were dealt with, and follow-up tasks were assigned and carried out.

### *(6) Observation of Work Environment*

Project staff observed work practice and the work environment in each Project Site (e.g., were mission statements, or statements of principles, clearly posted? Were there physical and organizational arrangements to facilitate communication? Was training and meeting space available? Were there mechanisms that facilitated follow-through on assignments and engendered accountability? Did the physical environment embody values of the collaborative – an atmosphere of respect for parties and child-friendliness?).

### *(7) Review of Documentation*

A range of existing documentation about each Project Site’s change efforts was reviewed for this project. To understand the legal context, all relevant statutes and court rules were reviewed,

as well as governing federal legislation. Past *Child Victims Act Model Courts Project Status Reports*<sup>5</sup> or evaluations summarizing the Model Court's change efforts were reviewed, as were other materials about specific programs and court processes.

### **(8) Observation of Dependency Hearings**

Project staff observed dependency hearings in each Project Site, using a standardized court observation instrument.<sup>6</sup> Because a great deal of the Model Courts' reform initiatives have been focused on improving hearing practice, court observations provided a measure of whether or not reforms have been implemented as intended. Hearing practice was also evaluated for the presence of best practice recommendations as articulated in the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES*, and for the interactional dynamics of the parties.

### **(9) Analysis of Automated Management Information System Data or Case File Review**

When possible, data from the court and child welfare agency's automated management information system were analyzed in order to examine outcome data that may be associated with systems' reform efforts. When data from a computer system were not available, researchers implemented a case file review process using a standardized coding form.<sup>7</sup> In some Project Sites, outcome data were also obtained from previous evaluations and performance assessments conducted in Project Sites.

### **ANALYSIS**

At the conclusion of the data collection stage, Project Sites' change efforts were evaluated with a focus on sites' readiness for change; leadership; ideological commitment (a shared vision for reform); collaboration across stakeholders (systems' focus); capacity for measurement of reform efforts; capacity for organizational learning (extent to which each Project Site embodied the principles of a learning organization); and the sustainability of change efforts.

Each Project Site was provided with a detailed report summarizing the findings of the study, including recommendations about how to strengthen and expand their collaborative efforts. Rather than provide a comprehensive

summary of the site-specific findings, the purpose of this *Technical Assistance Bulletin* is to provide the reader with a framework for thinking about and engaging in systems change. Drawing heavily on theories of systems change and experience in the Project Sites, the *Bulletin* outlines key elements and strategies that support meaningful and sustainable systems change.

Drawing on the collaborative experiences of six Project Sites – their successes, their challenges, and their lessons learned – as well as relevant organizational behavior and systems change theory, this *Bulletin* presents an overview of effective systems change strategies, with a focus on moving from theory to practice. Wherever possible, the concepts of effective collaboration and systems change are illustrated by specific examples and advice from the Project Sites. Examples of collaborative accomplishments in each project site are also included in the Appendix of the *Bulletin*.

It is our hope that this *Bulletin* will serve as a resource for courts, child welfare agencies, and communities as they refine their dependency systems to better serve children and families.

**CHAPTER NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Participating Model Courts include the juvenile and family courts in Alexandria, Virginia; Buffalo, New York; Charlotte, North Carolina; Chicago, Illinois; Cincinnati, Ohio; Des Moines, Iowa; El Paso, Texas; Honolulu, Hawai'i; Indianapolis, Indiana; Los Angeles, California; Louisville, Kentucky; Miami, Florida; Nashville, Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; New York City, New York; Newark, New Jersey; Omaha, Nebraska; Portland, Oregon; Reno, Nevada; Salt Lake City, Utah; San Jose, California; Toledo, Ohio; Tucson, Arizona; Washington, D.C.; and the Tribal Court in Zuni, New Mexico. For more information about the Model Courts see *Model Courts: Improving Outcomes for Abused and Neglected Children and Their Families*. (2004). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV. For additional information about the Victims Act Model Courts Project, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

<sup>2</sup> *RESOURCE GUIDELINES: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse & Neglect Cases*. (1995). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.

<sup>3</sup> *ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY GUIDELINES: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*. (2000). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.

<sup>4</sup> *Child Victims Act Model Courts Project Status Reports*. [1997-2002]. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; and *Diversions Project Matrix: A Report from Four Sites Examining the Court's Role in Diverting Families from Traditional Child Welfare Services into Community-Based Programs*. (1998). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.

<sup>5</sup> *Supra*, note 4.

<sup>6</sup> Instruments were adapted from instruments developed in an earlier Packard-funded effort aimed at improving jurisdictions' ability to engage in court performance measurement and judicial workload assessment. See *Building a Better Court: A Guide to Court Performance Measurement and Judicial Workload Assessment in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*. (2004). American Bar Association, National Center for State Courts, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.



**A FRAMEWORK FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:  
THE LAW, THE BEST PRACTICES, AND  
THE THEORY**

***THE LAW: THE ADOPTION AND SAFE  
FAMILIES ACT AND COURT OVERSIGHT***

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA),<sup>1</sup> was, in part, “a response to the fact that more children were entering the foster care system than were exiting.”<sup>2</sup> This landmark legislation clearly and unequivocally established the national goals of *safety, permanency, and well-being* for children in foster care. Five principles underlie ASFA and apply to state courts, as well as professionals working with families through public and private agencies.

- Safety is the paramount concern that must guide all child welfare services.
- Foster care is temporary.
- Permanency planning efforts should begin as soon as the child enters care.
- The child welfare system must focus on results and accountability.
- Innovative approaches are needed to achieve the goals of safety, permanency, and well-being.<sup>3</sup>

Through a combination of legislation, regulations, and executive policy guidance, Congress and state legislatures have given state courts increasing responsibilities in abuse and neglect cases. Courts handling child welfare (child abuse, neglect, and foster care) cases now play a larger role in achieving the safety, permanency, and well-being of abused and neglected children. To help achieve these outcomes, courts must hold more hearings, address more issues in each hearing, deal with more participants in court, and meet new and stricter deadlines. ASFA requires a focus on outcomes and performance reports, and stresses both court and child welfare system accountability. ASFA stresses the need for collaboration and community partnerships that are focused on child safety and timely permanency. ASFA reinforces and expands the court oversight role established in P.L. 96-272 over the child welfare agency through “reasonable efforts” and “contrary to the welfare” findings.

In its *Guidelines for Public Policy and State Legislation*, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau recommends “... that State law specify the following goals of the court process in child welfare cases. First, the court process should protect the health and safety of endangered children. And second, the court process should ensure the timely placement of each child in a safe, stable, and permanent home.”<sup>4</sup>

These *Guidelines* further note that state law should clearly articulate the overall goals of the court process in child abuse and neglect cases. These overall goals should be clear to judges, advocates, and parties, and the law is to be interpreted to achieve the goals of child safety, health, and permanence.<sup>5</sup>

The need to establish, articulate, and adopt overarching permanency goals is also echoed in a 2002 position paper of the Conference of State Court Administrators recommending the “[a]doption of a core set of values and principles that manifest thoughtful care and services of families, and focus on balancing the impartiality of the adjudicatory process with the restorative needs of the family.”<sup>6</sup>

***THE BEST PRACTICES: THE KEY  
PRINCIPLES OF PERMANENCY PLANNING***

Recognizing the critical oversight role of the court in child abuse and neglect cases and the need to focus on family preservation and reunification as a core focus, in 1998, the NCJFCJ articulated the *Key Principles of Permanency Planning*.

- All children have the right to a healthy and safe childhood in a nurturing, permanent family, or in the closest substitute to a family setting. Protecting children from abuse and neglect by their parents/caregivers is the primary goal of the child welfare system.
- All children are entitled to a safe, permanent, nurturing home in order to reach their full potential as human beings. It is preferable that permanency be accomplished within a child’s own family, but if that is not possible, it should be accomplished in a family setting.
- Consistent with child safety, families should be preserved, reunified, and strengthened so that they can successfully rear their children.

Judges must use their legal authority to ensure that social and protective services are immediately available to families whose children have been placed at risk for abuse or neglect. The services should be easily accessible, adequate, appropriate, and delivered in a culturally competent framework.

- Judges must ensure that the courts they administer provide efficient and timely justice for children and their families. Judges must ensure that their family court system has the capacity to collect, analyze, and report aggregate data relating to judicial performance, including the timely processing of cases to ensure the achievement of permanency for children who are under court jurisdiction. Judges must convene and engage the community in meaningful partnerships to promote the safety and permanency of children.
- The child welfare system, including the court and the social service agency, must be adequately resourced.
- Judicial officers must provide oversight of children and families under court jurisdiction to ensure that these children are safe and have a permanent home in a timely fashion and that the parents/caretakers receive due process of law.
- All juvenile and family court systems should have alternative dispute resolution processes available to the parties.
- Judges must ensure that the courtroom is a place where all are treated with respect, dignity, and courtesy, and all members of the court and child welfare system must respect the ethnic and cultural traditions, mores, and strengths of those they serve.
- All parties in child welfare proceedings should be adequately represented by well-trained, culturally competent, and adequately compensated attorneys and/or guardians *ad litem*.
- The juvenile and family court must encourage, promote, and sustain collaborative efforts among juvenile and family courts, social service agencies, and

community-based programs. The court should regularly convene representatives from all areas of the child welfare system so as to improve the operations of the system. Judges should convene the community so that professionals, volunteers, agencies, and politicians can join together to work on behalf of children and families.



For a copy of *the Key Principles of Permanency Planning*, please contact PPCD or visit the website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

***THE BEST PRACTICES: THE RESOURCE GUIDELINES AND A CULTURE OF PROBLEM-SOLVING***

With support from the OJJDP, a multidisciplinary committee worked over a three-year period to develop a written guide to best practices in the handling of child abuse and neglect cases. The resulting document, *RESOURCE GUIDELINES: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse & Neglect Cases*, details dependency hearing processes, provides options for improved practice, and guides juvenile and family courts in assessing and implementing improvements in their handling of child abuse and neglect cases. Upon its publication in 1995, the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* was endorsed by the Conference of Chief Justices and the American Bar Association. In 2000, the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* were supplemented with the *ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY GUIDELINES*, which focused on best practices at the latter stages of the dependency case process. The *ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY GUIDELINES* were also endorsed by the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators.

At the heart of the *GUIDELINES* is a philosophy that emphasizes a problem-solving approach to improving court practice – an approach that focuses on judicial leadership and oversight, as well as collaboration among all key players in the dependency system. Juvenile and family courts around the nation have looked to the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* as a blueprint for court and systems change and have implemented a number of

the best practice recommendations contained within the document.<sup>7</sup> VAMC Project Model Court jurisdictions, as well as juvenile and family courts across the nation, make *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* implementation a key aspect of their change initiative – whether using the document to brainstorm approaches to improving court practice or as a benchmark standard against which to measure their own court process.

Since the publication of the *GUIDELINES*, much consideration has been placed on the importance of courts adopting a problem-solving, restorative approach to case management and judicial decision-making. Part of the impetus for adopting a problem-solving approach is the recognition that the adversarial process may not produce the best results in some cases because it accentuates differences and amplifies conflict. Underlying the problem-solving approach is an ethic of care and restoration; that is, an approach to judicial decision-making that emphasizes treating litigants with a high degree of civility, dignity, and patience, aiding them in taking responsibility for resolving their difficulties, and providing them with access to restorative services. If courts are to help families fashion outcomes that are both legally appropriate and practically workable, court leaders must de-emphasize the adversarial model of dispute resolution and place greater weight on a “problem-solving” approach.<sup>8</sup>

Implementing a problem-solving approach to abuse and neglect cases, grounded in an ethic of care and restoration, necessarily involves greatly enhanced resources targeted at addressing the often-considerable needs of the family. It involves an approach to problem-solving in which judges and court personnel view their roles and actions as defined by both the law and the unique needs of each family. It is not simply a focus on deciding cases quickly, but also dictates a concern for managing families’ cases by helping parties focus on what happened to create the problems, what can be salvaged, how the family can justly resolve differences, and what is in the long-term best interests of the child and his or her family.

The core underlying assumptions of the problem-solving approach are consistent with the *Key Principles of Permanency Planning*, the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES*, and the spirit of ASFA.

- Judges are active participants in the problem-solving process.
- Courts can, and should, play a role in solving the underlying problem.
- Outcomes, not just process and precedents, matter.
- The courts’ coercive power can change people’s behavior.
- Courts cannot carry out the problem-solving role alone. Collaboration with child welfare agencies and the broader community are essential.



For a copy of the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* and the *ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY GUIDELINES*, please contact PPCD or visit the website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

***THE BEST PRACTICES! THE MODEL COURTS – A MODEL FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE*<sup>9</sup>**

Model Courts are, by definition, modeling change – changing the way in which the court responds to, and processes, child abuse and neglect cases; changing the way in which the court and child welfare agency, as well as the broader child welfare community, work together to develop, implement, and sustain

collaborative reform; changing the way in which all system participants define their roles with respect to day-to-day practice and overall reform initiatives; and changing the overall scope and mission of the court and the

child welfare community with respect to abused and neglected children and their families. Ultimately, the Model Courts are changing the system to better respond to, and meet the needs of, the abused and neglected children it serves.

**THE MODEL COURTS ARE MODELS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE.**

A Model Court is a real-time “laboratory” for implementing and evaluating court improvements. Like change itself, “Model Court” is more a process than a “thing.” The Model Courts provide an opportunity for practices, collaborations, innovations, and other system changes to be pilot-tested and refined as part of ongoing systems change efforts.

Model Courts are continually assessing their child abuse and neglect case processing, examining barriers to timely permanency, developing and instituting plans for court improvements, and working collaboratively with system stakeholders to effect systems change. Each Model Court is committed to taking a hard look at how its court process is working in everyday practice.

- How well is the court meeting federal and statutory requirements?
- How well are its social services agencies meeting the needs of the people they serve?
- How well is its child protection system as a whole meeting the needs of children and families?

While Model Court reforms often focus on procedural change – better case management strategies, delay reduction, resource management, and the like – these reform initiatives are embedded within a larger framework of reform that acknowledges the overall mission of the court and the key principles of permanency planning. The overall vision for reform sets the broader context and drives reform efforts, but procedurally focused reform initiatives, developed within the larger context, make the vision and the court’s commitment to that vision, visible to other system stakeholders and the broader community. Procedural and policy reforms that are developed within the context of the overarching mission are the means by which to realize the key principles of permanency planning in practice. The translation of these key principles into practice is a multi-year effort; it is this translation from mission and values to practice and policy that represents much of the work of the Model Courts.

### MODEL COURT ...

- ◆ **MODEL COURT IS AN ATTITUDE**
- ◆ **A MODEL COURT IS OPEN TO CRITICAL EXAMINATION AND REFLECTION**
- ◆ **A MODEL COURT CREATES AN ENVIRONMENT FOR CHANGE**

Although it is beyond the purpose and scope of this publication to discuss the specific achievements and reforms of the Model Courts Project, all of the Model Courts have:

- Established cross-system collaboratives, guided by a Lead Judge;
- Shortened time frames to permanency for children under court supervision;
- Decreased the number of children under court supervision;
- Focused on increasing reunification;
- Focused on increasing adoptions; and
- Focused on ensuring permanency for children in safe and stable families.



The PPCD has a wealth of information available on the reform efforts of the Model Courts. For more information about the Victims Act Model Courts Project generally, and any of the particular Model Courts or reform efforts specifically, please contact PPCD or visit the website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

### **The Theory: Understanding Court-Agency-Community Collaboration as Learning Organizations**

In addition to the legal and best practice contexts summarized above, a large body of theory and research in the area of organizational and change management also provides a useful framework for understanding change in child protection systems. While a comprehensive review and synthesis of this literature is beyond the scope of this *Technical Assistance Bulletin*, in

this section, we present an overview of the core philosophies and key elements of effective systems change that are most relevant to facilitating change in the child protection system context. Most notably, this *Bulletin* draws heavily on the work of Peter Senge and his concept of *Learning Organizations* as a framework for understanding the systems change process.<sup>10</sup> These core philosophies and key elements will be interwoven throughout the remainder of this *Bulletin* and, in subsequent chapters, this framework for systems change will be tied to concrete strategies and change efforts that emerged from our study of six Project Sites.

**SOME CORE PHILOSOPHIES AS A STARTING POINT**

- To be successful and sustain change, a collaborative should be ready and able to learn from its history in order to shape its future.
- To ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated or recreated in another form, it is important for system leaders and stakeholders to be able to recognize mistakes and diagnose problems – whether they are mistakes in expectations, assumptions, predictions, processes, or practices.
- To provide the opportunity for feedback, organizational learning, and evaluation, stakeholders must be willing and able to explore issues creatively, listen to each other, and suspend their own judgments and assumptions – there must be a forum for the free flow of information among system professionals.
- System stakeholders must be open to, and create a demand for, new information.
- Multiple perspectives must be brought to bear on issues. Given the complex and value-laden nature of the child protection system, it is incumbent upon leaders and stakeholders to learn from varied political, social, cultural, religious, ethical, and philosophical perspectives.
- Critical reflection and evaluation afford opportunities for relationship building and empowerment.

*In order to achieve significant systems change, system professionals must be willing to critically evaluate themselves and each other, their practices, and their policies – they must be open to new ideas and be willing to try innovative programs and strategies.*

**KEY FEATURES OF A LEARNING ORGANIZATION**

The theory of learning organizations is based on a fundamental belief in the ability of people and organizations to change and to become more effective. Drawing on this core philosophy, change requires open communication, critical reflection, and empowerment of institutional stakeholders and community members within a culture of collaboration and learning.

**A LEARNING ORGANIZATION:**

- **IS CONTINUALLY LEARNING AND EXPANDING ITS CAPACITY TO CREATE ITS FUTURE**
- **HAS AN INGRAINED PHILOSOPHY FOR ANTICIPATING, REACTING, AND RESPONDING TO CHANGE, COMPLEXITY, AND UNCERTAINTY**
- **IS SKILLED AT CREATING, ACQUIRING, AND TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE**
- **MODIFIES BEHAVIOR AS IT LEARNS IN ORDER TO ENHANCE CAPACITY TO CREATE RESULTS IT FINDS USEFUL**

*To become a learning organization, you must discover how to tap into people’s commitment, provide an environment for learning, and build capacity to learn at all levels throughout the organization and larger system.*

Fundamental to learning organizations is an institutional commitment to learning, which values learning as both a process and a systems-level phenomenon.

*Learning is a process:* Learning in organizations, and systems, means the continuous testing of experience, and the transformation of that experience into knowledge, practice, and policy that is accessible to the whole organization and system, and relevant to the core purpose.

**Learning is a systems-level phenomenon:**

Learning stays within the organization and system even if individuals change.



**All Project Sites are learning systems.** Although they may be at different stages of their evolution as learning organizations, all of the sites

studied function as learning systems. All have formal and informal processes and structures for the acquisition, sharing, and utilization of information, knowledge, and skills. Members of the collaborative groups communicate broadly and have assimilated the key principles of permanency planning into their collaborative efforts and daily practice.

**In all Project Sites, the learning conforms to culture.** The nature of organizational learning and the way it occurred in each project site was influenced by the site's culture, including its size, demographics, structure, resources, community characteristics and history.

**Learning style varies among Project Sites.** The different cultures of the Project Sites resulted in different approaches to acquiring, using, and sharing knowledge and leading change. Some Project Sites have more formal collaborative structures and processes in place; others have more informal collaborative mechanisms. Some sites have a clearly identified leader and leadership structure; other sites are more diffuse and leadership is shared. In some sites the collaboration is more centralized within the court and child welfare agency system, while in others the collaboration is more broadly defined to include members of the community at large. 

Besides an institutional commitment to learning, Senge notes that the mastery of certain basic *learning disciplines*<sup>11</sup> fundamentally distinguishes learning organizations from traditional organizations.

Senge argues that any successful change initiative with a goal of long-term sustainability must incorporate and enhance each of the five learning disciplines within their organization and overall system. Each of the learning disciplines will be discussed below. Subsequent sections

and chapters will provide concrete examples from the Model Court Project Sites of how each learning discipline can be created, implemented, and enhanced within different collaborative structures.

**THE LEARNING DISCIPLINES ...**

- 1. SYSTEMS THINKING**
- 2. SHARED VISION**
- 3. PERSONAL MASTERY**
- 4. MENTAL MODELS**
- 5. TEAM LEARNING**

**➤ SYSTEMS THINKING**

At its broadest level, systems' thinking is an orientation to examining the inter-relatedness of forces that act on a system, and seeing those forces as part of a common process. In systems thinking, the "structure" is the pattern of inter-relationships among key components of the system – inter-relationships that tend to be invisible until someone points them out. Systems thinkers pay attention to the more intangible elements of a system – attending to deep-seated assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs that support and undermine system functioning. While systems thinkers may intervene to improve the system at the level of rules and procedures, work processes, reward systems, material and information flow, physical structure, and so forth, they also focus on the people behind these elements. Because organizations are people-driven, as change efforts move more toward intangible elements, such as people's deep-seated attitudes and beliefs, leverage for effective change increases. That is, you come closer to looking at the underlying reasons why the rules, physical structure, and work processes take their current form, and the formal and informal mechanisms that sustain them. Once you have a better understanding of the "whys" you can develop more effective "hows" – strategies to facilitate deep and lasting systems reform.

*Ask Yourself: What constitutes the "court system?" What are the functional parts of the court that impact the processing of child abuse and neglect cases?*

*Ask Yourself:* What are the underlying and perhaps unarticulated assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes – about children, parenting, families, poverty, community, and such – that implicitly and explicitly guide policy development, resource allocation, and practice within the court system?

*Ask Yourself:* How does the oversight role of the court not only impact the processing of child abuse and neglect cases within the court, but also practice and policy within the child welfare agency?

*Ask Yourself:* What constitutes the “child welfare system?” What are the functional parts of the child welfare system that impact the processing of child abuse and neglect cases and the provision of services to children and families?

*Ask Yourself:* What are the underlying and perhaps unarticulated assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes – about children, parenting, families, poverty, community, and such – that implicitly and explicitly guide policy development, resource allocation, and practice within the child welfare agency and provider community?

*Ask Yourself:* What underlying philosophies and values does the child welfare system reflect to the community through its daily practice and achieved outcomes?

*Ask Yourself:* Who is our “community?” How expansive should we be in defining my community? What parts of the community bring resources, expertise, and services to child abuse and neglect cases? How do community values impact child abuse and neglect cases, resource allocations, and political supports for reform?

*Ask Yourself:* Where do the system components intersect or overlap? Where should they intersect or overlap?

*Ask Yourself:* Are all the parts of the system part of our system reform efforts? Are they all playing an active role in identifying and defining problems and generating solutions?

### Factors that limit systems' thinking

- A lack of involvement of key leaders and stakeholders from each part of the system
- A lack of information about each part of the system's functioning and needs; lack of appreciation for complexities of the system; failing to acknowledge linkages between organizations and systems or seeing that linkages can be made
- A lack of willingness to explore unarticulated assumptions and beliefs
- Organizational politics
- A history of failure, focusing on the prior conflicts among agencies or parties and fallibilities of the past; blaming individuals
- Meeting agendas that are too full, resulting in less group discussion and dialogue, less time to develop shared understandings, less time to explore issues in-depth

### Strategies to enhance systems' thinking

- Ensuring leaders and stakeholders from each major part of the system are represented
- Developing cross-functional teams (i.e., subcommittees with members from each system)
- Developing cross-system goals; pursuing interdisciplinary solutions, and gaining buy-in from the top for system-oriented projects
- A willingness to examine assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes
- Measuring system functioning and sharing the information with the larger group; learning about other system's needs; sharing the assessment burden; making information more available and accessible
- Mapping the organizational arrangements and linkages; developing a system “family tree” to assist in visualizing the bigger picture, the linkages, and any missing pieces

➤ **SHARED VISION**

A shared vision builds a sense of commitment in a group by developing shared images of the future they want to create, and the principles and guiding practices by which they hope to get there. A shared vision provides a focus on a mutual purpose, has the power to be uplifting and motivational, encourages experimentation and innovation, and fosters long-term commitment to change goals. It pulls people together, propels them forward, and provides a sense of ownership and an organizing framework for systems change.

A shared vision is not created by the leader, but co-created through the interaction of individuals in an organization. A shared vision emerges through collective action and agreement as to what types of systems change are needed and the means of accomplishing it.

*Ask Yourself: What is my personal vision for reform? How would I describe the ideal system? Am I communicating my vision for reform?*

*Ask Yourself: Do our practices, policies, and outcomes reflect my vision?*

*Ask Yourself: How does my vision match the vision held by other system stakeholders? Do I know what their vision is? Do their practices, policies and outcomes reflect their vision?*

*Ask Yourself: Do we have a common vision? Do we act, as independent organizations and as a collaborative, in accordance with that vision?*

**Factors that limit shared vision**

- A vision that is imposed on the group; no input from group on the development of the vision
- A vision that is created by a formal, authoritative group (i.e., by the leaders only) and not by the group
- Leaders who do not walk the talk (i.e., their behaviors are not in line with their articulated vision)

**Strategies to enhance shared vision**

- Leaders communicate a clear case for change and collaboration and also encourage input from the group about the vision
- A view of the system as a set of overlapping communities with a shared sense of purpose
- Developing a framework for collaboration by clearly articulating roles and responsibilities
- Group has input into goal development and vision creation

➤ **PERSONAL MASTERY**

Personal mastery is an individual process of reflection where one continually strives to clarify his or her thinking and deepen his or her personal vision. People with a high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode. People with a high level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance and competencies, and are aware of areas requiring the development of new skills and knowledge. Individuals who practice personal mastery become systems thinkers who see the interconnectedness of everything around them and, as a result, they feel more connected to the whole. It is exactly this type of individual that one needs at every level of an organization for the organization to learn. Individuals who practice personal mastery do not compliantly accept change. Instead, they do whatever they can to keep change alive both personally and at a systems level because they are intrinsically motivated to do so.

Another aspect of personal mastery involves effectively managing the “creative tension” that results when a gap exists between where one is currently functioning and where one wants to be. Using the image of a rubber band pulled between two hands, Senge explains that the hand on the top represents where one wants to be and the hand on the bottom represents where one currently is. The tension on the rubber band as it is pulled between the two hands is what gives an individual a creative drive. Creativity results when one is so unsatisfied with the current situation that one is driven to change it.

With personal mastery comes a clear conception of reality – the ability to see reality as it truly is, without biases or flawed assumptions. If one has an accurate view of reality, one will see constraints that are present. The creative individual knows that life involves working within constraints and will not waiver in trying to achieve the vision. Creativity involves using the constraints to one's advantage.

*Ask Yourself: How personally committed am I to leading, or engaging in, this change effort? Am I willing to make the necessary commitment of time and resources?*

*Ask Yourself: Do I feel energized by the change process or defeated by it?*

*Ask Yourself: Can I be honest with myself about the current reality of the system and how well we are serving children and families? Am I willing to seek information about, and honestly and accurately assess, system barriers and bad practices?*

### Factors that limit personal mastery

- Input from individuals in the group is not solicited or acted upon
- Feelings of powerlessness to make change
- Individuals feel leaders are dishonest about reality
- A lack of accurate information and data about reality; or information and data is available but kept “secret” and not shared
- A lack of opportunities to train or learn about new approaches; creativity is not supported or encouraged

### Strategies to enhance personal mastery

- Leaders function as mentors and coaches; encouraging stakeholders to act
- Personal commitment to change
- Group members have made a personal choice to be at the table; intrinsically motivated to participate in change process
- Respect for group members; a formal policy that stresses there is no point in blaming individuals for system-related problems
- Frequent structured opportunities for dialogue (e.g., regular meetings) and trainings
- Frequent informal opportunities for dialogue and discussion

### ➤ MENTAL MODELS

Mental models are images, assumptions, and stories that we carry in our minds about ourselves, other people, institutions, and every aspect of the world. Our mental models are deeply ingrained generalizations and assumptions about how the world operates and our expectations of others. Mental models have a great deal of influence on how we understand the world and the actions we take. In a learning organization, individuals will reflect upon these mental models, continually clarifying, correcting, and improving their internal pictures of the world. In a learning organization, personally held mental models are also challenged by others. Much like a physical map that must be updated continually to reflect changes in geography, mental models are our

internal maps of the world and they too have to be updated to incorporate changes and improvements in knowledge. Individuals in learning organizations welcome and engage in “learningful” conversations where people expose their own mental models and open up their thinking to the influence of others.

“Learningful” conversations can only take place if organizations foster an environment of openness and dialogue. Barriers to openness, such as internal politics and game playing, need to be overcome, and opportunities provided for people to safely share their mental models, challenge faulty assumptions, and learn new orientations.

Senge discusses challenging mental models as traveling along a *ladder of inference*.<sup>12</sup>

- First, one observes something (e.g., a behavior, a conversation, etc.) – the bottom rung of a ladder.
- One then applies his or her own theories to the observation and infers meaning – which may or may not be accurate) – thus begins the movement up to the next rung of the ladder.
- Subsequent rungs on the ladder are the assumptions we make, conclusions we draw, beliefs we come to have about the world, and finally, the action we decide to take. Assumptions and inferences build on prior assumptions and inferences, all of which are probably inaccurate to at least some extent. As we climb farther up the ladder, we are becoming more abstract in our thoughts and moving further away from the original observation that began the process. We are moving further away from an accurate depiction of reality.

Unfortunately, our flawed mental models usually cause us to make mistakes in this process of abstraction, and we end up with inappropriate actions. We generalize our beliefs and assumptions to the next situation we encounter and use them to filter the data we are willing to consider. Hence, every time we start up the ladder for a new situation, we are handicapped from the beginning.<sup>13</sup>

*Ask Yourself: Am I willing to examine my own*

*beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes?*

*Ask Yourself: What assumptions or attitudes do I hold with respect to parenting, poverty, race, and ethnicity, etc. that might be influencing how I perform my professional role and make decisions? Am I willing to examine and challenge those underlying assumptions or attitudes?*

*Ask Yourself: How does my attitude about the role of the judge and the court influence how I perform my professional role and make decisions? Am I willing to examine and challenge those underlying assumptions or attitudes?*

*Ask Yourself: How does my attitude about the role of the child welfare agency influence how I perform my professional role and make decisions? How does my attitude about case work practice influence how I perform my professional role and make decisions? Am I willing to examine and challenge those underlying assumptions or attitudes?*

*Ask Yourself: How open am I to considering other people’s perspectives and opinions? How comfortable am I having my assumptions, perspectives, opinions, and attitudes challenged by others?*

**Factors that limit mental models**

- Lack of willingness to challenge your own and others assumptions, opinions, and attitudes
- Topics that are off-limits for discussion (e.g., avoid potential disagreement by philosophy of “letting sleeping dogs lie”)
- A lack of information about other’s role, responsibilities, perspective and experiences
- A lack of willingness to explore other perspectives

**Strategies to enhance mental models**

- Willingness to challenge your own and others assumptions, opinions, and attitudes
- Regularly meeting with group where multiple perspectives and opinions are shared
- Throwing out “sleeping dogs” and encouraging discussion; providing a safe environment for openness
- Leaders who set an example of openness and see diversity in opinion as an asset
- Sharing meeting minutes with all stakeholders

as opposed to focusing on personalities and politics.

*Ask Yourself: Is there shared leadership? Is there a clearly articulated and shared vision that is common across system stakeholders?*

*Ask Yourself: Are we having real discussions and dialogues about issues or are we just “going through the motions”?*

*Ask Yourself: Has an environment been created in which I feel comfortable to express my thoughts and ideas, even when there is disagreement, in a professionally appropriate and respectful way?*

**Factors that limit team learning**

- A lack of shared leadership; change efforts that are driven by strong personalities rather than the group as a whole
- A lack of clear direction for the group’s efforts (e.g., lack of clearly articulated goals and steps to achieve those goals)
- A climate where openness is not encouraged; individuals fear negative consequences for expressing opinions

**Strategies to enhance team learning**

- Clearly defining roles and responsibilities for all group members in the change process
- Goals require participation from different stakeholder groups if they are to be achieved (i.e., system-oriented goals)
- Sharing of information about progress of group efforts; sharing of meeting minutes with all stakeholders, including those who do not participate in the group

➤ **TEAM LEARNING**

Team learning is not simply “team building.” Team learning requires fundamental changes in the way individuals learn collectively. Team learning builds on personal mastery and shared vision to develop knowledge of, and alignment with, others on the team. But team learning does not stop there – it also involves the ability to act as a collective unit.

The discipline of team learning starts with “dialogue,” the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine process of “thinking together.” When dialogue is joined with systems thinking, Senge argues, there is the possibility of creating a language more suited for dealing with complexity and an opportunity to focus on deep-seated structural issues and forces

**CREATING A LEARNING ORGANIZATION:  
COMMON CORE THEMES ACROSS PROJECT  
SITES**

Organizational learning does not always occur in a linear fashion as may be implied by any stage model and this was evidenced in each of the Project Sites. Learning may take place in unplanned or informal, often unintended ways. Nevertheless, despite the diversity of the Project Sites, our research exploring these different manifestations of systems change in child welfare systems identified some core themes or features among the six Project Sites we studied.

**CREATING A LEARNING ORGANIZATION:  
IDENTIFYING FACILITATING FACTORS  
ACROSS PROJECT SITES**

Theory and research has identified a number of facilitating factors (i.e., the structures and processes) that expedite learning within organizations.<sup>14</sup> To varying degrees, each of the Project Sites evidenced these facilitating factors. Indeed, to varying degrees, these facilitative factors are descriptive of all of the Model Courts.

**Involved Leadership:** Involved leaders articulate a vision and are engaged in its implementation; leaders frequently interact with organizational members; leaders become actively involved in idea-generation, education, and program development.



In Project Sites, and in Model Courts as a whole, involved *judicial* leadership is a core feature of reform efforts.

However, in sites with the strongest collaboratives, judicial leaders have actively worked to share leadership with child welfare directors and administrators. 

*Ask Yourself:* Is there involved judicial leadership engaged in change efforts?

*Ask Yourself:* Is leadership engaged in hands-on implementation of the vision?

**Multiple Advocates:** New ideas and methods are advanced by organizational members at all levels; there is more than one champion for change efforts.



In Project Sites and in Model Courts as a whole, collaborative efforts and active outreach have facilitated networks of advocates and champions for change throughout the system, although the extent to which leadership is shared varies across project sites. 

*Ask Yourself:* Along with involved leadership, is there more than one champion who sets the stage for learning?

*Ask Yourself:* Is leadership appropriately shared?

*Ask Yourself:* Is involved leadership throughout the system encouraged and facilitated?

**Systems Perspective:** Problems and solutions are seen in terms of systemic relationships; inter-dependence of organizational members' units recognized; there is a clear connection between each organizational unit's needs and the larger goals of the collaborative system.



Through multi-system collaboration, information sharing, and multidisciplinary trainings, Project Sites and Model Courts have developed a systems perspective. The vast majority of problems are identified and solutions generated from multiple points of view. Challenges and "poor practices" are viewed as systems issues—it is the rare policy or practice that is not influenced by all parts of the system. 

*Ask Yourself:* Are all functional parts of the system – court, child welfare agency, and service community – involved in reform efforts?

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative think broadly about the inter-dependency of its change efforts?

*Ask Yourself:* Are system barriers and challenges identified and resolved with the inclusion of all system stakeholders?

**Climate of Openness:** Information is readily accessible; there is open communication within the organization and across organizations; problems, mistakes, and lessons are shared, not hidden, and are used as learning opportunities; debate and conflict are acceptable ways to solve problems.

*Ask Yourself:* Are we sharing information and data throughout the system?

*Ask Yourself:* Is there an open flow of information and communication within and across the organizations?

*Ask Yourself:* Are there opportunities to meet with stakeholders from other organizations or institutions, as well as opportunities to meet with higher levels of management and leadership?

*Ask Yourself:* Are there opportunities to express views through legitimate disagreement and debate?

**Scanning Imperative:** There is an interest in, and concern for, information gathering about conditions and practices; awareness of the environment and context that impinges upon efforts; curiosity about the environment.

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative group recognize and understand the legal, social, and cultural environment within which it operates?

*Ask Yourself:* Has the collaborative group scanned the environment to identify and understand the limiting, enhancing, and balancing factors that impact change efforts?

**Performance Gap:** Shared perception of a gap between actual and a shared, ideal state of performance; performance shortfalls are seen as opportunities for learning.

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative recognize a gap between actual practice and performance and desired practice and performance? Are members of the collaborative willing to honestly assess the reasons for that gap?

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative share a vision of the ideal system?

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative see the existence of a gap between actual practice and desired practice as an opportunity for learning?

**Concern for Measurement:** Effort is spent on defining and measuring key factors when venturing into new areas; the group strives for specific, quantifiable measures about improvement; discussion of measurements occurs as a learning activity.

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative group develop and use data to support learning?

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative group recognize that data is a critical aspect of learning?

**Experimental Mind-Set:** There is broad support for trying new things; curiosity about how things work; ability to tweak and experiment with how things work; failures are accepted, not punished; changes in work process, policy, and structure are seen as a continuous series of learning opportunities that help move the collaborative towards achieving its vision.

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative group emphasize experimentation on an ongoing basis?

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative see setbacks as opportunities for reflection and learning?

**Continuous Education:** Ongoing commitment to learning at all levels of the organization; clear support for all organizational members' growth and development.

*Ask Yourself:* Is there a commitment to continuous learning at all levels of the collaborative, including formal and informal training opportunities?

**Operational Variety:** Variety of methods, procedures, and approaches embraced; an appreciation of diversity.

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative group envision more than one way to accomplish its

goals? Does the collaborative think "outside the box"?

*Ask Yourself:* Does the collaborative group support variation in strategy, policy, process, and structure?

**A NOTE ON DIVERSITY AND THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION**

The heart of learning organizations is the concept of "communities of commitment." Today's culture tends to promote fragmentation of thoughts and the detachment of individuals from their communities. By contrast, the building of learning organizations is a systems approach that brings the parts (people) together to create collaborative ways of working and living together. Recognizing and using the strengths of diverse people is natural for a learning organization. The management of diversity becomes a strategic issue.

The learning organization incorporates diversity into its internal processes and collaborative relationships by encouraging the expression of different points of view. Diversity of experience, education, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, expertise, and opinion facilitates change efforts in any organization or broader system.

A learning organization enables contributions from diverse people by:

- Discovering multiple ways that people can contribute;
- Strategically utilizing diversities of background and experience when defining problems and generating solutions;
- Recognizing unique roles and contributions; and
- Providing support for the whole person.



Although all Project Sites include multiple stakeholders from throughout the system in reform efforts, members of the collaborative may not be as diverse as they could be—in terms of professional and community role, perspective, race, class, etc.



**Activities of a learning organization**

- *Systematic problem-solving* -- thinking with systems theory; insisting on data rather than assumptions; using statistical tools
- *Experimenting with new approaches* -- ensuring a steady flow of new ideas; incentives for risk taking; use of demonstration projects
- *Learning from their own experience and past history* -- recognizing the value of productive failure instead of unproductive success
- *Learning from the experiences and best practices of others* – enthusiastically borrowing good ideas and best practices
- *Transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization:* reports, tours, and training programs

**CHAPTER NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> *Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997* (P.L. 105-89) signed into law November 19, 1997, amending Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. General Accounting Office, *Juvenile Courts: Reforms Aim to Better Serve Maltreated Children*, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND STATE LEGISLATION GOVERNING PERMANENCE FOR CHILDREN (Washington, D.C.: June, 1999). Pgs. 1-5—1-6.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND STATE LEGISLATION GOVERNING PERMANENCE FOR CHILDREN (Washington, D.C.: June, 1999). Pg. IV-1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Conference of State Court Administrators, August 2002, “Position Paper on Effective Management of Family Law Cases.”

<sup>7</sup> Approximately 30,000 copies have been disseminated to jurisdictions nationally since its publication in 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Berman, G. & Feinblatt, J. (2001). “Problem-Solving Courts: A Brief Primer.” *Law and Policy*, Vol. 23(2), Pgs. 125-140.; Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators. (2000). CCJ/COSCA Joint Resolution in Support of Problem-Solving Courts. *Journal of the Center for Families, Children & the Courts*, 2, (2). San Francisco, CA.; Conference of State Court Administrators. (August, 2002). Position Paper on Effective Management of Family Law Cases.; Feinblatt, J., Berman, G., & Denckla, D. (2000). *Judicial Innovation at the Crossroads: The Future of Problem-Solving Courts*. Center for Court Innovation. New York City, New York.; “Problem-Solving Courts.” (2002). *Special Issue: The Judges’ Journal*. Vol. 41(1). American Bar Association.

<sup>9</sup> For more information about the Model Courts see *Model Courts: Improving Outcomes for Abused and Neglected Children and Their Families*. (2004). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.; *Child Victims Act Model Courts Project Status Report* [1997-2002]. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The PPCD maintains a technical assistance library of resources about the Model Courts and their specific reform efforts. For more information, please contact the PPCD or visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

<sup>10</sup> Senge, P.M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of a Learning Organization*. Doubleday: San Francisco.; Senge, P.M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R.B., & Smith, B.J. (1994 ). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. Doubleday: San Francisco.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Nevis, E.C., DiBella, A.J., & Gould, J.M. *Understanding Organizations as Learning Systems*. Society for Organizational Learning, Developing Capacity for Desired Results. (SoL Online: [www.solonline.org/res/wp/learning\\_sys.html](http://www.solonline.org/res/wp/learning_sys.html)).



**WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TO FACILITATE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS CHANGE?**

Peter Senge<sup>1</sup> argues that learning organizations require a new view of leadership. These new leaders are responsible for building learning organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is, leaders in learning organizations are responsible for creating an environment that facilitates, and indeed even requires, learning. In a learning organization, leaders function as designers, stewards, and teachers.

**LEADER AS DESIGNER**

An organization’s policies, strategies, and “systems” are key areas of design that leaders need to attend to, but effective leadership should go beyond this. Leaders must take a visible role in guiding the design of governing ideas – the purpose, vision, and core values of the change effort. Leaders must build and communicate a shared vision. Leaders need to create and help implement the learning processes whereby people throughout the organization can use existing mechanisms or supports to help them develop their mastery in the learning disciplines and deal more productively with the critical issues they face.



In all of the Project Sites, and in all of the Model Courts, the Lead

Judges play a critical role in guiding the design of the vision for a reformed child welfare system. As designers and architects of the vision, all of the Lead Judges in the Project Sites:

- Use the best practices of the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* as their blue print for change;
- Use their positional power and authority to bring legitimacy to the change process and “get things done;”



- Think big, always bringing new ideas to the table and encouraging creativity in others;
- Bring multiple stakeholders from different parts of the system to the table to co-create the vision and engage in the process of change;
- Create a collaborative environment that encourages open communication and dialogue throughout the system, the sharing of ideas, and creative problem-solving; and
- Marshal resources to put the vision into action. 

**LEADER AS STEWARD**

Effective leaders communicate the purpose of the change efforts. That is, they communicate the “overarching explanation of why they do what they do, how their organization needs to evolve, and how that evolution is part of something larger.”<sup>2</sup> These “purpose stories” provide a single set of integrating ideas, or a guiding framework, which gives meaning to all aspects of the leader’s work and the systems change effort. Leaders are *stewards* of the vision. Stewardship involves a commitment to, and responsibility for, the vision, but it does not mean that the leader owns the vision. As stewards of the vision, leaders must manage the vision for the benefit of others. Leaders have to learn to listen to other people’s vision and to change their own where necessary. Telling the “purpose story” in this way allows others to be involved and to help develop a vision that is both individual and shared.



A “purpose story” might be the story of a child or a family that particularly touched you, or challenged you, or even shamed you. A number of judicial leaders speak passionately about the case of a particular child on their docket who touched their hearts – maybe because of the challenges faced and overcome by that child, or maybe because the system, and the judge, let that child down. A “purpose story” might be a story of system success that reflects your vision, or it might be a story of system failure, that reflects what is wrong

with the system. Whatever your personal “purpose story” is, it is the story that guides and motivates you, and infuses your reform efforts with meaning. It is the story you tell to others to inspire and motivate them; it is the story you tell to keep the focus on children and families and to engage the heart.



In all of the Project Sites, and in all of the Model Courts, the Lead Judge motivates and inspires other stakeholders to act as change agents. By embodying the vision and ensuring that their actions on- and off-the-bench reflect that vision, Lead Judges actively nurture the vision. They communicate and share the vision with stakeholders, they provide a framework for change, and they keep the focus of the vision on children and families. The “leader as steward” is most important, when the collaborative is faced with significant roadblocks that may seem insurmountable, when efforts go astray, when conflicts arise, and when stakeholders seem overwhelmed by the challenges and process ahead. As stewards and keepers of the vision, all of the Lead Judges in Project Sites:

- Share personal motivations and make their personal commitment to the vision visible;
- Recognize small successes and “baby steps” forward;
- View adversity, roadblocks, and challenges as opportunities for growth and learning; and
- Keep everyone’s focus on improving the system to benefit children and families. 

*“It is the judge who brings us to the table and enables us to work together. He is always the one who stresses that we are there to make changes for kids... He genuinely cares about what is going on in the lives of the child and families that come into the court system and expresses that level of care to others in order to get buy-in. He also has the ability to get people to feel good about change and that what they are doing is important and that it matters.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

**LEADER AS TEACHER**

Leaders in a learning organization do not teach others how to achieve their vision. Rather, these leaders foster learning for everyone. They help others throughout the organization develop systemic understandings of the vision and how to achieve it. While leaders may draw inspiration from their sense of stewardship, what is important is that leaders help others achieve more accurate, more insightful, and more empowering views of reality. Leaders influence people’s view of reality through the understanding of events, patterns of behavior, systemic structures, and the “purpose story.” Many leaders may focus on one or two of these domains (e.g., events and behaviors), but leaders in a learning organization recognize the holistic nature of change and focus on all four domains, paying particular attention to the “purpose story” and systemic structure to guide their efforts. They also teach people throughout the organization to do the same.



In all of the Project Sites, and in all of the Model Courts, the Lead Judge acts as coach, mentor, and teacher and creates an environment that supports learning. As teachers, Lead Judges are also good students and educate themselves about system issues, reforms, best practices, and innovations and actively share that learning with stakeholders. As teachers and mentors, all of the Lead Judges in Project Sites:

- Attend training events and conferences to educate themselves;
- Regularly bring back information from trainings and conferences to share with collaborative partners;
- Seek information and use data to inform group understandings of system performance and outcomes;
- Provide formal and informal opportunities for multidisciplinary training and information-sharing; and
- Seek a better understanding of system functioning and the factors that influence it, as well as think creatively about how to improve system functioning. 

*“He is open to new ideas. He is always wanting to learn about new programs and new ways of doing things that are making an impact. And, he expects the same from everybody.”*

*Stakeholder, Alexandria Project Site*

*Effective leadership encompasses all three functions – designer, steward, and teacher.*

### MODELS OF LEADERSHIP

There are many different models of leadership. Over the last 80 years or so, theories of leadership have evolved from a focus on leadership traits,<sup>3</sup> to leadership behaviors,<sup>4</sup> to contingency or situational models of leadership,<sup>5</sup> to transformational theories of leadership.<sup>6</sup>

The difficulty is finding and adapting a leadership model that is suited to the particular leader, the particular organization, the cultural context, and the goals that need to be accomplished. Three different leadership models are presented below. While the different leadership models have unique strengths and weaknesses, research on organizational leadership has shown that there is one model of leadership that is particularly effective for promoting and sustaining systems change – the *transformational model of leadership*.

#### Model One: Transactional Leadership

Transactional leaders are often reacting to crises and operate in a “crisis management” mode, convening systems stakeholders to attend to an immediate situation that needs their focus. This crisis management orientation undermines change efforts because in times of crisis people often revert back to familiar ways of reacting and patterns of behavior, rather than holding true to the vision and ideals of change. Transactional leaders tend to “drive the status quo” rather than support innovation.

#### Model Two: Relational Leadership

Relational leaders are team players who are sensitive to how others view them, and seek to maintain good interpersonal relations among colleagues. These leaders motivate people through trust, respect, and consideration. This model’s weakness, however, is that the leader

may be reluctant to make difficult decisions and force issues that would be unpopular with the group. Relational leaders may also be hesitant to challenge people’s assumptions and perspectives out of concern for maintaining relationships which can impede change efforts.

#### Model Three: Transformational Leadership

The transformational leader understands the broader context within which the organization and collaborative operates, and knows how to use that culture strategically. This leader is focused on long-term change strategies, and goals which enhance organizational learning and encourage a high-performance team and work environment. *The goal of transformational leadership is the creation of self-sustaining change.*

*With respect to systems change, a primary role of the transformational leader is to create, implement, and sustain organizational learning. A transformational leader is a strategic architect of the vision (leader as design), who holds the vision and keeps it visible throughout the change process (leader as steward), and mentors others to share and co-create reform efforts (leader as teacher).*

A successful leader analyzes and interprets the present, creates a shared horizon of possibilities for the future, creates an environment for change, and expands the systems’ capacity for action. The most effective leaders are those who influence others not by making them do something but by inspiring them to want to do it; not by telling them what to do, but by telling them why it is important and how it fits in the overall organizational vision for change. Effective leaders communicate a compelling vision, one that people want to see happen and want to participate in making happen.<sup>7</sup> A compelling vision energizes and motivates, and is ultimately reflected in the behavior and actions of those striving to bring about its realization. All of the aforementioned qualities of effective leaders can also be ascribed to effective judicial leaders.

**THE FOUR “I’S” OF  
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

• **Idealized Influence**

A transformational leader is a good role model for the organization; someone whom employees at all levels would aspire to be like.

• **Inspirational Motivation**

A transformational leader motivates and inspires employees by giving meaning to the work that is engaged in and empowering employees to learn and grow.

• **Intellectual Stimulation**

A transformational leader stimulates employees to have a questioning attitude, in order to challenge basic assumptions and mental models, and to reframe problems in ways that may be addressed through non-conventional means; helps individuals “think outside the box.”

• **Individualized Consideration**

A transformational leader treats each employee as an individual, and seeks to meet their needs while maximizing their potential.

Source: Bass, B.M & Avolio, B.J. (1994). *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

**EXEMPLARY LEADERS IN  
LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS**

- Challenge the process
- Inspire a shared vision
- Enable others to act
- Model the way
- Engage the heart
- Keep the purpose, goals, and approach relevant and meaningful
- Build commitment and confidence
- Strengthen the mix by encouraging participation of all level of skills and knowledge; Value and encourage diversity
- Manage relationships
- Create opportunities for others
- Do real work
- Conduct effective and meaningful meetings
- Encourage dialogue and discussion

**LEADERSHIP TRAITS**

- Interested in group’s concerns while sensitive to individual needs
- Aware of current social and political situations
- Good communication and group interaction skills
- Earns respect and is viewed as knowledgeable and fair
- Able to share responsibility and credit with others
- Promotes consensus, compromise, and trade-offs
- Integrates a variety of different perspectives
- Is patient, creative, and flexible

**JUDGE AS LEADER<sup>8</sup>**

While the court is responsible for protecting procedural due process rights of litigants and determining the sufficiency of petition allegations, the responsibility of juvenile and family court judges has been greatly expanded through federal and state mandates to go beyond these concerns. The overall role of the juvenile and family court judge is complex – a confluence of dimensions that in some cases may not even be recognized as part of the traditional or normative judicial role, much less understood in terms of the additional responsibilities that are placed upon the judge as he or she fulfills the duties of the office.

It is important to recognize and understand the complex, multi-dimensional role of juvenile and family court judges in dependency practice. The role of the judge must be understood as broader than that of the conventional view of “judge as legal decision-maker.”

In a study of judicial workload in which Model Court Lead Judges were asked to discuss their judicial role, the importance of the “leadership” dimension of judicial work became apparent.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that the judges interviewed were not responding to a question specifically designed to gather information about judicial leadership. Rather, they were asked to provide their opinion about the “role of a juvenile and family court judge in dependency or child abuse and neglect practice.” Almost every judge discussed a constellation of leadership expectations and responsibilities in response to this general question. Indeed, off-the-bench judicial leadership activities – convening, facilitating, and participating in collaborative meetings and community outreach – were identified as central role expectations for the dependency court judge. The dimensions of leadership and the numerous activities related to it that were identified by these judges helps highlight how difficult and misunderstood the role of the dependency court judge is.

Strong judicial leadership is critically important to successful systems change. While recognizing that there is no definitive leadership “style” that has been identified as “most effective” or “most successful,” there are transformational leadership activities that have

been found to support, and in some cases constrain, reform efforts. Fostering leadership in other stakeholders, ensuring forward movement toward an agreed upon vision or goal, and facilitating collaborative ownership of outcomes (both successful and unsuccessful) are important, but difficult, judicial leadership tasks.

Judges are in a unique position to assume the mantle of leadership for comprehensive system change. The judge plays a unique role in preserving the interests of all involved: the child, the parents, and the community. By virtue of his or her title, the judge is in a position that invites community leadership.

While judges are not granted leadership status by their position alone, judges are positioned to *become* leaders. As with any worthwhile skill, becoming an effective leader, judicial or otherwise, involves life-long learning and experience. As one continually strives to become a better judge, one also continually strives to become a better leader.

*Judges have the positional power to bring stakeholders to the table and lead the change effort. When a judge invites individuals to the collaborative table, they will come.*



In recognition of the importance of strong and visible judicial leadership to convene and mobilize systems change efforts, the national Model Courts Project requires the designation of a “Model Court Lead Judge” who leads project activities. These judges must be willing to accept the responsibility to spearhead systems reform efforts specifically aimed at improving the lives of children and families at risk of abuse and neglect. Model Court Lead Judges make an incredible commitment of time, effort, personal resources, and authority to try to implement these efforts. Lead judges develop expertise in a wide variety of areas related to improved court practice and systems change, which, in turn, benefits the jurisdictions they serve.

Model Court Lead Judges in Project Sites were interviewed about their judicial leadership role. All of the Lead Judges recognize the



opportunity their position affords them to convene stakeholders at the collaborative table, to build consensus around a common vision, and to strategically plan for change.

*"A lot has to do with our main judge ... because we have a judge leading our committee, our work has some weight in the community ... more than any other committee would ... our judge really wants to make a difference and wants everyone there ... that makes it really nice and meaningful for all of us. It is the judge's leadership style that makes us all want to be there and be a part of it."*

*Stakeholder, Alexandria Project Site*

*"With respect to systems change, I see my role as achieving consensus and empowering others to help create change systems-wide and to foster collaboration ... by creating an atmosphere that supports collaboration and bringing people to the table, listening to their ideas, and helping them put their ideas into action."*

*Lead Judge, Buffalo Project Site*

*"[The judge] provides direction and can bring major stakeholders to the table. He keeps us focused and on track. He calls the meetings, invites people, and sets topics for discussion. ... He is the convener of meetings and a conveyor of information. He has the authority of the bench. He has the oversight role."*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

*"There is a lot of respect for the court and the power of the court ... and the court has high expectations for all of the parties involved. ... The court identifies areas where system collaboration could benefit system reform and improve practice. There has definitely been direction from the court on what areas they want us to work on. It's the only way we can accomplish those kinds of reforms."*

*Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site*

*"In supporting reform efforts, I present problems, bring stakeholders to the table, elicit discussion, and encourage everyone to work together to create action plans."*

*Lead Judge, Los Angeles Project Site*

*"The role of the juvenile and family court judge is a unique one and it combines judicial, administrative, collaborative, and advocacy components. These include holding parents, social workers, attorneys, and service providers accountable; the creation and dissolution of legal rights and responsibilities relating to child custody; the protection of children's rights; and the articulation of community norms."*

*Lead Judge, San Jose Project Site*

#### STATUTORY SUPPORT FOR JUDICIAL LEADERSHIP

One of the best formal expressions of the full role of the juvenile court judge was adopted in Standards of Judicial Administration (SJA 24), California Judicial Council (1991). This statutory framework for judicial leadership operated in two of the Project Sites (San Jose and Los Angeles). In SJA 24 the Judicial Council wrote that juvenile and family court judges are encouraged to:

- Provide active leadership within the community in determining the needs and obtaining and developing resources and services for at-risk children and families. At-risk children include delinquent, dependent, and status offenders.
- Investigate and determine the availability of specific prevention, intervention, and treatment services in the community for at-risk children and their families.
- Exercise their authority by statute or rule to review, order, and enforce the delivery of specific services and treatment for children at risk and their families.
- Exercise a leadership role in the development and maintenance of permanent programs of interagency cooperation and coordination among the court and the various public agencies that serve at-risk children and their families.
- Take an active part in the formation of a community-wide network to promote and unify private and public sector efforts to focus attention and resources for at-risk children and their families.
- Maintain close liaison with school authorities and encourage coordination of policies and programs.
- Educate the community and its institutions through every available means, including the media, concerning the role of the juvenile court in meeting the complex needs of at-risk children and their families.
- Evaluate the criteria established by child protection agencies for initial removal and reunification decisions and communicate the court's expectations of what constitutes "reasonable efforts" to prevent the removal or hasten the return of the child.
- Encourage the development of community services and resources to assist homeless, truant, runaway, and incorrigible children.
- Be familiar with all detention facilities, placements, and institutions used by the court.



**JUDICIAL LEADERSHIP –  
EXAMPLES FROM THE  
PROJECT SITES**

Four of the six Lead Judges in Project Sites serve in an Administrative or Presiding

Judge capacity. One judicial leader is serving at the pleasure of the Administrative Judge (Cincinnati) and, in Charlotte, the Lead Judge has been invested with the leadership position through the District Court.

Clearly, it is not necessary that a judicial leader hold an Administrative or Presiding Judge position. The judicial position of the Lead Judge varies across the Model Courts – ranging from magistrates, pro-tem, and referees to Administrative and Presiding Judges. The “position” of the judge is not as important as the positional authority a judicial officer brings to the collaborative through the respect and authority afforded the court. However, if the judicial leader is not the Administrative or Presiding Judge, it is critically important that the Administrative or Presiding Judge visibly support reform efforts and the leadership role. Ideally, visible support for reforms should not only come from the Administrative/Presiding Judge position, but also from higher level judicial authorities and higher-level courts. For example, the Chief Judge of the State of New York, has been very supportive of the reforms in both the Erie County (Buffalo) and New York City Model Courts, as well as family court improvement efforts throughout the state. The Ohio Court of Appeals has been an active partner in reform efforts and has developed procedures to expedite appeals at the termination of parental rights stage of the proceedings. Indeed, many of the Model Courts are actively working to engage their appellate court and Chief Judge in reform efforts – as advocates and supporters of change, but also as active collaborators in reform efforts.



*“I go around the country and speak to juvenile court judges about improving their dependency systems...My model of change features judicial leadership...Judicial ethics are perceived as a barrier to leadership and collaboration...There are cautions and encouragements that must be given to judges who are about to embark [on collaboration] and these must be grounded in the judicial canons of ethics.”*

*Lead Judge, San Jose Project Site*



For additional resources related to judicial leadership, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

**SHARED LEADERSHIP**

Although judicial leadership is critically important to the change process, it is not enough. Meaningful and sustainable systems change can only occur through concerted, collaborative efforts on the part of all system professionals. Ideally, judicial leaders should draw on existing leaders throughout the system while creating conditions that allow others to see their own roles in leadership. Creating an environment of shared leadership and collective visioning facilitates a more open exchange of information, better relationships among system participants, and a stronger commitment to a common vision.

When shared leadership occurs, people approach problems in collaborative ways, engage each other in defining the work to be done, and are able to facilitate interaction and sustain action so that goals can be realized. People come to focus on the work itself rather than on the person who has the authority to do it.

*Shared leadership is necessary for guiding change, overcoming resistance, and mobilizing partners, while, at the same time, building competence and self-reliance in others.*



**SHARED LEADERSHIP –  
EXAMPLES FROM THE  
PROJECT SITES**

Shared leadership has been critical to the success of the

Buffalo Model Court’s reform efforts since the beginning. In February 1998 the Supervising Judge of the Family Court and the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (the local child welfare agency) committed to a process of long-term systems change.

From the beginning of their reform efforts in Erie County, leadership was formally and visibly

shared. For example, the Supervising Judge and DSS Commissioner ...

- Co-chaired collaborative meetings;
- Publicly endorsed a shared, child-focused vision for systems reform;
- Jointly sponsored multidisciplinary trainings;
- Shared the dais at professional and community events focused on child welfare issues;
- Created staff positions in both the Family Court and DSS whose roles were designed specifically to work with each other in furtherance of joint reform efforts;
- Strategically, publicly, and jointly leveraged the authority of each institution to increase available resources, increase public awareness, and bring new stakeholders to the table; and
- Publicly supported each institution’s agendas and reform initiatives when they were in support of the shared vision for system reform.

The shared model of leadership – especially shared leadership between the court and child welfare agency – has been adopted by a number of Project Sites (and other Model Courts), although usually at later stages in the evolution of their collaborative process.

*“In Erie County [Buffalo Model Court], the success of the project is a direct result of the relationship between the Supervising Judge and the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS). Unlike the relationships of the past, this relationship has been focused on the interplay of the various systems that comprise child welfare. As co-chairs of the project, the Court and DSS have modeled collaborative leadership to all of the stakeholders.”<sup>10</sup>*

In the Alexandria Project Site, the Lead Judge has recently invited the new Director of the city’s child welfare agency to co-chair the multi-disciplinary advisory group.



**SHARING LEADERSHIP / SHARING POWER**

Sharing leadership means being mutually responsible for the *process* of change. Sharing power means being mutually responsible for the *effect* of the change. It is

important to recognize, however, that sharing leadership and sharing power does not necessarily carry with it shared decision-making authority.

*“Our leader supports systems reform efforts by creating a leadership base that involves a combination of agencies and folks. A couple of judges and the director of social services have been instrumental, but many other players too, such as legal defense, schools, etc.[are involved]. Our Lead Judge supports systems change by not being the only leader ... by giving up some power and letting the ‘myth of king’ be dispelled. You can’t have collaboration if you have one person running everything; if that was the case, it would be something else ... but it would not be true collaboration.”*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

In sharing the leadership role and jointly guiding and supporting systems reform, neither the judge nor the director of the child welfare agency relinquishes their individual power or the independent roles of their organizations.

*Leadership does not necessarily have to start with the court, but the positional authority of the court needs to be brought into the collaborative.*

**Strategies to Encourage Shared Leadership and Shared Power**

- Co-create and share a vision for reform
- Share relevant information, knowing what is relevant may involve educating people so that they are able to comprehend the information
- Share credit
- Share blame
- Reward and recognize honesty and openness
- Be a role model and mentor
- Promote and reward partnering, particularly across functions and at all levels of the collaboration
- Hold dialogues focused on people’s perceptions of their relationships
- Commit to get to know people behind the mask of their job title, role, or function



In many of the Project Sites, and in many of the Model Courts, strong, charismatic leaders were critical to initiating the reform process.

Indeed, the "Lead Judge" designation somewhat implicitly requires that judicial leaders display charismatic leadership qualities — a strong, independent voice; a strong hand in guiding reform efforts; and a "strong," take-charge personality. Indeed, at the early stages of the change process, a charismatic leader may be necessary to bring people together, to motivate them, to inspire vision, and instill a commitment to that vision.

However, charismatic leadership presents some challenges. Charismatic leaders, especially charismatic judicial leaders, by sheer force of their personality, positional authority, and charm, send the message that they can and will make things better, find solutions to system problems, and guide the reform process. As a consequence, people follow the charismatic leader. A strong, charismatic leader creates strong, committed followers. Strong followership, however, fosters dependency on the leader — the vision for reform is created by the leader, the problems are defined and solutions are generated from the perspective of the leader, and it is the leader who singularly carries the message of reform. Followers buy-into the leader's vision for reform, but do not personally own it. Moreover, when reform efforts become closely associated with individual people, those individual leaders become more open to political attacks and, ultimately, reform efforts are undermined. Charismatic leaders may also face significant challenges when transitioning to new leadership.

Meaningful and sustainable systems change, however, requires leadership (not followership) from stakeholders throughout the system, a shared vision, and the creation of a collaborative environment that supports systems learning. The challenge for charismatic leaders, and for Lead Judges, is to know when to strategically be "charismatic leaders" who lead by force of their personality and vision, and when to move towards a more truly collaborative process that facilitates leadership (not followership) in others.



*"The Lead Judge supports reform efforts by presenting problems, providing guidance, and ensuring forward momentum ... and is doing a great job; without him we would be in worse shape ... but we are doomed to be so reliant on the Lead Judge. More of the organizations around the table need a role in leadership too, instead of relying on just one person."*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

**CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:  
PROJECT SITE STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES**

Stakeholders from throughout the system in each project site were asked to identify the characteristics they feel a leader should have in order to support effective systems change. Although the leadership structure and leadership style differed across project sites, stakeholders from each site identified a number of similar characteristics. What emerges is a picture of an "ideal leader" to spearhead reform efforts aimed at improving the systems' response to child abuse and neglect.

Because a primary role of a leader is to create, implement, and sustain a learning organization, the characteristics of effective leadership consistently identified by stakeholders in Project Sites are organized below according to the factors that facilitate learning (See Chapter 3).

**Facilitating Factor:** Involved Leadership  
**Leader Task:** Articulate a vision and be engaged in its implementation

- "Care about children and families."
- "Have conviction and a vision of what you would like to achieve and instill that vision in others to act on their own and get to that goal."
- "Be able to walk the talk."
- "Be persistent in bringing different groups together and work alongside others on an equal basis."

**Facilitating Factor:** Multiple Advocates  
**Leader Task:** Share leadership; create multiple champions throughout the system

- "Encourage leadership in others and motivate others to do their best."
- "Be able to generate other leaders so that everyone can go out and carry forth initiatives."
- "Empower others to instill a change process that will still work when [the leader] is gone."
- "Be willing to delegate tasks and responsibilities to other group members."
- "Encourage new ideas and input from all parts of the system and from people throughout the system."
- "Have an expectation that change is possible and the system will improve; communicate that expectation."

**Facilitating Factor:** Climate of Openness  
**Leader Task:** Create a climate of openness through information sharing, effective communication, and dialogue

- "Have the ability to listen to others in the system and take their ideas into consideration."
- "Be able to communicate effectively with multiple stakeholders in different systems."
- "Be accountable to yourself and other stakeholders."
- "Be tactful, approachable, and accessible."
- "Have the ability to mediate opposing viewpoints."
- "Encourage meaningful debate and challenge people's ideas."
- "Solicit feedback."
- "Encourage information sharing throughout the system and at all levels."

**Facilitating Factor:** Scanning Imperative  
**Leader Task:** Recognize and understand the environment within which systems change operates

- "Be knowledgeable about the history of the relevant organizations and the political climate."
- "Understand the law and how it supports and constrains change."
- "Be knowledgeable about what is going on with respect to various issues."
- "Know your resource community."
- "Be goal-oriented and solution-focused."

<p><b>Facilitating Factor:</b> Performance Gap  <b>Leader Tasks:</b> Recognize and manage the gap between current performance and the ideal system; build consensus for the ideal system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Be able to fully define the problem from all perspectives."</li> <li>• "Be able to identify important issues in need of reform."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facilitating Factor:</b> Concern for Measurement  <b>Leader Task:</b> Focus on measurement, define benchmarks and outcomes, and track change over time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Stress the importance of really knowing how we are doing; do not just rely on others' opinions."</li> <li>• "Collect data."</li> <li>• "Set goals, establish benchmarks, and set timeframes for achieving or completing a project."</li> <li>• "Set short-term and long-term goals so that we know when we achieve success."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facilitating Factor:</b> Experimental Mindset  <b>Leader Task:</b> Emphasize experimentation, be curious, and support innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Be open to and willing to accept new and different ideas."</li> <li>• "Think outside the box."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facilitating Factor:</b> Continuous Education  <b>Leader Task:</b> Provide formal and informal opportunities for training and ongoing education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Be willing to go to others for additional help and knowledge."</li> <li>• "Be willing to understand and learn about all of the systems and how they function, and encourage others to do the same."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facilitating Factor:</b> Operational Variety  <b>Leader Task:</b> Envision more than one way to achieve systems change goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Be innovative."</li> <li>• "Get feedback from others about how to solve problems and address issues."</li> <li>• "Facilitate and support the cross-pollination of ideas."</li> <li>• "Support for brainstorming, seeking new and different ideas."</li> <li>• "Focus on a total systems change approach that includes systems change in court practice, policies, and programs."</li> <li>• "Encourage broad consensus across multiple stakeholders."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facilitating Factor:</b> Systems Perspective  <b>Leader Task:</b> See problems and solutions in terms of systemic relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Solicit input and feedback from different parts of the system."</li> <li>• "Have a systems perspective. Be willing to understand and to learn about all of the systems and how they function."</li> </ul>

**CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGEMENT VS. LEADERSHIP<sup>11</sup>**

What distinguishes leaders from managers? Leaders are interested in direction, vision, goals, objectives, effectiveness, and purpose, while management relies on using a set of processes to help keep systems running smoothly. Management includes planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem-solving. Leadership, on the other hand, refers to a set of processes that creates organizations or adapts them to changing circumstances.

Leadership defines what the future looks like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen. Managers administer while leaders innovate; Managers rely on control while leaders inspire trust. Leaders pay attention to the details, but within the framework of the bigger picture. Leaders also have the ability to make people feel valued – to inspire and energize, to nurture creativity and to encourage people to take risks and learn from their mistakes.

According to John Kotter,<sup>12</sup> successful change efforts are 70-90% leadership and only 10-30%

management. While managing change is clearly important, only leadership can motivate the actions needed for widespread and lasting change –“only leadership can get change to stick.”<sup>13</sup>

The challenge for effective leaders is to make sure that their approach to change includes both the *management and leadership* components needed for transforming systems.



**FULLFILLING THE MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS CHANGE: EXAMPLES FROM THE PROJECT SITES**

Trying to both manage and lead systems change initiatives can be overwhelming, especially if both components are the responsibility of one person – and even more so if leadership activities and reform initiatives are carried out in addition to full-time on-the-job responsibilities. For example, judicial leaders often commented that the leadership activities required to facilitate systems change – to convene and attend multiple meetings, to plan agendas, to disseminate information, to engage in community outreach – are done during their off-the-bench time, outside of court hours. Many noted how exhausting the leadership role can be and the tension it creates in trying to balance their professional and personal lives.



In one of the Project Sites (and in a number of other Model Courts) the management component of systems change has been formalized and institutionalized into a new administrative position (e.g., the role of “Project Manager,” or “Model Court Project Director”). Whatever the formal title, the person holding this position usually works closely with the judicial leader to coordinate and manage the change process. The responsibilities of this position usually include convening meetings and disseminating meeting notes, organizing training programs, collecting data and generating reports, developing policy and practice recommendations, relationship-building and outreach, and sharing information throughout the stakeholder community.

In the Buffalo Project Site the Director of the Erie County Family Court Improvement Project is responsible for much of the management of change and works closely with the judicial leader. And, recall that in Buffalo, a similar position has also been created in the Department of Social Services, and the individuals holding these two complementary positions work very closely together to manage the change process and coordinate the implementation of reforms.

In other Project Sites (and in some other Model Courts), the position is less formalized and usually falls under the job responsibilities of someone already working within the court administration structure (e.g., a research attorney or a “court case coordinator,” or a “dependency case manager”).

Management responsibility, like leadership, can also be shared by stakeholders throughout the system. As with shared leadership, shared management facilitates empowerment, ownership, and shared vision, and facilitates the sustainability of reforms and the collaborative process as a whole.



Over the history of the Model Courts Project, we have seen the “manager of change” role become increasingly critical to successful systems change. Whether formally created as a new role or an expansion of an existing role, these “right hand people” serve a critical management support role for Model Court Lead Judges. In fact, the role has become so critical that the PPCD now strongly suggests that new Model Court jurisdictions develop some kind of management support role.



**CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP: LIMITED TIME TO MAKE MEANINGFUL CHANGE**

A number of stakeholders in Project Sites, especially Lead Judges and child welfare administrators, commented on the pressure they feel to make significant and meaningful systemic change in a relatively short period of time. Often these individuals serve in formal leadership positions for a clearly defined period of time (e.g., a few years). And, while they recognize that change takes time, they feel that they only hold the positional power necessary to make change happen for a limited time.

A number of Project Site leaders recognized that because of the time-bound nature of their leadership role, they are “rushing” to get things done, focusing solely on outcomes, and may not be spending the necessary time to build relationships and focus on the *process* of change. Rather, in recognition of these time

constraints, they are using the power of their positions and the force of their personalities to move the process along as quickly as possible. As a result, their change process becomes more driven by a single, powerful leader in a formal leadership position, rather than being a collaborative group of stakeholders throughout the system working together toward a common vision.

The tensions created by the time-bound nature of these leadership positions should be used strategically, and the pull between moving reforms forward as quickly as possible and taking the time to create a strong collaborative needs to be appropriately managed. The danger of not balancing this tension is the development of a reform effort that becomes so tied to the personality of the formal leader that it cannot sustain itself beyond the loss of that person in a leadership role. Moreover, every new individual that assumes the formal leadership role drives the reform effort in accordance with his or her own vision and agenda for reform. As a result, the change effort lacks long-term vision and sustainability.



Even when system leaders have formal authority for only a limited amount of time, they still need to focus on building a strong collaborative, sharing leadership and power, building a common vision, and prioritizing reform efforts. Rather than become overwhelmed by “so much to do in so little time” and the performance gap between current and ideal practice, leaders should focus on identifying what the priority areas for reform are and what can be accomplished in the time that they have. A leader in this predicament can ask, “What can be accomplished under my formal leadership to ensure that the system continues to move forward in the right direction?”

Remember, systems change is an evolutionary and ongoing process. Changes in the leadership tenure should be seen as stages in the change process, not as discrete moments and issues in time.

**CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP: DEALING WITH POLITICS AND CONFLICT**

Assuming the mantle of leadership when you are buried in the day-to-day work of your position can be daunting. Not only do

leadership activities add to your workload, but they also place you solidly in the position of tackling political and structural arrangements that may involve all sorts of negativity and conflict. This may be especially true with a highly politicized and bureaucratic system such as the child welfare system.

No matter how well conflict is handled, it will never disappear. Even the best relationships have clashes – there are bound to be differences of opinion. Effective leaders, however, do not shy away from these conflicts. Instead, they see them as opportunities to learn about the needs and perspectives of others, build consensus around the vision for reform, and move change efforts forward.

*Remember, systems change is people-driven – fear of, and resistance to, change is to be anticipated – change is a human process filled with human emotions.*

Judges in Project Sites were asked to talk about the politics of leadership.

*“You have to take your vision on the road and talk to staff at all levels ... you have to be a visible leader ... you have to create an awareness of the Model Court Project ... you have to communicate.”*

*“You have to reinforce that it is about a vision for reform and a plan to achieve that vision ... you have to stress that it is not about one individual judge or one individual courtroom.”*

*“I deal with judge-envy by actively reaching out and engaging judicial colleagues and by building relationships with other stakeholders.”*

*“The Chief Judge publicly supports us ... you need to get the people with the political clout to support your reform efforts.”*

*“You keep it focused on children. This is about better outcomes for children and families; this is not about the system. You have to keep it vision-focused, not personality focused.”*

*“I do not let it defeat me and I actively work to engage judicial colleagues and stakeholders in the process.”*

*“I try to build a network of supports from different parts of the system. We all support each other.”*

### Strategies Leaders can use to Overcome Politics and Conflict

- Ensure that different perspectives are included in the collaborative group – especially those that have been identified as leading to resistance to change or other potential stumbling blocks to change efforts – do not leave someone out of the collaborative group because they are “hopeless” or “difficult”
- Prepare for conflict – do not speak or act out of frustration or anger; allow yourself time to “cool off” when tempers flare; lead by example – how you handle the politics should be the way you would want others to behave
- Clarify problems – when you sit down to discuss differences, ask questions and be genuinely interested in other perspectives; do not assume that you know where others stand; ask “What do you see as the problem?”; Listen and then paraphrase other viewpoints – while you may never agree, this will demonstrate that you are trying to understand and will build trust
- Seek areas of agreement – identify all those areas, no matter how small, that you agree on; in a “disagree column” record only the main issues which will make the areas of disagreement look smaller; reinforce agreement about the common vision (i.e., better outcomes for children and families); make peace by stressing common vision and goals despite apparent differences
- Take responsibility for how you might have contributed to the problem; taking responsibility often means allowing honesty to come to the surface – honesty is best for getting to the real difficulties and moving into problem-solving
- Keep the group focused on results – when conflict arises ask “So, what can we do to resolve this situation?”; encourage brainstorming to generate solutions

Adapted from: Pastor, J. (2004). “Who is Afraid of a Little Conflict?” [www.leader-values.com](http://www.leader-values.com); and Joan Pastor (2004). “Conflict Resolution:

**Managing the Politics of Leadership:  
Advice from Project Sites**

- *“Always bring it back to the children - remind people that this is not about status, authority, resources, or the system. This is about children and families.”*
- *“Reach out to the highest level of judicial authority in your court and in your state and ask for public support for reform efforts. ”*
- *“Ensure that your efforts are truly collaborative - get everyone to the table that needs to be there.”*
- *“Build a network of supports and champions. You can support each other.”*
- *“Remember, sometimes people are just responding from a position of fear, or they feel threatened. Help them deal with it by helping them understand the bigger vision and their role in achieving it.”*
- *“Be open and honest. Recognize the problems and challenges; do not try to disguise them.”*
- *“Do not point fingers. Recognize and communicate that everyone is part of the problem and part of the solution.”*



For tools related to leadership roles and overcoming politics, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

**CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP:  
TRANSITIONS**

Periods of leadership transition bring uncertainty and there are challenges inherent in identifying and supporting a successor. But, transitions in leadership can be powerful opportunities to strengthen organizations and change initiatives. They can serve as “pivotal learning moments” that enable organizations and systems to change direction, to maintain momentum, to build or rebuild infrastructure, and to clarify the mission and vision. Properly managed, leadership transitions provide a “pivotal learning moment” – a time when current organizational and system practices, positioning, mission, and

vision can all be re-examined and not feared or avoided. Transitions should be seen as capacity-building opportunities.

Changes in leadership often lead to periods of disruption. These periods of disruption can occur for many reasons. For example, a successor may operate according to different values or be unclear as to the vision for systems reform; a successor may lack the informal channels of communication and information-sharing that are available to individuals who are well-established in their positions; a successor may need time to build a sense of loyalty among system professionals; a successor may have new ideas on how to approach problems and overcome barriers; and a successor may have different leadership qualities.

Times of transition may be particularly problematic and stressful if the reform effort has been led by, and is strongly associated with, one, charismatic, larger-than-life leader. While such a leader may be necessary to initiate a reform effort, transitions will be much smoother, and initiatives are much more likely to sustain over time, if leaders actively encourage shared leadership and shared ownership throughout the system.



**TRANSITIONS IN  
LEADERSHIP:  
EXPERIENCES FROM THE  
PROJECT SITES**

During the Packard Project period almost all of the Project Sites went through significant transitions in leadership – whether in the court, the child welfare agency, or other key stakeholder agencies. Some transitions were planned, some were not. Some were relatively smooth transition periods, some were not.

In the Cincinnati Model Court, for example, past reform efforts are strongly associated with one key judicial leader. The judge retired from the bench, but retained the formal designation of “Model Court Lead Judge” for several years post-retirement. During that time he actively mentored judicial colleagues to assume the leadership role, but only recently has the designation and authority of “Model Court Lead Judge” been formally transferred.

The long period of transition from a judicial leader so strongly identified with local and national child welfare reforms has been somewhat of a double-edged sword. By formally and informally staying involved in the Model Court reform effort post-retirement, the judge demonstrated ongoing, public support for reform efforts and continued to provide the weight of his authority, reputation, and professional network in support of local (and national) reform efforts. These transitional activities were instrumental in helping to ensure that reform efforts continued.

The judge's continued involvement in the Model Court post-retirement presented some challenges. For example, stakeholders reported that it was difficult for the new leader charged with carrying the work forward to convince others that they had the necessary authority to make strategic decisions. There was also confusion about who was actually "leading" reform efforts.

*"When the judge was directly involved there was clear authority and things fell into line... When he retired, but was still informally involved, it became difficult for those who were left to get the same level of buy-in to do things without having the judge step in."*

*Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site*

The Charlotte Model Court has gone through significant changes in leadership throughout the system over the last few years as well – changes in Presiding Judges, and changes in the administrators of the Child Welfare Agency and Behavioral Mental Health Agency. Moreover, two relatively recent changes in judicial leadership occurred after the retirement of a long-time judicial leader.

Stakeholders in Charlotte acknowledge that the transitions were not well managed, nor well planned. Moreover, they recognize that each transition has resulted in a set-back and that it has taken some time for a formal leadership structure to re-emerge for the purposes of continuing system change. Although Charlotte has a very strong collaborative community, multiple collaborative committees and subcommittees, and stakeholder involvement from throughout the system and community, reform efforts are not effectively coordinated

and strategically leveraged. As a collaborative community, Charlotte is struggling with how to re-align and re-shape its court-agency-community collaborative network.

*"At the moment, there is not an identifiable leader or leadership base directing the overall systems reform. That's a problem we are trying to address right now. We have a million committees. A committee gets started for everything. We have duplicate committees, committees that have collapsed, some that are conflicting in recommendations, and no overall hierarchy. Since there is no clear leader, it is difficult to coordinate and direct reform efforts."*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

Within the next few years, the San Jose Model Court will face a significant leadership transition with the retirement of the Model Court Lead Judge. The significant reforms of the Model Court are very much associated with the leadership of the Lead Judge and he serves a central role in all child welfare reform efforts in Santa Clara County. In preparation for retirement, the judge is taking steps to plan his transition and mentor his potential successor.

On the surface, it would appear that systems reform in San Jose is driven by a single, strong, charismatic judicial leader. And, in many ways, it is. However, the collaborative process in San Jose has become so institutionalized as part of the system's culture and is recognized as such a "taken-for granted" approach to problem-solving and systems change that the judge's strong leadership role may have become more symbolic than strategic over time. And, while the transition that will result from his retirement will undoubtedly impact the system and culture, it should not disrupt the change process to the same extent that it would if the change process was purely driven by a single, charismatic leader.

*"It is the attitude you have to sustain - the process. You should not be just focusing on sustaining particular reforms ... the challenge is bigger than that."*

*Lead Judge, San Jose Project Site*

The Buffalo Model Court has also recently experienced a transition period in leadership. Initially, the Model Court Team was led by both the Lead Judge and the Commissioner. In 2004, a transition occurred at both the Commissioner and Lead Judge level. The transition in Lead Judge was an event that the Model Court had been formally planning for approximately six months prior. The existing Lead Judge began talking with her fellow judges about the role and responsibilities of the Lead Judge and continued to encourage their leadership on topic specific initiatives. Once the new Lead Judge was identified, the existing Lead Judge began meeting one-on-one with her to begin formulating a transition plan. The existing Lead Judge began introducing the new Lead Judge to the Model Court Team and staff. The new Lead Judge also served in place of the existing Lead Judge at the NCJFCJ/PPCD 2003 VAMC All-Sites Conference to become better acquainted with her Model Court Team and Model Court counterparts across the country. Once the transition was in place the Model Court faced another transition at the Commissioner level. The existing Commissioner, who had been the instrumental in the progress of the Buffalo Model Court, was replaced with a new Commissioner. Once the new Commissioner was confirmed the Model Court Lead Judge and Team began meeting with the Commissioner to discuss the Model Court process and collaborative structure. The Commissioner had expressed an interest in the Model Court Project and actually attended an All-Sites Conference a few years ago. The Model Court Lead Judge, Team, and Commissioner are hopeful about the transition and see the transition as an opportunity to build new relationships as well as an opportunity to welcome new ideas and initiatives to better serve the children and families of Buffalo. 

**TRANSITION STRATEGIES**

• **Develop a Leadership Transition Plan**

Begin early in the process to identify emerging leaders or those with the potential to become leaders. Successful transitions take time and they should be planned.



Although all of the Lead Judges in Project Sites have either faced, or are about to face, significant transitions in leadership, all admitted that they did not strategically plan for the transition as well as they could have. While they all realize that transitions have not been well managed in the past, all are making a concerted effort to plan for transitions in the future.

In the San Jose Project Site, for example, the Model Court Lead Judge is beginning to actively mentor his judicial colleagues into leadership roles and provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their leadership potential.

In Los Angeles, the Lead Judge encourages his judges to take a leadership role in specific areas of interest to them. By providing them with leadership opportunities, and mentoring their emerging leadership roles, the Lead Judge hopes to build a leadership base across the bench. The Department of Children and Family Services in Los Angeles County has also gone through some recent transitions. The Lead Judge was a formal participant in the selection process for the newly appointed director which helped to facilitate relationship-building between the court and agency and within the collaborative group.

Over the next few years, the Alexandria Project Site is facing the possible transition of both child protection judges and the loss of the Clerk of Court to retirement. The leadership of the two judges has been central to driving reform efforts and the clerk has been a critical member of their Model Court Core Advisory Committee since its inception. Coupled with recent past transitions in the Department of Social Services, these upcoming transitions are presenting significant challenges to the Model Court Team. In anticipation of these transitions, the Core Advisory Committee is actively discussing and

strategizing about how to manage the transitions and beginning to develop transition plans. The recent identification and mentorship of the new Director of the Child Welfare Agency as a co-leader in reform efforts has been one component of their transition strategy. 

Encourage and support emerging leaders by helping them develop the necessary skills and capacities to succeed. This includes transferring knowledge and information about the organizational history. Afford your successor opportunities to develop their own leadership style and provide feedback and mentorship during the process. Begin delegating some of the responsibilities of leadership while also sharing its benefits. Clarify leadership responsibilities and authority – work with your successor to develop a logical and orderly transition plan.

Some examples of how this can be accomplished include:

- Write and share reports containing traditions, ideas, projects, concerns, etc.
  - Constitution and by-laws
  - Statutes and local rules (and rationale behind development of local rules)
  - Organizational goals and objectives
  - Job descriptions and role clarifications
  - Status reports on ongoing projects
  - Evaluations of previous reports and programs
  - Resources
  - Mailing lists
  - Previous minutes and reports
- Go through personnel and organizational files
  - Introduce related personnel
  - Acquaint with physical space, meeting structure and process, etc.
  - Institute transition meetings

A thorough leadership transition plan has several benefits:

- Provides for transfer of significant organizational knowledge
- Minimizes confusion over leadership change-over

- Gives outgoing leaders and those involved in the collaborative a sense of closure
- Utilizes the valuable contributions of experienced leaders
- Helps incoming leadership absorb the special expertise of outgoing leadership
- Increases knowledge of, and confidence for, new leadership
- Minimizes loss of momentum and maximizes the efficiency and accomplishments achieved by the group
- Makes leadership transitions less stressful for both leaders and collaborative members

**Cultivate a Support Network for Your Successor**

No matter how good a leader might be, they cannot do it alone. Effective leaders need to develop strong networks of advisors and counselors. Not only do these support networks help leaders avoid becoming isolated and help them make more effective decisions, but they may also ease transitions in leadership – a support network can help leadership successors in times of transition, and beyond, to help sustain change efforts and minimize disruptions to the existing change efforts already underway.

Michael Watkins,<sup>14</sup> an expert on leadership, suggests cultivating three types of advisors and counselors in your leadership support network: technical, political, and personal.

**Technical Advisors:** Provide expert analysis of the system; are knowledgeable about structures and processes, have access to information, and are able to share that information.

**Political Counselors:** Provide support with culture, politics, and relationships; serve as a sounding board to help think through options; challenge you with “what-if” questions.

**Personal Counselors:** Provide support during times of stress; offer feedback and advice; listen to your worries and doubts regarding leadership role.

While most leaders are better at seeking technical advice, to succeed you need to

have the balanced support of all three types of help.<sup>15</sup> A balanced support network will also help your successor make a smooth transition to the leadership role.

A network of supporters and leaders throughout the system who share the vision for reform will also serve to smooth transitions in leadership.



All of the Project Sites, to varying degrees, encourage leadership throughout the system and develop a “network of champions” to support reform efforts. Although most of these individuals do not serve in a formal advisory capacity to the Lead Judges, all serve in some informal capacity as supporters, champions, advisors, counselors, and such. It is through active outreach to stakeholder groups, relationship-building, and the creation of a collaborative culture that such networks emerge.

Many of the Lead Judges in the Project Sites have individuals who serve as trusted advisors – people who can help brainstorm ideas, provide critical feedback and reflection, and offer advice. Sometimes these positions are formalized as “change management” positions (e.g., Model Court Project Directors) and sometimes the process is more informal through collegial supports. For example, the Model Court Lead Judges, representing twenty-five jurisdictions across the country, serve as mentors and advisors to each other. Wherever the support is found, leaders do need to develop a network of supporters to help manage politics and transitions.



#### Strategies to Support Smooth Transitions in Leadership

- Ensure there is a shared vision for reform that is widely held and articulated throughout the system.
- Develop a specific leadership transition plan.
- Reflect on the existing team – are the right people on the team? Is there anyone missing who might help ease the transition?
- Assess the network of support for the collaborative – will a strong network of advisors and counselors be available to your successor? If not, recruit these individuals to the collaborative before the transition occurs.
- Critically assess whether your successor has the right qualities to lead and the necessary energy and enthusiasm to motivate others. If not, provide mentoring and other learning opportunities to help develop these skills.
- Communicate your support for your successor – both orally and through your actions (e.g., co-lead or co-chair projects and collaborative meetings; identify your successor as your successor).
- Pass the mantle of leadership – once you have exited, allow your successor to truly lead; while your input may still be sought and encouraged, be sure to reinforce that a change in leadership has occurred, and that it is one that you have supported.

**Managing Transitions:  
Advice from Project Sites**

- *“Actively plan for transitions. Do not let it just happen.”*
- *“Share leadership with the [child welfare] agency head (e.g., co-chair meetings).”*
- *“Identify a process for continuity. Name a deputy judge or deputy administrator. Begin a line of succession.”*
- *“It cannot become personality driven. The best way to find someone to succeed you is to engage your colleagues in what you are doing. You will have a better idea of who is interested in doing what work and who has the potential for leadership.”*
- *“Sustain your attitude for change. Holding down the fort is not enough.”*
- *“There is not a specific formula for successful transitions. But each jurisdiction needs to think about how to develop its own.”*



For tools to assist with the development of transition plans and leadership support networks, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

### Leading Change: The Eight-Stage Process of Creating Major Change

1. **Establish a Sense of Urgency**
  - Identify and discuss problems and opportunities
  - People start telling each other, "let's go, we need to change things"
2. **Create a Guiding Coalition**
  - Put together a group with enough power to lead the change
  - Get the group to work together like a team
3. **Develop a Vision and Strategy**
  - Create a vision to help direct change efforts
  - Develop strategies for achieving that vision
4. **Communicate the Change Vision**
  - Use every means possible to constantly communicate the vision and strategies of the collaborative
  - Have the guiding coalition serve as a model for change through their actions – people begin to buy into the change, and this will show in their behaviors
5. **Empower Broad-Based Action**
  - Remove obstacles so that more people feel able to act, and will act, on the vision
  - Change systems or structures that undermine the change vision
  - Encourage risk-taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions
6. **Generate Short-term Wins**
  - Plan for visible improvements or "wins;" start small with "baby steps" – helps build momentum
  - Create those "wins" – fewer people will resist the change if immediate successes are visible
  - Visibly recognize and reward those who make the wins possible
7. **Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change**
  - Use increased credibility to change all systems, structures, and policies that don't complement each other and that don't fit the vision
  - Add new people to the guiding coalition who can implement the change vision
  - Reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes and change agents – "don't let up"
8. **Anchor New Approaches in the Culture**
  - Create better performance through better leadership
  - Articulate the connections between new behaviors and organizational success
  - Develop means to ensure leadership development and succession – make change stick

Source: Adapted from John P. Kotter (1995). "Why Transformation Efforts Fail," *Harvard Business Review*. March-April, Pg. 61; John P. Kotter. (2002). *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations*. Harvard Business School Press.

**CHAPTER NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Senge, P.M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Doubleday: New York; Senge, P. M. et al. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. Doubleday: New York.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Senge (1990). Pg. 346.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Gardner, J. (1989). *On Leadership*. New York: Free Press. Trait theories are based on the assumption that a defined set of characteristics, or traits, make a leader regardless of the situation or leadership context. Leadership theories that define the qualities of leadership only in terms of traits have been criticized on two major grounds. First, these theories tend to mix different psychological qualities under the rubric of “traits” – e.g., behaviors, skills, temperament, and intellectual ability. Second, trait theories of leadership ignore the influence of the situation and social context on leadership, and how effective leadership may differ depending on the situation.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Blake, R.R. & Mouton, J.S. (1964). *The Managerial Grid*. Gulf Publishing: Houston, TX.; Wright, P. (1996). *Managerial Leadership*. Routledge: London. In the 1950’s and 1960’s, leadership theories moved away from focusing on the traits of leaders to an examination of leadership styles with the aim of identifying different patterns of behavior that are characteristic of different leadership “styles.” Although there is considerable variation in the literature, four general styles have been identified: (1) Concern for task – leaders emphasize concrete objectives and high levels of productivity; (2) Concern for people – leaders focus on the interests, problems, and needs of their followers; (3) Directive leadership – leaders make decisions and expect others to follow; and (4) Participative leadership – leaders share decision-making with others. Again, as with trait theories of leadership, leadership styles and behavioral theories were criticized for ignoring the influence of the social environment on leadership – especially the influence of who the people are the leader is working with and the environment within which the leader, and followers, are working.

<sup>5</sup> See for example, Fiedler, F.E. & Garcia, J.E. (1987). *New Approaches to Effective Leadership*. John Wiley: New York; Fiedler, F.E. (1997). “Situational control and a dynamic theory of leadership” in Grint, K. (1997). *Leadership: Classical, Contemporary and Critical Approaches*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.; Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K.H. (1977). *The Management of Organizational Behavior, Third Edition*. Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ. In the 1970’s, researchers began to turn their attention to the context within which leadership is exercised and recognized that what constitutes effective leadership will differ from situation to situation. The research conducted in this area focused on the interaction between leadership styles and different leadership situations and on the interaction between leaders and followers. The focus became one of choosing the appropriate leadership style for the particular situation. Although these contingent or situational theories of leadership explicitly focused on the influence of the situation or context, they were primarily criticized for not paying enough attention to the broader context of the situation – issues of structure, politics, and culture.

<sup>6</sup> See for example, Covey, S. R. (1989). *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Simon and Schuster: New York, NY; Senge, *Supra* note 1. Although various models of transformational leadership exist, at their core, they share a common focus on the leader as an agent of change.

<sup>7</sup> Stoltenberg, J. & McIntosh, C. (1990). “See the Big Picture? Now show your staff.” *Working Woman*, Vol. 15 (4), April. Pg. 84.; Dobbin, S.A. & Gatowski, S.I. (1998). “Judicial Leadership and Judicial Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases.” *Technical Assistance Bulletin*, Vol. II(5). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV

<sup>8</sup> Dobbin & Gatowski, *Ibid*; Edwards, L.P. (1992). “The Juvenile Court and the Role of the Juvenile Judge.” *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, Vol. 43(2). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.

<sup>9</sup> Dobbin, S.A. & Gatowski, S.I. (2001). “Judicial Workload Estimates: Redefining the Concept of Judicial Work.” *Technical Assistance Bulletin*, Vol. 5(1). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV. This research was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

<sup>10</sup> Townsend, S.S. & Carroll, K. (2002). “Systems Change through Collaboration...Eight Steps for Getting from There to Here.” *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*. Vol.53(4). Pg. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Kotter, J. P.(1996). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business School Press.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 21.

<sup>14</sup> See for example, Watkins, M. (2003). *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels*. Harvard Business School Press; Ciampa, D., and Watkins, M. (1999). *Right from the Start: Taking Charge in a New Leadership Role*. Harvard Business School Press.

<sup>15</sup> Watkins, M. (2004). "Leadership Transitions: Assessing Your Vulnerabilities." [www.elearning.hbsp.org](http://www.elearning.hbsp.org).



**CREATING A COLLABORATIVE, PROBLEM-SOLVING CULTURE**

*"A well-managed collaborative effort is like a chemical reaction that creates far more energy than it consumes. It makes you feel energized, not drained. ... When a group is in alignment about its direction (where it is trying to go), its commitment (the will it possesses to get there), and its capability (the skills and knowledge it has to complete its journey), there is a release of energy. Not only are team members energized by the process, but so is the surrounding organization or community. It's this energy that fuels an extended collaborative effort and keeps it going during rough times."*<sup>1</sup>

If collaboration is such a potentially energizing and powerful experience, why do so many people find it difficult? Because, many people do not know how to collaborate effectively. This lack of knowledge becomes even more problematic when people are attempting to collaborate across complex, politicized systems. Moreover, people tend to focus exclusively on the content of what they are doing, not the process.

*Collaboration is a process of learning together.*

Collaborative problem-solving encompasses decision-making and planning, and creative activities, such as exploring new opportunities; challenging taken-for-granted assumptions, practices and policies; engaging in inquiry and experimentation; visioning; learning; and communicating.

Creating a collaborative culture to support systems change requires creating a culture that supports individual, organizational, and systems learning – a culture that reflects strong leadership throughout the system; a shared vision for reform; a multi-systems approach to problem identification and solution-generation; open information sharing and communication across individuals, collaborative groups and systems; appropriate avenues for assessing and challenging current procedures, policies and

underlying assumptions; and a culture that builds personal capacities and ownership of change efforts.

*The creation of a collaborative culture requires strong, transformational leadership.*

Leaders are responsible for building learning organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is, leaders in learning organizations are responsible for creating an environment for learning. In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards and teachers. (Chapters 3 and 4 outlined some of the key characteristics of effective, transformational leadership.)

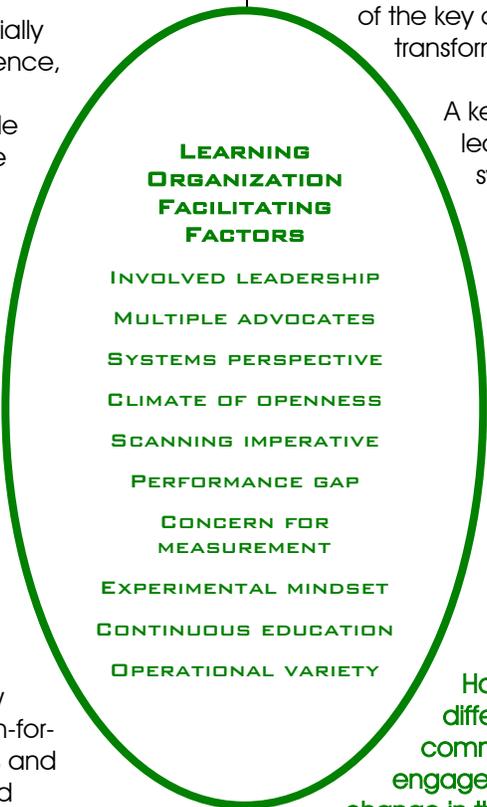
A key function of transformational leadership is to bring multiple system stakeholders to the table and to engage those stakeholders in a collaborative process that is focused on meaningful and sustainable systems change and improved outcomes for children and families.

*"We have become a significant change agent in our community ... for our kids."*  
Stakeholder,  
Charlotte Project Site

**How do you bring together different institutional partners and community representatives to engage in a process of systems change in the child protection arena?**

The key to understanding system improvement, goal achievement, and sustainability, resides in the interaction between stakeholders, the vision of a reformed system, and the structural arrangements and organizational strategies that promote and sustain participation in the collaborative process.

Collaboration is more than just bringing stakeholders to the table – collaboration is more than "cooperation." Collaboration involves giving collaborators a meaningful role, a strong



voice, and a real opportunity to make a contribution. Meaningful collaboration emerges over time and multiple interactions through which trust and mutual respect develop among members.

*“There are few times in life when your participation in something can have such an impact on the lives of children and families. I have a great deal of pride in my involvement.”*  
*Stakeholder,*  
*Buffalo Project Site*

To be effective, the collaborative group has to become more than the sum of its individual parts. A collaborative group develops a group identity of its own, becoming more than a meeting of various stakeholders who merely interact within the limits of status and turf boundaries. Collaboration involves a qualitatively different way of co-laboring.

To truly collaborate and engage in a process of organizational and system learning, it is necessary to deepen the level of conversation across all system and community partners. Collaborative meetings must provide the opportunity to openly and honestly discuss multiple perspectives on systems reforms, underlying assumptions and expectations held by each collaborative partner, common and competing system goals, and the like.

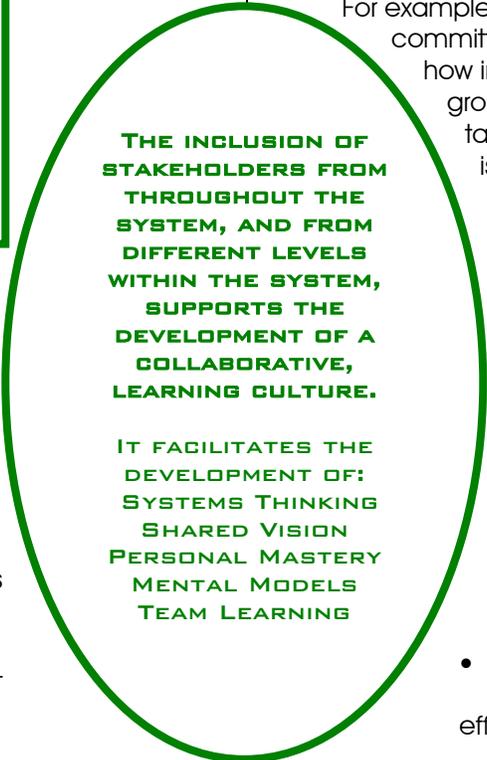
Collaborative partners must be willing to learn from their institutional histories, but not cling to them; change their patterns of formal and informal interaction, communication, and information flow; and provide appropriate and public leadership and support for reform efforts. All collaborative partners must be willing to commit their experience, expertise, energy, and authority to moving reform efforts forward.

Partners must also be willing to commit to widening the sphere of stakeholders who are included in the change process and to

including representatives with differing levels of organizational responsibility (e.g., line workers, mid-level staff, and management staff), the broader community, and clients or consumers (e.g., parents and youth involved in the system).

Successful collaboratives can take many forms. For example, there can be differences in committee structures, differences in how information is brought to the group, and differences in how tasks are assigned and follow-up is managed. However, all collaboratives, to be effective, must clearly articulate the following:

- Who participates in the collaboratives – who are the essential stakeholders?
- What is the purpose of this collaborative? How does the work of this collaborative support the achievement of the larger vision for reform?
- How should the collaborative be structured to be most effective?
- What is the role of the individual participants?
- What level of decision-making authority does the collaborative have?
- How frequently should the collaborative meet?
- How will the work of the collaborative be accomplished?
- How will information be shared within the collaborative and between the collaborative group and other entities?



**WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS?**

Within the context of child protection, a stakeholder is defined as someone who has a “stake” in the outcome of a case. It is important to note, however, that this does not mean that stakeholders have a stake in advocating for a specific outcome (e.g., reunification vs. adoption). Rather, in this context, a stakeholder is someone who has a stake in the overall safety, permanency, and well-being of children.

Stakeholders are individual people, as well as organizational, institutional, and community entities.

*"The reality is that the working relationship, the ability to make systems improvements, is based on a degree of personal relationships and personal interactions and allowing these relationships to develop around a common goal. This only strengthens the working relationships between agencies.*

*Collaboration is a valuable process. In order to be effective it must be part of the process in the design of the system reform process so everyone feels they have a stake in the outcome. It is absolutely critical to success that all stakeholders are included."*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

*"It has allowed people to get to know each other. It helps us have more camaraderie among the various agencies, and when we break off to work on issues, we work better together, we understand each other better, and we are willing to compromise."*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

Collaborative groups should reflect the system and include representatives from all the key institutions and agencies who are involved in child abuse and neglect cases and the provision of services to children and families. When the full range of differing interests and points of view are involved in solving a problem or making a decision, the solution is more comprehensive, creative, and systems-focused. Moreover, the inclusion of stakeholders from throughout the system enables underlying (and perhaps previously unrecognized) assumptions, philosophies, and "mental models" held by the various partner agencies to be challenged and further explored. Ultimately, without inclusion of all parts of the system, a shared vision for system-wide reforms can never be fully developed and implemented.

Not only do stakeholders vary by where they are in the system and community, they also differ by their level of authority and the roles they play in the collaborative process.

In creating a collaborative team, or network of teams, how broadly you define your stakeholder community is a question to be considered.

*"I am not anymore important than anyone else, but it is important that I am here."*

*Stakeholder, San Jose Project Site*

*"Being part of the collaborative compliments everything I do on a daily basis. It is important for me to be part of this."*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

*"Without bringing everyone together it cannot be done."*

*Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site*

*"To be truly effective ... long-lasting results can only be achieved when people are willing to work together."*

*Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site*

**General Categories of Stakeholders in Child Protection Cases**

- Judiciary
    - Court Administration
    - Clerks of Court
  - Legal Representatives – Child
    - Legal Representatives – Parents
    - Legal Representatives – Child Welfare Agency
    - Legal Representatives – State
  - Child Welfare Agency – Clinical / Services
    - Child Welfare Agency – Administration / Policy
  - Service Providers –
    - Substance Abuse
    - Mental & Behavioral Health
    - Physical Health / Public Health
  - School Board / Educational Advocates
  - Domestic Violence Advocates
  - Community Representatives
    - Faith Community
    - Community Based Non-Profit Corp.
    - Local Universities / Colleges
    - Local Arts / Theater Community
- Many stakeholder groups are actively working to include individuals that represent the children, families, and care providers the system serves.
- Parents (with closed cases)
  - Children
  - Foster Parents
  - Care Providers

**Four General Types of Stakeholders<sup>2</sup>**

***(1) Stakeholders with Formal Decision-Making Power***

It is critical that stakeholders with the formal authority and power to make decisions about changes in practices, policies, structural arrangements, and resources are at the collaborative table. The inclusion of formal decision-makers brings both symbolic and real legitimacy to the collaborative effort. The exclusion of formal decision-makers dooms a consensus-based decision to be no more than a recommendation that can be ignored or dismissed by those in higher positions of authority. Dismissal of such consensus-based

decisions, in turn, can lead to lower morale in the collaborative as it sends the message that their input is not valued. If, however, the formal decision-makers are included, and if they are part of a final consensus, then they will be more likely to return to their formal positions and act on the agreement.



In all of the Project Sites, the appropriate level of “executive decision-maker” is involved in reform efforts. What constitutes the appropriate level of decision-maker, however, is somewhat dependent on the structure of the local system.



*“... it needs to be the prosecutor himself that attends, not his assistant, ... the Director of Children’s Services, not just a representative, ... there needs to be expressed endorsement from the executive level decision-makers.”*  
*Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site*

As discussed in Chapter 3, it is not necessary that judicial leaders hold administrative or presiding positions. However, it is important that Administrative and Presiding Judges are actively and visibly supportive of reform efforts. Moreover, a number of Project Sites (and a number of Model Courts) have engaged their Appellate Courts and Chief Judges in reform efforts.

*Ask yourself: Within each functional part of the child welfare system – the court, the child welfare agency, legal representatives, etc. – who are the people with the formal decision-making power and authority? Have those individuals been invited to the collaborative table?*

***(2) Stakeholders with the Power to Block a Decision or Reform Initiative***

Just as it is important to include those stakeholders who have the formal power to support reform efforts and make the necessary policy decisions, it is also important to include those stakeholders that have the power to block initiatives (recognizing, of course, that this could be the same person). Blocking new initiatives and reforms does not necessarily require formal authority, nor is it always a visible process. Within

any organization there may be management-level individuals and other employees who may subtly or passively block or undermine reform efforts – for example, by ignoring or not acting on a new policy; by failing to inform others about a new policy or failing to share necessary information; by sending mixed messages about their level of commitment to, or support for, new reforms or policies; or by simply going through the motions, but not in any meaningful way. It is often this form of passive resistance to change that can cause the most problems when working to achieve reforms (i.e., it is difficult for an organization to address inaction as opposed to explicit opposition to change), so understanding why people act as “blockers” assists the collaborative in the long run.



All of the Project Sites have had to manage “blockers” at some stage, or at several stages, of their collaborative process.

“Blockers” have ranged from top level decision-makers who actively block reform efforts to other stakeholders who passively undermine the implementation of specific reforms. 

*“We still have some adversarial people, as well as others who are reluctant to come to the table ... I think their reluctance comes from fear. But, we just keep reaching out.”*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

Excluding “powerful blockers” only makes them more powerful and legitimizes their ability to claim that the process is closed and unfair. It is important that these individuals feel they have a voice in the consensus-building and decision-making process. They need to feel that their concerns are being addressed. Including the perspective of these individuals also assists in the process of problem-definition and the identification of barriers to implementation. People who were once blockers often become strong advocates for collaboration if they are treated with respect and educated about how to participate constructively. “If these people can learn how to work effectively within the guidelines and ground rules of a collaborative process, and if the other stakeholders can be

encouraged to let go of their stereotyped preconceptions – to legitimize [concerns without necessarily agreeing with them] ...<sup>3</sup> these individuals can become productive and important members of the collaborative.



All of the Project Sites acknowledged the frustration engendered by having to continually reach out and try to engage

people who were actively (and passively) working against their efforts. They also stressed, however, that the continual outreach was a necessary part of “wearing the person down” and eventually engaging them in the process. 

*Ask yourself: Who could block or delay implementation of any decisions that emerge from this collaborative process? Who could sabotage the process of implementation? Have these individuals been invited to the collaborative table?*

### (3) Stakeholders with Relevant Information or Experience about the Current Reality of Practice, Policies, and Outcomes

The inclusion of those stakeholders with the day-to-day experience of working in the system – those in the middle-management level, as well as those on the “front-line” – is critical. Individuals who are most involved in the day-to-day experience of policies and practices can serve as valuable informants. The knowledge they can share about current practice, challenges, opportunities, and resources is invaluable. The inclusion of “front-line” level stakeholders ensures that the vision of the collaborative “trickles-down” to those individuals actually carrying the work forward on a daily basis, further expanding the sphere of influence of the collaborative. Making certain that a range of individuals from differing levels of the organization or system’s structure (e.g., managers, supervisors, and line level staff) are included in the collaborative group not only expands the knowledge base of the group, but also expands the group’s sphere of influence.



All of the Project Sites include multiple levels of stakeholders from throughout the system in their collaborative efforts, at least to some degree.

However, two specific stakeholder groups tend to be under-represented in collaborative groups: front-line case workers and defense attorneys. With respect to both groups, caseloads and a lack of resources tend to be primary obstacles to participation. Their input, however, is critical. Active efforts need to be made to more directly involve both case workers and defense attorneys in collaborative reform efforts – whether as committee members, meeting participants, faculty/trainers, or training participants.

*“[The Parents Attorney Panel] are not represented by a particular director. They are not an organized entity. They don’t get paid for their time.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

*Ask yourself:* Are individuals with access to the information needed by the collaborative included in the group? Are representatives from all levels of the system included? Is the collaborative group perceived to be inclusive rather than an exclusive or elite club?

**(4) Stakeholders Affected by Decisions and Changes in Policy and Practice**

Those affected by the changes in policy and practice proposed by the collaborative deserve an opportunity to express their opinions about changes and to have a hand in crafting new policies and procedures. In the child welfare system, these stakeholders encompass all of the professions represented in the system (e.g., judges, attorneys, caseworkers, advocates, administrators, clerks, foster parents, treatment or service professionals, etc.). But in the child welfare system, ensuring the inclusion of stakeholders affected by the decisions of the collaborative group may also involve including the “clients” of the system – the children and families the child welfare system is designed to serve, as well as members of the community at large. Inclusion of “client” stakeholders in the collaborative group can serve as a constant “reality check” against whether collaborative efforts are appropriately targeted and implemented (e.g., are reform efforts reaching the individuals they were designed to reach? Does the collaborative group have an accurate picture of the needs and concerns of its clients?).

Collaborative groups focused on child welfare reform should consider whether there is a role for the system’s clients (e.g., the children and families impacted by their reform efforts) in the collaborative process. And, if they have a role, exactly what that role might be and how the information they provide might be used to further develop and refine change initiatives. The contribution of “client” stakeholders may take many forms, from direct participation in the collaborative group discussion to more remote participation via feedback, surveys, or focus groups. Collaborative groups should also consider how expansive to be when defining this stakeholder group – should contributions be sought from individuals currently involved in the system or will input be sought from “graduates of the system” only?

*“In reality, no one understands the obstacles to effective permanency planning like the parents who face them. Yet the judicial system traditionally assumes that judges, lawyers, and other experts have all the answers.”<sup>4</sup>*

*Ask yourself:* Is there a forum for the system’s clients (e.g., children and families) to contribute to the collaborative group? How are the contributions made by the system’s clients used and shared? What level of direct participation in the collaborative is appropriate for the system’s clients?

If it is not possible to include clients in the collaborative, whether for legal or practical reasons, it is still good practice to attempt to incorporate the perspective of clients into the collaboration. This can be accomplished by consciously trying to adopt a client’s likely view or reaction to the collaborative’s goals or vision. Some questions the collaborative can ask to help orient itself to a “client perspective” are:

*As a client...*

- Would I understand the goals and vision being created at the most basic level?
- Would I agree with the vision and goals as being important and meaningful?
- Would I feel respected and valued if this vision and the goals it sets forth were adopted on my behalf?



### Creating Opportunities for Client Input: Examples from the Project Sites

The San Jose Model Court has made a concerted effort to provide opportunities for parents to have input into the permanency planning process.

The San Jose Model Court Lead Judge maintains that the child welfare system cannot begin to identify and address parents' needs without making a commitment to listening to their insights. Acting in accordance with this belief, the Lead Judge began listening to parents.

As he listened to parents' experiences in the system and their concerns and challenges, the Lead Judge became dissatisfied with the quality of representation being provided to parents. This dissatisfaction led to an organizational restructuring and a parental representation system was developed in which, among other things, parents had access to attorneys who have the time to explain the legal process to them.<sup>4</sup>

Parents also expressed fear that the dependency court and the child welfare agency had taken away their children forever. For parents to change their perception of the system and participate in the permanency planning process, the court and child welfare agency had to first change how it operated. The court and child welfare agency began to take a more family strengths-based approach and focused on building trust and empowering families. Through a collaborative process, the San Jose Model Court implemented two system tools designed to help the court and child welfare agency focus on family strengths and reunification – mediation and family group conferencing.<sup>5</sup>

Through mediation and family group conferencing, the voices of more and more parents and families were heard. The court and child welfare agency continued to learn more about the challenges facing the families that came before them; this led to an increased focus on providing drug and alcohol services and the development of a drug court, as well as more attention to the impact of domestic violence on child and parent safety and family functioning.

The San Jose Model Court also holds town meetings within their community, as does the Alexandria Model Court. These town meetings provide an opportunity for community outreach and community feedback, and serve to increase community awareness around issues of child abuse and neglect.

A stakeholder in the Charlotte Project Site commented that she would like to see parents and family members more actively involved in collaborative meetings. When asked why parents were not more involved, she noted both the novelty of the concept, as well as some of the logistical barriers that may discourage family participation.

*"It is a relatively new idea. ... It is very difficult for families to be involved. We usually have meetings at lunch. A family member would have to give something up to be there. We get paid to participate as part of our job. This is a goal that would be difficult to attain, but worth pursuing."*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

A number of Project Sites invite former foster children to participate in trainings and meetings. Many jurisdictions throughout the country have advocacy groups for foster children and these groups serve as a wonderful resource to facilitate the inclusion of the child's perspective. Videos are also available, often developed by former foster children, which are powerful reminders that the most important perspective and experience is that of the child.

Project Sites, and other Model Court jurisdictions, have often invited children, families, and community members to participate in later stages of their collaborative process. However, the earlier the "client" perspective is included, the more likely it is that reform efforts will be truly child and family focused.



It is also important to consider the role of the community and community agencies. Outreach to and collaboration with community and local advocacy groups can greatly increase the breadth and depth of the collaborative and bring new resources and creativity to the collaborative table.

Community stakeholders may include the Board of Education or representatives of the local school district, the faith community, the Departments of Labor and Housing, police departments, and advocacy groups.



**Engaging the Community:  
Examples from the Project Sites**

All of the Project Sites have actively worked to include their local educational community in reform efforts. Outreach to the school districts has proven particularly challenging for the Los Angeles Project Site due to the size of the county and the need to reach out to 81 separate school districts.

Charlotte has successfully engaged the behavioral and mental health community and Buffalo has developed strong collaborative ties with the local medical community and public health agencies. Charlotte has also developed collaborative relationships with the non-profit sector of the county and formed a Children’s Alliance focused on providing better services and supports to Mecklenburg’s vulnerable children and families.

The Alexandria Project Site has actively reached out the faith and arts community and engaged in a number of community outreach activities.



*Ask Yourself: What constitutes my community? Who should I reach out to – in the educational and faith communities, in the police department, in county agencies, in the non-profit sector? Am I maximizing resources, expertise, and professional networks already existing in my community?*

*“This collaborative is making change in the community. It is important that my agency and the school system be involved in the system of care in general. We are part of this community. We have a responsibility.”*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

*“Getting the school districts involved has been one of our biggest challenges. There are 81 school districts here, each a separate entity.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

It is important to recognize that stakeholder types are not mutually exclusive. However, including stakeholders from each of the four categories discussed above greatly strengthens the collaborative effort.



For tools and strategies to assist in identifying stakeholders and including the voice of children and parents in collaborative reform efforts, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

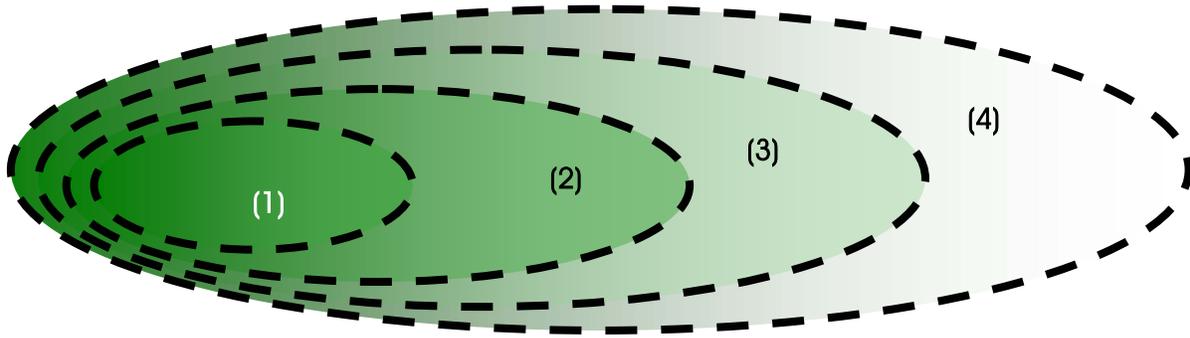
**THE SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF COLLABORATIVE GROUPS**

As noted earlier, there are a broad range of individuals and organizations that have a “stake” in the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in their community. Some of these stakeholders are more central to the functioning of the court and child welfare agency, while others are more broadly focused on the overall welfare of their communities.

Straus discusses the structure of the collaborative process in terms of four expanding “rings of involvement.”<sup>6</sup> Each larger ring, progressing outward from the first one, includes more people but at a decreased level of intensity. Thus, the first ring involves the fewest people but with the highest level of participation intensity, while the fourth ring includes the most people but at a much lower participation intensity. Not all collaborative processes need to include all four rings.

In the initial stages of developing a collaborative structure, decisions need to be made about the scope, structure, and purpose of the collaborative group – recognizing that this might change over time.

**Straus's Rings of Involvement**



- (1) Core Problem-Solving Group (Executive or Steering Committee)
- (2) Task Forces, Subcommittees
- (3) Input / Feedback Meetings – Trainings, Kick-Offs
- (4) Communication and Outreach

**Ring 1: A Core Advisory Group**

The innermost group serves as the core advisory group. The size of this core group, and the eventual number of “rings” in the overall collaborative, depends in large part on the number of stakeholders involved in the collaborative process and the overall complexity of the system.

In smaller communities with less stakeholder groups, the core advisory group may be the only collaborative group. If this is the case, then care must be taken to ensure that all of the stakeholder groups have a representative on the core committee.

In a complex, collaborative process with hundreds, if not thousands, of stakeholders, a core advisory group typically serves as a central steering or executive committee. This type of committee is usually responsible for managing and coordinating the collaborative process and integrating the work of subcommittees and task force groups.

The core advisory group can also serve as a starting point which will then, over time, evolve into a more formalized structure involving multiple rings of involvement (e.g., a subcommittee structure may emerge as the collaborative develops).

Core advisory groups or committees usually do not hold any centralized, decision-making power. Rather, the group’s power to effect change comes from their ability to coordinate reform initiatives and generate broad-based consensus and buy-in across stakeholder groups.



**Multidisciplinary Advisory Groups: Examples from the Project Sites**

Lead Judges in a number of Model Courts, and almost all of the Packard Project Sites, began their collaborative efforts by bringing together a core group of key decision-makers from each of the primary institutional partners within the child welfare system.

- The Court
- The Child Welfare Agency – Legal and Clinical (Service) Representatives
- Legal Representatives for Children
- Legal Representatives for Parents

Some of the Project Sites, and many of the Model Courts, have developed larger “Model Court Advisory Committees” that range in size from 10 to 45 people. These Advisory Committees may be relied on instead of, or in addition to, a smaller “Table of 5” type of core committee.

These Advisory Committees, comprised of a multidisciplinary group of key stakeholders, usually meet according to some pre-determined schedule (e.g., the first Monday of every month or every other Tuesday at lunch) to discuss reform issues, identify challenges and roadblocks, and ensure that efforts are solution-focused and coordinated. The Model Court Advisory Committees typically focus on core practice and policy issues within the court and child welfare systems.

For example, the Alexandria Model Court has a collaborative “Core Group” (Model Court Advisory Committee) comprised of representatives from all relevant agencies and professions (i.e., social service personnel, attorneys, guardians *ad litem*, CASA, court personnel, and treatment providers). This Core Group of Model Court stakeholders meets regularly to examine current practice, create innovative solutions for addressing system improvement challenges, and strategically plan for the achievement of system improvement goals.

Strong judicial leadership and the Model Court’s Core Group collaborative have been critical to sustaining Alexandria’s commitment to applying the best practices principles of the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES* in order to achieve better outcomes for Alexandria’s children and families.

Over the last few years, many of these Model Court Core Committees have formed subcommittees to address specific issues or initiatives as needed. For example, subcommittees have been formed to address issues pertaining to the educational needs of children in foster care, domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health services in many of the Model Court jurisdictions. 

The “Table of 5” concept was begun in the Chicago Model Court in the mid-1990s.

The “Table of 5,” led by the Presiding Judge of the Child Protection Division of the Cook County Juvenile Court meets regularly with the General Counsel of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Directors of the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, Public Defender’s Office, and the Public Guardian’s Office to address court and system improvements.

Today, the Table of 5 continues to meet has generated and as many as 15 interdisciplinary committees work under an Advisory Work Group to resolve barriers to timely permanency.

The “Table of 5” concept has been adopted by many Model Courts. Depending on the local structure and community, in some jurisdictions it is the “Table of 6,” while in others it is the “Gang of 8.” Whatever the final number of key individuals involved, the “Table of 5” concept refers to bringing together a small group of the critical decision-makers (usually Directors and Administrators) of the primary institutional partners in child welfare.

### *Ring 2: Task Force Groups and Subcommittees*

The second ring of involvement outlined by Straus includes members of task force groups or subcommittees. These individuals are usually involved in intensive problem-solving and change efforts, but the scope of the topic is limited. Almost all of the Project Sites have a subcommittee structure. Subcommittees usually have a very specific focus and are, quite often, time limited.

Like the core committee, subcommittees should include a representative from each major stakeholder group. Whatever the specific topic of focus, problem-definition and solution-generation will be more innovative, comprehensive, systemic, and achievable if a multidisciplinary perspective is taken. Inclusion of representatives from all stakeholder groups on subcommittees also dramatically increases the likelihood that the recommendations that are generated or innovative programs and policies that are created by the subcommittee are implemented.

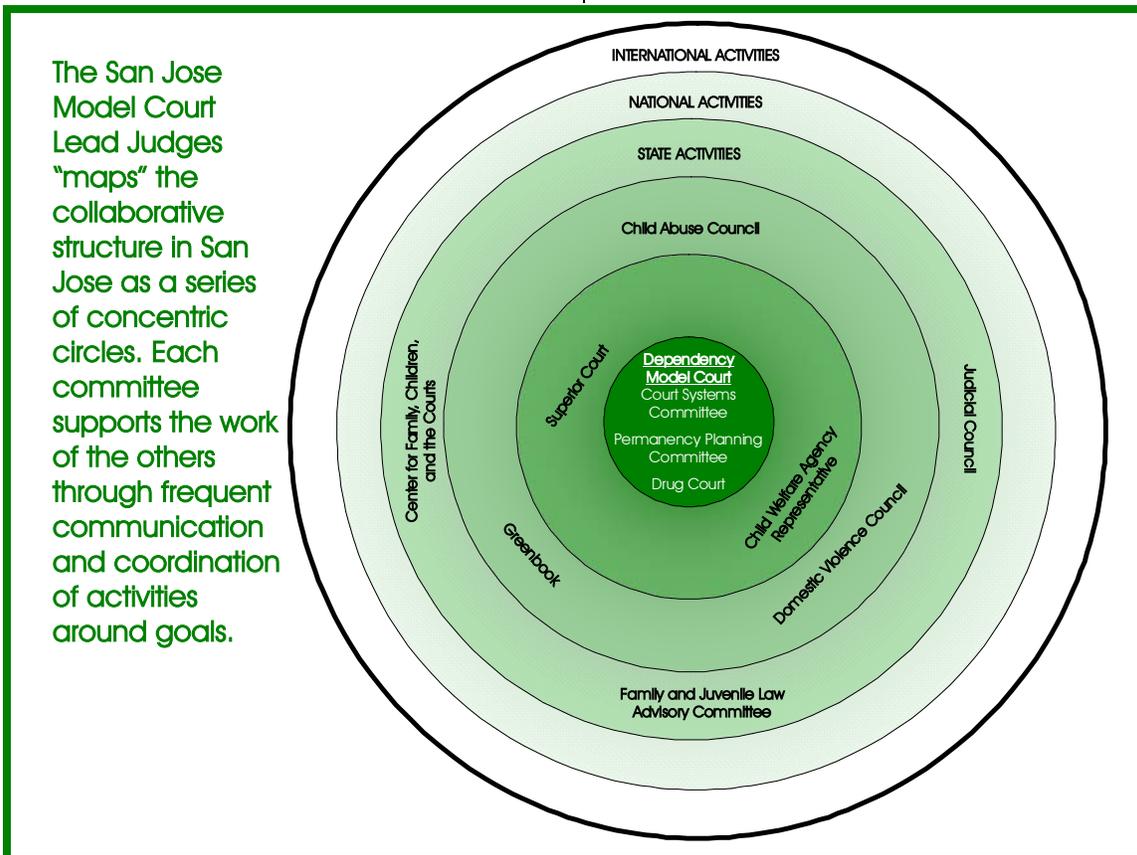
A primary challenge inherent in creating multiple, topic-focused subcommittees is ensuring that those subcommittees are operating within the larger vision (not outside of it) and that there is information flow and communication between and among subcommittees, the core advisory committee, and other collaborative entities. Another challenge in developing multiple subcommittees is that often the same people will end up serving on multiple committees which increases the likelihood of burn-out. In addition to having representatives from throughout the system serving on subcommittees, each subcommittee should have an identified chair, or co-chairs. Besides leading the actual meetings, subcommittee chairs should serve as a communication mechanism between the subcommittee and the core advisory committee and groups falling into the other rings of influence.

*When subcommittees are developed, key decisions need to be made about ...*

- What the scope of the subcommittee work will be, and what is the expected “product” of the subcommittee?

- What decision-making power will the subcommittee have?
- How the work of the subcommittee relates to the overall vision for reform and how it moves the system closer to achieving that vision?
- Who will serve on the subcommittee and what are the expectations for membership?
- Who will chair the subcommittee and what are the responsibilities of the chair?
- What will be the frequency, duration, and location of meetings?
- How will the core advisory committee be kept informed about the work of the subcommittee? How will the subcommittee share information and communicate with other committees?
- What accountability mechanisms are in place, or will be put in place, to ensure continued progress on collaborative goals within the subcommittees?

Ideally, you should be able to “map” your committee structure, showing lines of communication and information flow between and among the various committees.





### Task Force Groups and Subcommittees: Examples from the Project Sites

All of the Project Sites, and all of the Model Courts, have a subcommittee structure to at least some degree.

Subcommittee topic areas are diverse and include such topics as:

- Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in Foster Care
- Improving Physical and Behavioral Health Outcomes for Children in Foster Care
- Adolescent Issues
- Children Aged 0-6
- Domestic Violence Services
- Substance Abuse Services
- Dependency Drug Court
- Mediation
- Family Group Conferencing
- Expediting Adoptions
- Legal Issues (broadly or narrowly defined)
- Interdisciplinary Training
- Foster and Kinship Care
- Cross-Over Population (Dually adjudicated youth)

Whatever the specific topics, all issues addressed by subcommittees should be part of the larger vision for systems reform and should be a strategic part of moving the system toward that shared vision.

In the Buffalo Project Site, there are more than 175 representatives from throughout the system – the court, child welfare agency, mental health, legal community, service providers, and public school district – who participate in subcommittees on a variety of issues (there are currently nine subcommittees, although the number has fluctuated over the years). These multidisciplinary subcommittees routinely develop action plans that include recommendations for policy and practice changes. The actions of the subcommittees are overseen and coordinated by a smaller group of 25 members who represent the department

heads of all major stakeholder groups and include all subcommittee chairs. This decision-making group, which meets bi-monthly, considers recommendations from the subcommittees and oversees their work, surveys ongoing changes within the system as a whole and communicates those changes back to the subcommittees, and directs the overall course of systems change. This core decision-making group also disbands and creates subcommittees as necessary (in collaboration with subcommittee chairs and members), and serves as the core mechanisms by which the work of the subcommittees is coordinated and integrated into overall systems reform.<sup>7</sup>

Like Buffalo, San Jose also has a formal subcommittee structure. Each subcommittee works on an identified area within the broader vision and develops written recommendations and a plan for implementation. This plan is then shared with everyone in the collaborative via e-mail. Everyone reviews the plan and provides feedback. A final plan is then developed and submitted to the court. Ultimately, the court makes the final decision.

In contrast to Buffalo and San Jose where the core group developed first and then generated topic-focused subcommittees, reform in the Los Angeles Model Court initially began with a series of multi-disciplinary groups focused on very specific issues. Although there was common membership across groups, there was no formal mechanism for information sharing across the groups. More recently, the Lead Judge has developed a core Advisory Group. A primary role of this core group will be better coordination of initiatives and the work of the existing committees.

Subcommittees in the Los Angeles Model Court tend to be very tied to statutory issues and challenges and, in fact, the subcommittees are often referred to in terms of the relevant statutory citation. Closely tying subcommittees to state statute (whether to ensure compliance with statute, or to clarify ambiguities or inconsistencies, or to strengthen practice), enables subcommittees to remain very focused on the legal framework, the court oversight role, and facilitates state statute and ASFA compliance. However, it may also restrict the range of problems and challenges identified and unintentionally may limit creative problem-

solving and the kinds of solutions that may be offered.

As discussed, one of the primary challenges of developing a subcommittee structure is ensuring strategic coordination across subcommittees – whether through a formal steering committee or through more informal means. The Charlotte Model Court continues to struggle with this issue. Charlotte is a very collaborative community and a large number of multidisciplinary subcommittees, that draw membership from a broadly defined community of stakeholders, are currently meeting on a wide range of topics and issues relevant to child welfare reform. While the commitment and energy of system stakeholders and the broader community is to be commended, the subcommittees are not working together in a strategic and coordinated way. For example, there are a number of subcommittees focused on the same issue, but there is no communication or coordination between them, and, as a result, potentially conflicting recommendations are generated and there is no formal authority to implement recommendations. Moreover, individuals are serving on multiple subcommittees and becoming overwhelmed, and in some cases defeated, by the time required to attend meetings that do not seem to be as productive as they could be.

The Charlotte Model Court is actively pursuing strategies to build upon and better coordinate the collaborative efforts throughout the county.

*“When separate meetings used to be held with each different stakeholder or with different groups of individuals the message seemed to get mixed somehow, or lost in translation. By having frequent, collaborative meetings, everyone hears the same message, they are part of the same dialogue, they get to listen to all the perspectives. It is much more meaningful and productive.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

**TIPS FROM PROJECT SITES FOR ENSURING AN EFFECTIVE SUBCOMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

- Ensure multidisciplinary representation on the subcommittee.
- Identify a chair or co-chairs. Inviting stakeholders to chair or co-chair subcommittees is a great way to provide an opportunity for shared leadership and relationship-building.
- Make sure the roles and responsibilities of subcommittee chairs and co-chairs are well-articulated and understood by everybody.
- The subcommittee should have a clear purpose that is commonly understood by all subcommittee members. The purpose of the subcommittee should clearly relate to the overall vision for reform.
- Establish clear goals for the subcommittee and expectations for the work product of the subcommittee.
- Establish clear mechanisms for communication and information flow between the subcommittee and the core, or centralized committee, and between multiple subcommittees.

**Ring 3: Input and Feedback Meetings – System-Wide and Community-Wide Trainings, Kick-Offs**

The third ring of involvement includes those people who might attend one or more large-group, “feed-forward” or “feed-back” meetings. In “feed-forward” meetings, the information flows from a few people out to many people throughout the organization or system. In “feed-back” meetings, a large group of people gather to offer reactions to and reflections on the work of the core advisory group or subcommittees. These types of meetings are usually held a few times a year. Participants in these kinds of meetings might show up for the meeting and offer input, but they do not roll up their sleeves and engage in extended, intensive collaborative work.



**Input and Feedback Meetings: Experience from the Project Sites**

All of the Project Sites, indeed all of the Model Courts, utilize input and feedback meetings to at least some extent. Most commonly, these meetings take the form of multidisciplinary training sessions and workshops to present new initiatives and policies and to open new dialogues with the broader community of stakeholders. Ideally, these multidisciplinary training sessions are jointly supported by system partners and leadership visibly and collaboratively participates. 

**Ring 4: Communications and Outreach**

The outermost ring of involvement includes broad-based communications and outreach activities (e.g., through mass media and public awareness campaigns). Communication and outreach, especially through media campaigns, is generally undertaken once the collaborative is well established and change is well underway.



**Communication and Outreach Activities: Examples from the Project Sites**

Each of the Project Sites engages in communication and outreach activities, although each to a different extent and each in a way that reflects their local community culture.

The Alexandria Model Court has made a strong commitment to community outreach and increasing community awareness of issues pertaining to child abuse and neglect. For example, several years ago, with the assistance of the Alexandria United Way, four arts programs began working with at-risk youth to engage them in writing and producing plays, music, costume and set-design, theatrical makeup application, singing, and acting. Since then other teams of people have begun programs to link the arts community with at-risk children who have not yet entered the court system. As a result of the court's continued collaboration with the arts community, the Alexandria Arts Commission approved funding for an ongoing children's art exhibit in the hallways outside of the Juvenile Court's courtrooms. This exhibit premiered in summer 2002. This arts initiative, originally begun in the Reno Model Court through the Sierra Arts Foundation, has been

adopted by other Model Court jurisdictions, including the Buffalo Project Site.

The Alexandria Model Court judges and Core Group members also regularly appear on local cable television programs and participate in "town meetings" in order to highlight the needs of children and families in Alexandria and the reform efforts of the court, social services, and other system professionals. Another significant effort at community outreach has involved outreach to Alexandria's faith community. Informational memos about children in care, the needs of the system, and legal aspects of the dependency case process have been distributed to the various churches, synagogues, and mosques in Alexandria. The goal of this effort is to raise public awareness by having information about the child welfare system included in bulletins for the faith community so that their congregations learn more about children in their community who would otherwise remain hidden from the general public.

In an effort to improve communication between the court, stakeholders, and the broader child welfare community, the Buffalo Model Court Project began a lunchtime series, "Wednesdays at Family Court." The court invited more than 200 community service providers to participate in this child welfare services fair. Each Wednesday was given a particular service theme. Agencies providing those particular services were invited to set up booths and provide information to caseworkers, attorneys, and other stakeholders. As an added benefit, the lunchtime series promoted information-sharing and relationship-building among the provider agencies.

Project Sites also provide training opportunities for community members. For example, the Buffalo court collaborated with other county, city, and private entities to co-sponsor the annual Kinship Caregivers' Conference, in June 2002. This all-day conference was designed to share new ideas, legislation, and program improvements with relative caregivers in either a formal or informal living arrangement. Workshops were given on issues including health care, housing, legal issues, special education, and benefited nearly 100 relative caregivers.

The Charlotte Project Site hosts a "Children's Summit" which brings together a cross-section of

agencies and hundreds of people to discuss child protection issues and challenges on many levels.

A number of the Project Sites, most notably Alexandria and Buffalo, are actively working to expand their reform efforts statewide. Both courts are working closely with their state Court Improvement Programs, participating in statewide best practice conferences, hosting site visits, and providing support and guidance to other jurisdictions around their state who are beginning a collaborative reform process and working to implement the best practices of the *RESOURCE GUIDELINES*.



It is important to recognize that the boundaries between the “rings of involvement” are fluid and permeable. During the course of collaborations, people’s level of interest may change, and workload and transitions may affect people’s level of commitment. The collaborative process and structure needs to be flexible to accommodate such changes and transitions.

No matter what collaborative structure is put in place, it needs to be visible. If a collaborative process is not well publicized and visible to the broader stakeholder community, it may be perceived as a closed or exclusive process. Visibility and transparency contribute to openness, which, in turn, facilitates broad stakeholder involvement – all of which increases the power, action, and influence of the collaboration.



**Making your Collaborative Visible: A Lesson Learned in the Buffalo Model Court Project Site**

In September 2002, a day-long training for DSS line staff and contract agency representatives culminated in a powerful lesson for the Buffalo Model Court Lead Judge and Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner. The afternoon session, intended to be a facilitated discussion on the use of outcome measures to improve practice, was used by staff to voice strong concern over the lack of communication throughout the child welfare system. Participants stated that the collaborative goals and vision of the Commissioner and Judge as part of the Model Court Project were not being communicated from the various supervisory levels to the front

line. Conversely, they felt that their practice needs were not communicated back to the highest levels and were not reflected in the overall vision for change.

As an immediate response to these concerns, the Lead Judge and DSS Commissioner embarked on a strategy to engage all line staff in “retro buy-in.” The strategy included the formation of two committees - a Model Court subcommittee that engaged stakeholders of all levels as consultants to discuss cross-system communication and an internal DSS practice “think tank.”

The communication subcommittee began work by reviewing current and past methods of communicating collaborative efforts. The group discussed stakeholder meetings, the informational website, and the collaborative newsletter. It was decided that “The Same Page” newsletter was the preferred method for receiving routine information on projects and changes underway. The group stressed that information should be prospective whenever possible and that opportunities for participating in the development and implementation of projects should be extended to line staff. After much discussion on methods of disseminating the newsletter, it was decided to e-mail the newsletter as a PDF file to each line worker directly.

Discussions during the training also brought light to the fact that the line workers were unaware of projects that could help their practice and had been developed in direct response to their voiced needs. The Lead Judge, Commissioner, and other key stakeholders presented a collaborative update of Model Court projects and policies of DSS and court staff. The agenda included an update on collaboration, a reintroduction to the roles of the key stakeholders, and a statement of goals. Nearly 200 staff attended and participated in one of three scheduled meetings over the course of a year.

Another request voiced at the training was that line workers be given an opportunity for direct communication with judges and other key stakeholders – communication that would not be censored or misinterpreted by administrative staff. The DSS, the Court, and key stakeholders committed to a process of team meetings

where every other Wednesday, from April through September 2003, two DSS casework units would meet at DSS with a Family Court judge, court attorney referee, law clerk, law guardian, parent's counsel, DSS counsel, and CASA volunteer for one hour. The agenda was set to include one issue provided by the DSS units, the other by the legal team, and a period dedicated to discussing a collaborative initiative relevant to those teams. The judges and other stakeholders were assigned to meeting dates in direct consideration of the practice of the DSS unit scheduled to participate. The meetings were co-facilitated by DSS and court staff representatives.

Over the course of seven months, the teams met and discussed issues including caseworker involvement in the collaborative process, documents caseworkers should bring to court, protocol for court reviews, service of petitions and reports, change in pre-trial procedure, and transfer of cases. In addition, a representative from the child permanency mediation program was on hand to discuss the use of mediation in all stages of the case and to troubleshoot problems observed by the caseworkers.

The results of these meetings include substantive changes, some still underway, that improve practice, ongoing discussions of practice issues and problems, and a united sense that the best interest of children and their families is a common goal to all. At the end of each meeting, the facilitators conducted a "process check" to solicit a comment from each participant on how the process worked for them. Reactions were overwhelmingly very positive. These meetings are anticipated to continue throughout 2004 and may include staff from the private agencies as well.

### **WHAT COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE IS RIGHT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?**

There is no "one size fits all" or "right answer" to determining which collaborative structure is best for your jurisdiction. The type of collaborative structure best suited to your community will depend on a variety of things, including the structure and size of your court and child welfare system, local demographics and resources, and the politics and culture of your community.

In deciding who should be part of your collaborative team, at least initially, it is often helpful to "map the system" or "map the process." That is, identify each of the primary institutional parts and the person who directs that agency or institution and then reach out to that person.



### **GETTING STARTED: EXAMPLES FROM THE PROJECT SITES**

In all of the Project Sites, and in almost all of the Model Courts, the initial outreach was made by the Lead Judge to the local director of the child welfare agency. This outreach typically took the form of an initial in-person meeting or letter of introduction outlining the need to work together to initiate systems reform activities. Relationship-building usually began through a series of one-on-one meetings to discuss each other's perspectives and vision for reform. Outreach to other key system stakeholders then built on this initial outreach and these relationships were developed over time in small stages.

Usually, the final scope of the collaborative, and the identification of the proper stakeholders to involve, is accomplished through the joint efforts of those initial key leaders.

*"Multiple, ongoing meetings are critical. It helps to build and maintain relationships."  
Stakeholder, San Jose Project Site*

*"After 35 years in child advocacy, we are finally coming together and producing policy that changes how we deliver social services and presents parents with a minimum standard of care that every child and family is entitled to."  
Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

In the Buffalo Model Court Project Site, the Administrative Judge (Model Court Lead Judge), the DSS Commissioner, and the Mayor, with the help of the Court Improvement Project Committee, identified key players from the community that needed to be part of the collaborative. Due their influence, when people were invited to the table, they came. Initially, one large meeting was held with representatives from every sector of the child welfare system. At that initial meeting, the need for change was outlined, data on case backlogs and time to permanency were presented, and the initial vision for reform was presented – "... to provide children with safe, healthy permanent families in the shortest time possible." Over 150 stakeholders attended the meeting. Participants were asked to support reform efforts and they were invited to be part of the collaborative change process through work on subcommittees. Four priority areas were identified: Expediting adoptions; implementing a child permanency focused mediation program; coordinating service access for hard-to-place and hard-to-serve children; and designing a comprehensive health care initiative for children in foster care.

Then, several small meetings were held to begin the change process. More stakeholders were invited to participate and a formal subcommittee structure was developed. A Steering Committee provides general oversight, coordinates the work of the subcommittees, and guides the overall work of the collaborative.

To encourage the involvement of stakeholders, the Erie County Model Court adopted a three prong approach: respect, food, and praise. Care was taken to provide a respectful and professional environment for information sharing and dialogue; stakeholders needed to learn to recognize the individual funding, staffing, and resource constraints faced by each stakeholder group, their underlying philosophies, etc. Trust among agencies was fostered and given time to develop. Sharing food and "breaking bread" together fostered collegiality. Since the beginning of the reform efforts, through today, subcommittees have creatively provided lunch and snacks as incentives to attend meetings (at little cost, with small contributions by committee members). During meetings, stakeholders are encouraged to raise issues, be creative, and "think outside the box." All ideas and opinions

are welcome. A collaborative environment was created to facilitate personal ownership over the vision and the change efforts.<sup>8</sup>

Los Angeles is the largest child welfare system in the nation. Every year more than 70,000 children in Los Angeles who are victims of abuse, neglect, abandonment and exploitation are entrusted to the care of the Department of Children's Services. Just fewer than 30,000 children currently require the protection of the juvenile dependency court system.<sup>9</sup> The Los Angeles Model Court Lead Judge oversees 20 judicial officers, hearing dependency cases, who have an annual caseload of approximately 1,500 cases per court.

The sheer size of their jurisdiction and high volume of cases was identified by almost all of the Model Court stakeholders as the primary challenge to their collaborative reform efforts. Geographical boundaries also make it difficult for people to travel to attend collaborative meetings, and this makes it "especially difficult" to include community members as participants in collaborative group meetings.

The context within which the Los Angeles Model Court operates (i.e., that of a large, urban jurisdiction) shapes the reform efforts underway in Los Angeles. But rather than use size as an excuse not to do something, the Los Angeles Project Site tries to use its size to its advantage – as an opportunity to overcome barriers. For example, the sheer number of people working in the court and child welfare agency also means that there is a wealth of expertise and systems' knowledge available to "get the work done." As one stakeholder explained, "With the large volume of cases also comes a lot of people ... these individuals are constantly tapped for creative solutions to problems and to staff reform projects." As Model Court Lead Judge Michael Nash noted, "size is also a strength ... we have tons of experienced, diverse, talented, and dedicated people and resources to tap into."

*“People can be overwhelmed by the size of the jurisdiction ... it’s hard to change something this huge ... Because of the size we have a hard time filtering down to the line workers”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

*“Transportation is very difficult for everyone ... there are formidable problems in this system that have to do with the distance and geographical size of the county.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

*“The system is just too busy ... there are too many cases ...”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

Other strategies mentioned to overcome the barriers imposed by such a large jurisdiction included:

- *“Ensuring that the head of every department or a representative is present at each collaborative meeting where child welfare decisions are made – that way policy and best practice information shared will trickle down from the heads of each department.”*
- *“Providing opportunities for multidisciplinary training to give staff an opportunity to learn along side their counterparts – results in better learning as well as relationship-building.”*
- *“Personalizing the problem and appealing to the common mission.”*

In contrast to the Los Angeles Project Site, the Alexandria Model Court is a relatively small jurisdiction with two judges hearing abuse and neglect cases. The small size is clearly identified as strength of the collaborative:

- *“The fact that we are a small jurisdiction means that we all know each other... you feel like you just can’t shrug people off .. there is more of a personal connection – thus, more of a willingness to see the need for collaboration.”*
- *“The fact that we are a small jurisdiction helps in communication.”*

However, Alexandria’s small size is also a challenge. Stakeholders report that because of their small size, all of the same people are responsible for carrying the work of the change initiative forward. Individuals report feeling

“burnt-out,” “over-worked,” and they also express concern about sustainability of change efforts when “we have to tap into the same individuals.” Strategies identified to address this challenge include:

- *“Keep inviting new people from the community to the group.”*
- *“Provide more opportunities for training on ‘best practices’ so we remain creative and innovative.”*
- *Provide ‘retreat’ opportunities ... make them formal but not so formal that people don’t feel that they can’t talk ... give people a forum in which to discuss stress, burn-out, etc., but also to re-connect and get re-motivated and inspired.”*



For tools to assist with the collaborative mapping process, and other planning tools, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

**THE EVOLUTION OF COLLABORATIVE TEAMS**

A collaborative culture, and an effective, multi-disciplinary collaborative committee, whatever its structure and membership, will take time to develop.

*Remember, the collaborative group has to become more than the sum of its individual parts. It needs to develop a group identity of its own. It needs to become more than a meeting of various stakeholders who merely interact within the limits of status and institutional boundaries. It needs to become a group that can openly discuss issues and concerns, challenge each other's core philosophies and practices, and engage in meaningful dialogue. Relationships across disciplinary boundaries need to be built and trust needs to develop. It takes time to develop an effective team and to engage in effective teamwork.*

Before a team can become a "learning team," it must first become a team. The process of becoming a team – and the challenges, struggles, and developmental stages that it involves – is a necessary part of developing a strong, effective collaborative. The recognition that the developmental progress of teams is a natural and necessary process that must be engaged in enables group leaders and team members to see that challenges and frustrations are to be expected and natural, that they are not merely a reflection of individual personalities, a lack of commitment from group members, or organizational politics.

Five stages of group or team development are generally recognized.<sup>10</sup> Although presented as steps in a process, the stages are not necessarily linear. Any given group or team may move back and forth between stages.

**Stage 1: Forming**

In the *forming* stage, group members are concerned about how they present themselves and how others interact with them. This stage of group development is often characterized by polite conversation and explicit recognition of

status and professional roles. Group members tend to rely on safe, patterned behavior and traditional role relations. They have a desire to be accepted and recognized as an important part of the group.

**TEAM BUILDING, LIKE SYSTEMS CHANGE MORE GENERALLY, IS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS THAT OCCURS OVER TIME.**

**5 STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT**

- 1. FORMING**
- 2. STORMING**
- 3. NORMING**
- 4. PERFORMING**
- 5. ADJOURNING**

When a group is forming, group members are tentatively exploring and getting to know each other. Group members are gathering information about each other, including similarities and differences in comparison to themselves, and making judgments about future interactions and relationships. Feelings at this stage include excitement and optimism, mixed with skepticism and anxiety. The emotions and hesitations experienced during the forming stage should not come as a surprise and their importance should not be under-estimated.

Remember, systems change is people-driven. Like any newly developing relationship, time needs to be spent getting to know each other and building trust. And, just like at the beginning of any new relationship, people tend to be excited, but also somewhat hesitant and nervous, unsure of what to expect or where the relationship is going.

**Characteristics of Initial Stage:**

- Silence, awkwardness, and high anxiety.
- Impatience to "get the ball rolling."
- Confusion about what everybody is supposed to be doing.
- Storytelling (a tendency to talk about others and focus on people and situations outside of the group).
- Central issue is trust vs. mistrust.
- Testing of each other and the leaders.
- Requests for greater leader involvement.
- "Cocktail conversations" and other safe levels of conversation.
- Vying for informal leadership.

The length of time needed to complete this stage varies depending on many factors, including, among other things, the type of group and the history of relationships among group members. It is important to recognize that in the child protection context, stakeholders have traditionally not collaborated with each other. It is also important to realize that the relationship building necessary to collaboration and team problem-solving is the antithesis of the institutional relationships, professional roles, and advocacy positions of many stakeholders. Do not underestimate the paradigm shift that is necessary to support such collaborative action – both institutionally and personally.

The major tasks to be undertaken at this initial forming stage orient group members to the purpose and function of the group.

- What is the overall purpose of the group?
- Who will lead the meeting?
- How often will the group meet? How long will each meeting last?
- How will agendas be set?
- What information needs to be gathered?
- What issues will be initially discussed?

Although the answers to these initial questions may change over time, it is important to set some initial group rules and to establish some clear expectations as to how the group will operate. Although still in the forming stage, groups can still begin to tackle real issues and problems and make significant steps toward systems change. However, the problems and issues selected to focus on should be appropriate to the stage of group development. Start with small, manageable tasks and build-in opportunities for early successes. At this early stage, try to avoid very controversial or threatening topics.

As team members become more comfortable with each other, and as trust grows within the group, group members will begin to relinquish the comfort of non-threatening topics and be willing to risk disagreement and conflict.

#### Advice from Project Sites ...

- Start with small, manageable problems. Talk concepts and processes not people.
- Avoid hotly contested or controversial topics initially.
- Build in early successes.
- Stress the baby steps and small accomplishments. Acknowledge all signs of change, including the fact that people are coming together and talking on a regular basis.
- Stay focused on outcomes for children.
- Avoid finger-pointing and direct challenges in the early stages.
- Spend time getting to know each other, and each other's roles and responsibilities.
- Serve food, if possible, as this contributes to a more relaxed atmosphere which can help people feel more at ease.

#### *Stage 2: Storming*

Stage two, *storming*, is characterized by competition and conflict in the dimension of personal-relations. As the group members attempt to organize around a specific task or course of action, conflict will inevitably result in their personal relations. Individuals have to bend and mold their feelings, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs to suit the group organization. Because of "fear of exposure" or "fear of failure," there will be an increased desire for structural clarification and commitment at this point. Although conflicts may or may not surface as group issues, they do exist. Questions will arise about who is going to be responsible for what, what the rules are, what the reward system is, and what the criteria for evaluation are. These reflect conflicts over leadership, structure, power, and authority. Because of the discomfort generated during this stage, some members may remain completely silent while others attempt to dominate. Partners may become impatient and begin arguing. Feelings that may arise include resistance to change and negative attitudes about the success of the partnership. Group members may start arguing about less important and peripheral issues, become defensive or competitive (choosing sides) or develop unrealistic expectations or goals during this stage.

This is the most difficult stage of group development and it can also be the most frustrating. Although this can be a frustrating time in the group's development, recognize that it is a natural part of the evolution of the team. This stage can be useful in terms of identifying conflict resolution styles and how the members of the collaborative respond to stress. So, recognize entry into this stage as a developmental milestone and, as with any developmental milestone, celebrate it!

In order to progress to the next stage, group members must move from a "testing and proving" mentality to a problem-solving mentality. The most important trait in helping groups to move on to the next stage seems to be the ability to listen.

The major tasks to be undertaken at the storming stage are:

- Refining and prioritizing goals or areas of focus;
- Identifying performance gaps; and
- Collecting data and sharing information and perspectives.

**Stage 3: Norming**

By stage three, *norming*, the team or group has become more cohesive. There is active acknowledgement of all members' knowledge and expertise and their contributions to the group, as well as community-building. Members are more open to having their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions – their mental models – challenged by other group members. They actively ask questions of each other and actually listen to the answers.

Group members begin to know each other better – as professionals and as people – and trust begins to develop. Leadership and ownership becomes more shared within the group, status concerns are diminished, and cliques begin to dissolve. Individuals identify with the group and the group develops its own group identity. Individuals begin to develop a sense of group belonging and a sense of purpose, as well as confidence in the ability of the group to achieve meaningful systems change.

Advice from Project Sites ...

- Keep meeting, especially when it seems to be getting contentious. Trust the process.
- Recognize that your group is evolving. Celebrate it as a developmental milestone.
- Set ground rules. Model the behavior you expect.
- Challenge issues and assumptions and practice, not people.
- Always bring it back to children.
- Supply food.
- Have an agenda and stick to it. Manage the dynamics and meeting time effectively.
- Make it clear that differences of opinion and lack of consensus are okay and to be expected. Actively solicit different opinions and then listen to them.
- Follow-up with individuals if needed, but try to keep it a group process.
- Use data.

The major tasks of the norming stage are:

- Ongoing information flow among group members;
- Sharing thoughts and ideas and soliciting feedback from one another; and
- Challenging each others assumptions and perceptions (their mental models).

During the norming stage, individuals accept their role in the team and the ground rules for team interaction, and they are committed to the purpose and goal of the team. They are addressing issues cooperatively (although not necessarily in a truly collaborative manner) and are comfortable working together on a common task.

**Stage 4: Performing**

The *performing* stage is not reached by all groups. If group members are able to evolve to stage four, their capacity, range, and depth of personal relations expand to true interdependence. In this stage, people can work independently, in subgroups, or as a total unit with equal ease and skill. Their roles and

**LEADERS – REMEMBER YOUR ROLE IN ADDRESSING GROUP CONFLICT AND MOBILIZING DIFFERENCES TO FACILITATE LEARNING**

authorities dynamically adjust to the changing needs of the group and individuals. Stage four is marked by interdependence in personal relations and problem-solving. By now, the group should be functioning at its most productive level. Individual members have become self-assured, and are confident of their role within the group and the need for group approval has passed. Members are both highly task- and people-oriented. There is unity: group identity is complete, group morale is high, and group loyalty is intense. The task function becomes genuine problem-solving, leading toward optimal solutions, and optimum group development. There is support for experimentation in solving problems and an emphasis on achievement. The overall goal is productivity through problem-solving and work. By this stage, the partnership has become an effective and close-knit unit. People begin to really work together. Feelings include new insights about the partnership and each member's roles as well as satisfaction with the partnership's progress.

**The Evolution of the Team in Project Sites**

*"There is a great sense of doing the right thing. It is amazing. We went from having a room of cross-armed individuals to, in about 10 months, having more believers than non-believers. People are now working together. We started to realize that different frames of reference are valuable."*

*Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site*

*"I can see that people are now talking the problems out instead of just crabbing them to whom ever will listen ... It has given us a way to work on a common purpose or mission. We are able to see results as we move along. There are so many needy families in our areas, the only way we can improve things for them is as a group. It is not an easy task ... it requires good leadership, bridging gaps, and building relationships."*

*Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site*

*"Everyone in the collaborative has a common mission and understanding that it is a system designed to deal with a defined set of issues. We understand the system more. Everyone is informed on the issues and topics. The more people understand each other's roles, the more they are willing to work together, to call each other for help. To accomplish our goal, we have to share ... we have to learn how to collaborate as a team."*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

**Does your collaborative group embody the perspectives of a learning organization?**

- Are you willing to examine and challenge your sacred cows?
- What kinds of structures have you designed for this testing?
- When people raise potentially negative information do you shoot the messenger?
- Does your collaborative group show capabilities it did not have before?
- Do you feel as if what you know now is qualitatively different from what you knew before?
- Are you critically reviewing data and is there a "value-added" to that review?
- Is the knowledge accessible to all of the collaborative group members?

**Stage 5: Adjourning**

The final stage, *adjourning*, involves the termination of task behaviors and disengagement from the relationships established in the group. A planned conclusion usually includes recognition for participation and achievement and an opportunity for members to say personal goodbyes. Concluding a group can create some apprehension - in effect, a minor crisis. The most effective interventions in this stage are those that facilitate task termination and the disengagement process.

Developing effective collaborative teams is not the sole responsibility of the leader. Those who participate in the process also have a responsibility to be effective team participants.

**Effective Team Members:**

- Support the team leader
- Help the team leader to succeed
- Ensure that all viewpoints are explored
- Express opinions, both for and against
- Provide open, honest, and accurate information
- Support, protect, and defend both the team and the team leader
- Act in a positive and constructive manner
- Provide appropriate feedback
- Understand personal and team roles
- Address problems to the team (upward feedback)
- Accept ownership for team decisions
- Recognize that they each serve as a team leader
- Accept ownership for team decisions
- Participate voluntarily
- Maintain confidentiality
- Show loyalty to the organization, the team leader, and the team
- View criticism as an opportunity to learn and develop
- State problems, along with alternative solutions/options
- Give praise and recognition when warranted

*Leadership Tips: Characteristics of Effective Team Members.* Center for Service and Leadership. George Mason University. ([www.gmu.edu/student/csl](http://www.gmu.edu/student/csl))



Stakeholders in each Project Site were asked how they view their responsibilities as a collaborative team member.

The responses were consistent across sites. According to the Project Sites, effective team members:

- Attend meetings regularly;
- Actively participate in meetings;
- Represent the position, practices, and opinions of the agency or stakeholders they represent;
- Share information with the group;
- Take information back to their colleagues;
- Reflect on issues from their individual, institutional positions and explain issues and challenges from their agency's perspective;
- Stay positive;
- Stay focused on the mission;
- Be honest;
- Support reforms.

**Characteristics of an Effective Team:\***

- Team members share a sense of purpose and common goals, and each team member is willing to work to achieve these goals. Members know what needs to be done next, by whom, and by when to achieve team goals.
- The team has principled, effective leadership.
- Authority and decision-making lines are clearly articulated and understood, but are not rigidly imposed on the others in the group.
- The team is aware of, and interested in, its own processes and examines the norms operating within the team.
- The team identifies its own resources and uses them, in accordance with its needs. The team willingly accepts the influence and leadership of the members whose resources are relevant to the immediate task.
- The team members continually listen to and clarify what is being said and show interest in, and listen to, others thoughts and feelings.
- Differences of opinion are encouraged, explored, and freely expressed. The team does not demand narrow conformity or adherence to formats that inhibit freedom of movement and expression.
- The team is willing to identify conflict and focus on it until it is resolved or managed in a way that does not reduce the effectiveness of those involved. Conflict is dealt with openly and is considered an important part of decision-making and personal growth.
- The team focuses on problem-solving rather than allowing interpersonal issues or competitive struggles to drain the team's energy.
- Roles are balanced and shared to facilitate both the accomplishment of tasks and feelings of team cohesion and morale.
- To encourage risk taking and creativity, mistakes are treated as sources of learning rather than reasons for punishment.
- The team is responsive to the changing needs of its members and to the external environment to which it is related.
- Opportunities for feedback and the updating of skills are provided and taken advantage of by team members.
- Team members are committed to periodically evaluating the team's performance.
- The members identify with the team and consider it a source of both professional and personal growth.
- Developing a climate of trust is recognized as the crucial element for facilitating all the above characteristics.

\*Adapted from: Larsen, K. McInerney, B. Nyquist, C., Santos, A., & Silsbee, D. (1996). *Learning Organizations*. <http://home.nycap.rr.com>.; Larson, C.E. & LaFasto, F.M. (1989) *Teamwork: What Must Go Right, What Must Go Wrong*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.; Starcevich, M.M. & Stowell, S.J. (1990). *Teamwork: We Have Met the Enemy and They are Us*. Bartlesville, OK: The Center for Management Organization.; Stowell, S. & Starcevich, M. (1998). *The Coach: Creating Partnerships for a Competitive Edge*. Salt Lake City, UT: CMOE: Press.

**CREATING A SHARED VISION**

The process of creating a shared vision is a critical part of developing a collaborative culture. A shared vision, and a shared commitment to that vision, emerges through the interaction of key stakeholders and provides a common ground from which coordinated and coherent reform activities take root. Focusing on a shared vision and outcome goal (e.g., safe, timely permanency for children), affords the opportunity for differences to retreat into the background and for commonalities to become salient. By maintaining a focus on shared goals and by recognizing the vital part that each stakeholder plays in reforming child abuse and neglect case processing, differences and conflict among institutions, agencies, and professions that may differ in philosophy, positional power, and resources can be overcome.

*When the focus remains on the child, institutional differences and "turf" issues retreat into the background.*

If significant systems change is to be achieved, then members of a collaborative must reach consensus on a common vision and must agree on the direction reform efforts should take. Commitment to a shared vision and common goals is revealed through, and reflected in, language, behaviors, attitudes, policies, and practices. To the extent that there is not full consensus on a vision of reform, or to the extent that there is only partial or peripheral commitment to a course of action, then systems reform efforts are undermined.

*"A vision is truly shared when you and I have a similar picture and are committed to one another having it, not just to each of us, individually, having it. When people truly share a vision they are connected, bound together by a common aspiration. Personal visions derive their power from an individual's deep care for the vision. Shared visions derive their power from common caring."<sup>11</sup>*

Today, "vision" is a familiar concept. But, often a vision represents one person's (or one group's) vision that is imposed on the larger organization or system. Such visions command public

compliance, but not true commitment. A shared vision is a vision that many people are truly committed to, because it reflects their own personal vision.

- A shared vision is shared among people throughout all levels of an organization and system; it focuses the energy and commitment of hundreds of people.
- A shared vision motivates people. Everyday work becomes part of pursuing a larger purpose.
- A shared vision compels courage. Courage becomes doing whatever is necessary in pursuit of the vision.
- A shared vision fosters creativity and innovation.
- A shared vision provides a rudder to keep the learning process on course.
- A shared vision creates an environment in which people are more likely to expose their ways of thinking, challenge each other's mental models, give up deeply entrenched views, and recognize personal and organizational shortcomings.
- A shared vision sustains organizational and systems change efforts.

You cannot have a learning organization or a learning system without shared vision. Without a pull toward some goal which people truly want to achieve, the forces in support of the status quo – business as usual – become overwhelming.

**Encouraging Personal Vision**

Shared vision emerges from personal visions. Organizations and systems that want to build shared visions must encourage the employees to develop their own personal visions. These personal visions should reflect individuals' hopes and concerns for systems change based on their own experiences and beliefs.

*"If people don't have their own vision, all they can do is 'sign-up' for someone else's. The result is compliance, never commitment. On the other hand, people with a strong sense of personal direction can join together to create a powerful synergy toward what I / we truly want."<sup>12</sup>*

**A PRIMARY ROLE OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER IS TO FACILITATE THE CO-CREATION OF A SHARED VISION AMONG COLLABORATIVE STAKEHOLDERS.**

**From Personal Vision to Shared Vision**

Shared visions take time to emerge; they emerge through ongoing interactions among stakeholders over time. The emergence of a shared vision requires ongoing discussion and dialogue between stakeholders guided by a strong, transformational leader.

*In **The Learning Organization**, Senge differentiates between Commitment, Enrollment, and Compliance with a Shared Vision.*

***Enrollment** is a process of becoming part of something by choice, of taking on a vision as your own.*

***Committed** describes a state of being not only enrolled but feeling fully responsible for making the vision happen. – “I can be thoroughly enrolled in your vision. I can genuinely want it to occur. Yet, it is still your vision. I will take action as need arises, but I do not spend my waking hours looking for what to do next.”*

*Senge argues that in most organizations, very few people are enrolled in the organizational or system vision, and even less people are committed to it. Rather, he argues, most people are **compliant**. “Compliant followers” go along with a vision. They do what is expected of them. They support the vision to some degree. But, they are not truly enrolled or committed. Senge outlines various levels of compliance, ranging from genuine compliance to those who are just putting in time.*

***People who are enrolled or committed want the vision. Genuinely compliant people accept the vision.***

**What are the growth factors that support the emergence, evolution, and sustainability of a shared vision?**

- A transformational leader who is enrolled in the vision and actively works to honestly communicate and share that vision with others.
- Grounding the vision in core values or governing ideas (e.g., the Key Principles of Permanency Planning)
- Ongoing and meaningful interaction, communication, and dialogue among system stakeholders.

Shared vision emerges and takes root through ongoing interaction and communication – through increasing clarity, enthusiasm, and commitment. As people talk, the vision

becomes clearer. As the vision becomes clearer, enthusiasm and commitment build. As a result, the vision becomes a reinforcing loop that allows it to be self-sustaining.

**What are the limiting factors that impede the emergence, evolution, and sustainability of a shared vision?**

- The inability to inquire into and solicit diverse opinions and perspectives in such a way as to cultivate a deeper level of understanding. If the system is unable to appropriately recognize and manage diverse opinions and views, conflict arises, polarization increases, and the clarity of the vision is decreased. As a result, enthusiasm and support for the vision wanes.
- People become discouraged by the apparent difficulty in bringing the vision to reality. As awareness of the vision increases, so does the recognition of the gap between the vision and current reality.
- People become overwhelmed by the demands of the current reality and lose their focus on the larger vision.
- People forget their connection for each other, lose respect for each other, and groups split into “insiders” and “outsiders.”
- Lack of concrete, intermediate-level, measurable goals. If people are not able to “see” results from their efforts then it is difficult to maintain momentum.

**How do you balance the growth and limiting factors?**

- Reflection and inquiry. Continuous dialogue and discussion among stakeholders. Team learning.
- Personal mastery.
- Systems thinking.
- Transformational Leadership.

Vision paints the picture of what you want to create. Systems thinking reveals how you have created what you currently have (our current reality) and what you need to change to realize the vision. Once individuals understand that they are part of shaping the current reality, they will realize that they can also be part of shaping the vision. The system ceases being something “out there” that is separate from the individual.

“Embracing systems change is a common goal. Improving things for children. Fostering an attitude and an approach that says ‘what can WE do?’ instead of ‘what can I do?’”

Stakeholder, San Jose Project Site

**Remember ...**

- A shared vision is not imposed on others from the top down.
- A shared vision does not emerge from a one-time meeting or “single shot;” a shared vision emerges through interactions and discussions over time.
- A shared vision is not a solution to a problem.

Once a “vision statement” is created, organizations often formalize it, laminate it, and display it. Be careful however. To be effective, shared visions are always evolving – they are emergent. A vision for systems change should always be re-visited and allowed to evolve to meet new needs and situations.

*“The discipline of shared vision is centered around a never-ending process, whereby people in an organization and throughout the system articulate their common stories – around vision, purpose, values, why their work matters, and how it fits into the larger world.”<sup>13</sup>*

**Vision:** An image of your desired future. A vision is a picture of the future you are seeking to create. “Our vision” states where we want to go and what we will look like when we get there. The more richly detailed and visual the image is, the more compelling it will be.

**Values:** How you intend to operate, on a day-to-day basis, as you pursue your vision. Values are a set of governing ideas that include how you behave with each other, how you behave toward the children and families you serve, and how you behave toward your communities. Values also include the lines that you (as a person and as a system) will not cross (the non-negotiables) to accomplish your goals.

When values are articulated but ignored, it undermines the visioning process. But, when

values are made part of the organization’s and system’s shared visioning effort, and put out in full view, they become guiding symbols of the behavior that will guide people to achieve their vision.

**Purpose or Mission:** The fundamental reason for the organization’s and the system’s existence. It is the answer to the question – what are we here to do together?

**Goals:** Specific, measurable, attainable and time-bound goals. Goals represent what we are committing ourselves to do – in the short and long-term – to achieve our vision.

**PROJECT SITES – MISSION STATEMENTS**

All but one of the Project Sites have developed a child protection specific mission statement. A number of sites are revisiting their mission statements as their collaborative process evolves.

Alexandria Model Court Project Site:

- *Helping children and families to change their lives.*

Buffalo Model Court Project Site:

- *To provide safe, healthy, permanent families in the shortest possible time.*

Charlotte Model Court Project Site:

- *“To help resolve cases involving children and families through the combined efforts of the family, the court and community services in ways that are the least adversarial and intrusive appropriate, and that are just, safe, timely, efficient, courteous, and accessible.”*

Cincinnati Model Court Project Site:

- *“The mission of the Hamilton County Juvenile Court Dependency Department is to provide a safe and secure permanent home for every child in the shortest time frame possible, avoiding unnecessary separation from family whenever possible.”*

San Jose Model Court Project Site:

- *“To protect children, preserve families and provide permanency for children while treating all with dignity, respecting diversity, and valuing each child as our own.”*

**A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION<sup>14</sup>**

An effective, transformational leader will begin by articulating his or her own personal vision for reform in a clear and honest manner. It is important that the leader articulate his or her vision to stakeholders directly – clearly and consistently – and explain why change is necessary. Leaders need to be honest about the current reality of the system and, to the extent possible, use data to demonstrate the performance gap between the current reality and his or her vision for the system. Remember, one central function of the vision is to generate creative tension; to make people understand the current reality and feel the “pull” that comes from understanding the true distance that needs to be bridged in order to realize the vision. The leader should be clear about what is negotiable and what is not. Although the leader should provide some level of details with respect to his or her vision, the details should be filled in through the process of interaction, communication, and dialogue.

Once the leader has articulated his or her vision for reform, that vision needs to be “sold” to stakeholders. The leader needs to enroll people in the vision – a leader cannot force people to enroll in the vision, they must enroll themselves. Open communication and relationship-building between and among the leader and stakeholders is critical for encouraging stakeholders to enroll in the vision. In “selling” the vision, the leader should focus on the overall benefits and outcomes of the vision, not just the features of it. Leaders should talk about the vision using “I” statements, demonstrating personal commitment to the vision, and not just articulating the official vision.

It is important that stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback and input on the leader’s vision – to “test” the vision. The leader needs to see how people really feel about the vision -- are they excited and motivated by it --and what it is about the vision that matters most to them. The leader needs to present the vision with the ramifications and challenges clearly spelled out and give as much information as possible to facilitate informed responses. It is important that stakeholders feel comfortable providing feedback, even when they disagree with the vision or give negative feedback. *All types of feedback need to be solicited – positive and*

*negative.* Leaders can solicit feedback through discussions and dialogue, surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

As the process develops, stakeholders will begin to articulate their sense of a common purpose and feel that they are part of co-creating the vision. Leaders need to work with stakeholders to link their personal visions to the emerging organizational and systems vision. The focus should be on dialogues and interactions.

*The journey involved in developing a shared vision is as important as the vision itself.*

Critical to building a collaborative culture is remembering that systems change is an evolutionary, people-driven process.

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE TEAM: COMMUNICATION, DIALOGUE, AND TEAM LEARNING WITHIN A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE**

Developing a collaborative culture and a shared vision, as well as developing successful partnerships and collaborative teams, requires clear and open communication and dialogue. Discussion, both during and outside meetings, should be honest and open. Partners need to listen to each other and be willing to provide constructive feedback. Because each partner has an interest in the success of the partnership, each should participate in discussions and decisions. This type of balanced participation will also promote a spirit of trust and cooperation.

From the standpoint of building shared meaning within teams or between groups, a different orientation to discussion must be adopted. Traditional discussion is oriented toward advocacy.<sup>15</sup> In an advocacy-oriented discussion, people “discuss” to win; they throw out ideas to pit them against others to see which ideas are strongest. This is not an effective way to encourage and support teamwork or the development of a collaborative culture – not just because it undermines learning, but because ideas and potential “solutions” rarely get the consideration they deserve. Ideas and solutions are judged according to who said them, and whether or not they matched conventional wisdom. This form of conversation is often

present in the earlier stages of group development – the forming and storming phases. To become an effective learning team, as the group evolves it must develop the capacity for more skillful discussion that not only encompasses advocacy, but also encompasses reflection and inquiry.

**DIALOGUE VS. DISCUSSION<sup>16</sup>**

The primary difference between dialogue and skillful discussion involves intention. In skillful discussion, the team intends to come to some sort of closure – either to make a decision, reach agreement, or identify priorities. In the process of making a decision, the team may explore new issues and build some deeper meaning among the members; but the intent involves convergent thinking (i.e., thinking that moves in the same direction to a common focal point) and decision-making.

Senge defines dialogue as a sustained collective inquiry into everyday experience and what we take for granted.<sup>17</sup> The goal of dialogue is to explore, challenge, and “problematize” the everyday taken-for-granted realities and assumptions. The taken-for-granted nature of daily practice is reflected in the often heard statement “we do it this way because this is the way it has always been done” – that is, we are tethered to, and constrained by, what is comfortable and familiar. These “taken-for-granted realities” often constitute the unarticulated, and often unrecognized, mental models that both guide and constrain our behavior – both personally and organizationally. It is, therefore, difficult to “think outside the box” when you do not even realize that you are in the box or that other possibilities exist outside of it. Thus, to facilitate systems change, this “attitude of everyday life”<sup>18</sup> must be suspended, examined, challenged, and problematized by organizational and system stakeholders through a process of dialogue.

Teams unquestionably benefit from dialogue – from exploring assumed understandings and shared meaning – but they also have the everyday need to come to a conclusion, decision, or plan. To accomplish this work productively, skillful discussion incorporates some of the techniques and devices of dialogue and action learning, but always stays focused on tasks (e.g., meetings have agendas and people leave with priorities and work assignments in hand). Nonetheless, the team also learns to

make their thought processes visible, to examine and challenge assumptions, and to look more closely at sources of disagreement. Gradually, within their team setting, they improve the quality of their collective thinking and interaction. Remember, however, it takes time for a group or team to develop the capacity for dialogue.

*“Participating in this collaborative process has been very personally meaningful to me ... I’ve gained a better understanding of the system and everyone’s roles. It has broadened my perspective. It raises new things for me to think about, and makes me think in new ways.”*

Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site

**FIVE BASIC PROTOCOLS FOR SKILLFUL DISCUSSION<sup>19</sup>**

• **Pay Attention to Your Intentions**

As an individual, make sure you understand what you hope to accomplish in this discussion – “What is my intention?” “Am I willing to be influenced?” If not, what is the point of the discussion? Be clear on what you want, and do not mislead others as to your intentions.

• **Balance Advocacy with Inquiry**

Some teams take great pride in “challenging each other,” but they do not actually challenge each other in an effective way. They are merely “in your face” with each other – one-upping each other. Other teams pride themselves on how constructively they deal with confrontation. However, this often involves just sitting there and listening, in turn, to each other’s position statements. Assumptions are not brought to the surface, much less challenged. What they are really thinking about will only be heard after the meeting – in the hallway and bathrooms. While there is essentially nothing wrong with this kind of advocacy, it is the lack of balance that causes misunderstanding, miscommunication, and poor decisions.

• **Build Shared Meaning**

Different words have different meanings to different people. In most multidisciplinary team meetings, the discussion moves at a fast pace and people use words loosely – which makes it very difficult to develop shared meaning. People walk away with ambiguous understandings, usually not realizing that they have each “heard” and “understood” the discussion differently.

It is important to use language with precision, taking care to make meanings clear. Avoid having phrases in your team vocabulary where you assume everyone agrees on the definition, but nobody actually has any idea what it is (e.g., what do you actually mean by terms such as “permanency” and “well-being?”). Be careful in the use of legal jargon. You may start a discussion with a sloppy or loose meaning, but as you talk around an issue, you should get closer and closer to a specific meaning that everyone can agree on.

• **Use Self-Awareness as a Resource**

Ask yourself, at moments when you are confused, angry, frustrated, concerned, or troubled: “What am I thinking?” “What am I feeling?” “What do I want at this moment?” You will often end up with insights about the team’s assumptions or your own concerns, which you can then raise for the group without casting blame.

• **Explore Impasses**

Ask yourself – What do we agree on and what do we disagree on? Can we pinpoint the source of disagreement or impasse? Often the disagreement will fall into one of four categories:

1. *Facts* – What exactly happened? What are the ‘data’?
2. *Methods* – How should we do what we need to do?
3. *Goals* – What is our objective? Our vision?
4. *Values* – Why do we think it must be done in a particular way? What do we believe in?

Simply agreeing on a source of disagreement often allows people to learn more about the situation, clarify assumptions that were previously below awareness, and move forward.

Some strategies to help accomplish this include:

- Listen to ideas as if for the first time. Work at being open to new ideas.
- Consider each person’s mental model as a piece of the larger puzzle. Look at the issue from the other person’s perspective.
- Ask yourself and everyone else – what do we need to do to move forward?

*“Ideas are fleshed out, knocked around, and brought back to the group ... everybody has an open mike and a say in the process ... it’s an open forum ...people aren’t afraid to tell the truth here because we all want to learn”*

Lead Judge, Alexandria Project Site

**PREPARING THE GROUND FOR SKILLFUL DISCUSSIONS:**

• **Create a safe haven for participants.**

Because people from different parts of the system and the community may join the collaborative team, ideally the “turf” of the meeting must belong to no one. The symbols and trappings of power, prestige, and status should be minimized to help facilitate this.

As another power equalizer, all participants in a skillful discussion should expressly agree to “treat each other as colleagues.” Curiosity, respect of, and support for, each other’s opinions and feelings are essential components of a collegial relationship.



In almost all the Project Sites the collaborative meetings or the core advisory group meetings were held in the courthouse (usually because the courthouse had the best meeting space). Typically, the meetings were held in conference rooms, libraries, or meeting rooms. In Alexandria and San Jose, the collaborative meetings of the core advisory group are often held in the courtroom. However, even when the meeting is held in the courtroom, care is taken to re-arrange the furniture so that all stakeholders can sit around the table together (the judge does not sit on the bench, but at the table with the stakeholders).

In several of the Project Sites collaborative meetings involving the broader community of stakeholders are held in different locations around the community, and in some cases the meeting locations are rotated among agencies and offices.



- **Make openness and trust the rule rather than the exception.**

People must feel secure that they can speak freely, without fear of being the target of criticism, ridicule, or retribution. Agreeing on ground rules for the discussion is only the beginning. Trust develops only if every participant continues to act in a trustworthy manner even when they may not agree with the points being made.



In all of the Project Sites, the Lead Judges were clearly in charge of running the meeting, even when leadership was shared. However, in all sites, the judges managed the meeting dynamics so that everyone had an opportunity to be heard and listened to. The judges modeled collegiality, professionalism, and openness to information and new ideas.



- **Encourage and reward the injection of new ideas.**

For groups that meet often, it is useful to find external sources of new perspectives – such as outsiders invited to join in for one or several sessions. Regardless of who is present, the discussion will broach issues, ideas, and approaches typically given short-shrift in day-to-day work. Whether someone or something is right or wrong is not the concern. Instead, it is the exchange of different perspectives and points of view that matters.



In all the Project Sites new and creative ideas and solutions are actively sought from stakeholders. New issues, barriers, and areas in need of improvement are always being identified. New stakeholders are welcomed to the table. In several of the Project Sites, collaborative meetings are used as a training forum on a fairly regular basis. Local experts are asked to join meetings and share knowledge, offer information, and provide data with respect to certain issues.



- **Plan the agenda, time and context to allow for concentrated deliberation.**

The best way to ensure discussion focus is to make sure that every participant expects to talk about the same subject. Agendas should be developed and agreed upon in advance. Also, creative discussions take time – plan accordingly and keep distractions to a minimum.



All of the Project Sites develop agendas for meetings, often with input from meeting participants. Agendas are usually disseminated in advance of the meeting (typically through e-mail). (See Chapter 6 for further discussion of agenda-setting and successful meeting strategies).

In the Los Angeles Model Court “position papers,” proposed policy statements, and memoranda outlining different perspectives, issues, and approaches are also circulated prior to the meeting with the expectation that they will be reviewed in preparation for discussion at the next meeting.



For tools to assist with discussion and brainstorming, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

**BRAINSTORMING – ENCOURAGING NEW IDEAS AND CREATIVE THINKING****BRAINSTORMING**

One reason for discussion and dialogue is to generate new ideas. Brainstorming is an essential method to use for bringing out the creativity in your group. The result is often a variety of good, and often unexpected, ideas that can lead to new solutions. Below are guides for brainstorming.

Set the stage - Define your purpose in terms of what you want the group to accomplish. Provide a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Have all the necessary supplies (such as markers and flip charts) on hand.

Go for quantity - People often have different ideas. The key is to get these ideas out quickly without concern for the quality of the ideas. Evaluation comes later.

Record ideas - Ideas need to be recorded on a flip chart by a recorder. Another way to get ideas down is to allow people to silently record their ideas on post-it notes or other cards. These notes and cards are placed on a flip chart so others can see them.

Limit time - Set a time limit for generating ideas so people are motivated to get ideas out quickly. This also allows enough time for discussion and evaluation of ideas later.

Encourage “free wheeling” - Let people share ideas no matter how unrealistic they may be. Ask people to build off others' ideas. Don't evaluate or criticize ideas at this point.

Use humor - This will allow your group to break out of existing patterns and habits to relax and be more creative.

Follow-up - After ideas are generated, the group should identify the most promising ideas. They can then work to come up with ways to expand or improve on these. Set a time for the group to further evaluate ideas and make decisions as a group.

**Rules for Brainstorming:**

- No criticism, evaluation, judgment or defense of ideas during a brainstorming session.
- No limiting of “wild” ideas, no matter how outrageous or impractical they may seem. Every idea is to be expressed.
- Quantity is more desirable than quality.
- “Piggybacking” (i.e., building on others ideas) is encouraged.
- Everyone must be encouraged to participate.
- Record all ideas – (e.g., on flip charts).
- Choose “top 5 ideas” – combine similar ideas when appropriate.
- Individually rank ideas.
- Decide, as a group, which idea will be enacted first.
- Begin the brainstorming process again as necessary.

*Leadership Tips: Rules for Brainstorming.* Center for Service and Leadership. George Mason University. ([www.gmu.edu/student/csl](http://www.gmu.edu/student/csl))

**BUILDING CONSENSUS IN A COLLABORATIVE GROUP**

A collaborative group reaches consensus on a decision when every member can agree to support that decision. Each person may not think it's the very best decision, but he or she can buy into it and actively support its implementation. No one in the group feels that his or her fundamental interests have been compromised. Consensus is not "almost everybody" – it is unanimous support for a decision.

The struggle to satisfy and incorporate the views of all members tends to produce a synergy and creativity not possible when members work alone. If all the key stakeholders are involved in forging the consensus, they will make a decision that they agree to implement, so it is a workable solution.

*"Consensus building is particularly powerful because it connects our minds and our hearts. It speaks to what is possible and what is right – what makes practical sense and what is the moral thing to do ... Consensus building respects the intelligence and dignity of all individuals. And, when treated with respect and dignity, most people will act rationally and can bring important insights into the collaborative process."<sup>20</sup>*

**Effective consensus decisions share the following characteristics:**

**Total participation** - All major interests are identified and brought together.

**All partners are responsible** - Everyone helps plan activities and offers suggestions to make them more effective.

**Partners educate each other** - Partners spend time discussing issues, their perceptions and concerns, and ideas for solutions.

**People are kept informed** - Partners keep their own groups and stakeholders informed.

**A common definition of the problem is used** - Partners discuss and agree on a constructive definition of the problem.

**Multiple options are identified** - Partners seek a range of options to satisfy their respective concerns and avoid pushing single positions.

**Decisions are made by mutual agreement** - Partners do not vote; but rather modify options or seek alternatives until everyone agrees that the best decision has been reached.

**Partners are responsible for implementation** - The group identifies ways to implement solutions.

**Ways to maintain consensus:**

- Actively involve a broad range of system stakeholders and community partners in planning and implementing system change initiatives.
- Ensure each partner organization has the opportunity and responsibility for meaningful contributions.
- Document, publicize, and celebrate successes through ongoing information sharing and feedback.
- Designate an effective and respected project leader to maintain the activities of the collaborative.
- Identify and manage conflicts early in the process.
- Make sure activities are meaningful in order to maintain interest and commitment.

*"Do not underestimate the power of collaboration. It reflects a lot of consensus-building that has a lot of unanticipated consequences - some positive, some negative."*  
*Stakeholder, San Jose Project Site*

*"The broader the consensus, the broader the vision, the broader the change."*  
*Stakeholder, San Jose Project Site*

*"In this group everyone really contributes and decisions are made by consensus. I feel comfortable voicing my opinion. It is heard and respected ... I really appreciate that."*  
*Stakeholder, San Jose Project Site*

**BUILD CONSENSUS PHASE BY PHASE**

The process of building small agreements one at a time begins the very first time that the stakeholders get together. The first agreements should be about the process – ground rules, agendas, roles, time frame, meeting times, etc..

To build consensus, a group must make agreements one phase and one step at a time. A group needs to agree that it is even legitimate to discuss an issue before it can agree on a definition of the problem.

**DEFINING THE PROBLEM: THE “PROBLEM SPACE”**

Problem perception, problem definition, and problem analysis define the “problem space.”

- *Perception:* Is there a problem? How do you feel about it? Is it legitimate to discuss this openly?
- *Definition:* What is the problem? What are its limits or boundaries?
- *Analysis:* Why does this problem exist? What are its causes?

**GENERATING SOLUTIONS: THE “SOLUTION SPACE”**

The generation of alternatives, evaluation, and decision-making defines the “solution space.”

- *Generation of Alternatives:* What are some possible solutions to the problem?
- *Evaluation:* What criteria must a good solution meet? Which alternatives are better or more acceptable than others?
- *Decision-making:* Which solution can be agreed on? Which alternatives can we commit to implementing?

The bulk of the work in consensus building takes place in the problem space. Often, when a group has reached consensus on the definition of a problem, the solutions will almost “fall out.” By contrast, if group members jump to the solution space too quickly, each may feel compelled to advocate strongly for his or her position, thereby polarizing the group.

*Something to think about ...* Some commentators argue that using a parliamentary procedure to conduct meetings is an ineffective tool for building consensus, because it begins in solution space by requiring a participant to “make a motion” – to propose a solution. The motion is then debated before the group even agrees on what problem is being addressed.

Because collaborative problem-solving is a trial-and-error process, there will be some natural jumping back and forth between phases. For example, sometimes a stakeholder will feel so strongly about a particular solution that it makes sense to jump to the solution space early on, have the person present the alternative, have other group members ask clarifying questions, and then defer evaluation and return to the problem space for further analysis and problem definitions. The key here is to recognize that *effective collaborative problem-solving requires that the whole group stay focused and together in the same phase of problem-solving.*

Effective consensus building involves making lots of little conditional agreements at the conclusion of each phase of problem-solving. These little agreements build the foundation for consensus in the final phases of decision-making. While the decision-making process sometimes requires trade-offs and negotiations, this foundation of agreement helps to create a spirit of goodwill and a common understanding that consensus is possible.

**THE FALLBACK POSITION: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CANNOT REACH CONSENSUS?**

When a group is seeking consensus, it is essential that the group specify a fallback decision-making rule in case consensus cannot be achieved.

**FALLBACK DECISIONS IN HIERARCHIES AND HORIZONTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

As a leader or manager in a hierarchical organization, you can delegate a decision but you cannot abandon your ultimate responsibility or authority. You can organize an informal group to solve a problem collaboratively – using a consensus decision rule – as long as the fallback is that you, the formal decision maker, have the final say.

With this notion of fallback, a formal hierarchy can coexist with, and take advantage of, the power and inclusiveness of consensus building. Members of a hierarchical organization can periodically convene under the decision-making rules of an informal, collaborative structure to search for consensus, while preserving the final, fallback decision-making authority in case of an impasse.



In most of the Project Sites, the fall back position for most collaborative initiatives and reforms rested with the formal authority of the court and the Lead Judge.



*“Basically everyone understands that there will be differences of opinion and that the goal is to reach a common ground. We discuss it. We argue it out. If we cannot agree ... usually the court winds up settling issues of conflict.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

A similar type of parallel process can take place in horizontal, representative bodies (e.g., boards of directors, commissions, elected legislatures). In these organizations, the decision-making process relies on voting and the decision rule is usually a majority vote of a quorum of members. Typically, these decision-making processes are guided by formal parliamentary procedures. However, such organizations can and should convene in more informal, collaborative, consensus-based structures to seek win-win solutions by consensus before resorting to voting. Within the parliamentary process, this would be called “moving into a committee of the whole.” Once a consensus agreement is reached, the organization can again resume using its traditional procedures and vote to ratify any decision that is made. If consensus is not reached, the fallback is the traditional voting process.

#### **FALLBACK IN MULTI-ORGANIZATION COLLABORATIVES**

When multiple organizations (both horizontal and hierarchical) are involved in collaborative problem-solving – as in multi-organizational or

community collaboratives – the concept of fallback is more complex.

Every community contains a variety of hierarchical and horizontal organizations in its business, government, and community sectors.

Just like individual managers, these organizations cannot relinquish their decision-making responsibility and authority to some other formal organization or to a win-lose decision-making vote. But, they can send representatives to participate in an informal, consensus-based collaborative problem-solving process.

Stakeholder representatives come together and disperse periodically in an attempt to build consensus phase by phase, first in the multi-group collaborative process and then back home in their own organizations. To the extent that consensus can be reached at the end of a collaborative process, stakeholders can return to their positions in their own organizations and act on the agreements. The fallback is that if consensus cannot be reached, then each stakeholder, within his or her organization, has the freedom to act independently.

Straus refers to this process of convening (i.e., coming together as a multi-organizational collaborative group) and dispersing (returning to your home organization) as an “accordion planning process.”<sup>21</sup> This type of accordion planning process, according to Straus, allows for a win-win collaborative process to co-exist with the fallback, win-lose processes of the formal horizontal and hierarchical organizations.

When dealing with multiple stakeholders, a collaborative, accordion consensus-building process will take longer than a traditional, top-down, linear approach but, in the end, should progress to the implementation phase much more quickly and with a significant saving of resources.



We began this chapter with a quote ... “collaborative effort ... creates more energy than it consumes. It makes you feel energized, not drained. ...

there is a release of energy.” We asked stakeholders in Project Sites what their involvement in the collaborative process meant to them. Across all Project Sites, the vast majority of stakeholders, regardless of what part of the system they were from, felt that their participation in the collaboration was personally, very meaningful to them.



**Some Representative Quotes from Stakeholders in Project Sites**

*“I have a much better understanding of the system, of people’s roles ... of why we do what we do - the good and not so good. Being a collaborative member compliments my daily tasks. It empowers me to change what I do on a daily basis.”*

*“I can see that we are making progress, making change. I think we may have been able to bring about significant changes in our community.”*

*“One of the most meaningful and productive groups that I have ever been involved in.”*

*“Our meetings provide an opportunity to give a personal perspective on theory as it relates to practice.”*

*“It’s an opportunity to give input on standards prior to having to abide by them.”*

*“Participating in the meetings allows you to gain respect from others in the system.”*

*“You gain a better understanding of the system - it broadens your perspective.”*

**CHAPTER NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Straus, D. (2002). *How to Make Collaboration Work: Powerful Ways to Build Consensus, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.: San Francisco, CA. Pg. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Straus, *Ibid.*, Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Pg. 42.

<sup>4</sup> For specific information about how the Santa Clara County Superior Court improved parental representation in dependency cases, please contact the PPCD.

<sup>5</sup> The San Jose Model Court was an early pioneer in the use of mediation and family group decision making in child protection cases. Beginning in 1995, San Jose served as one of four national demonstration sites participating in the PPCD's "Diversion Project." The Diversion Project, funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, was designed to study the role of the juvenile and family court in diverting families from traditional child protection services into community-based programs. Mediation and family group conferencing were two of the major reforms to come out of this project and both are now considered standard practice in most jurisdictions around the country. For more information about the Diversion Project, see *Diversion Project Matrix: A Report from Four Sites Examining the Court's Role in Diverting Families from Traditional Child Welfare Services into Community-Based Programs*. (1998). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV. For more information about mediation and family group decision-making programs in San Jose specifically, or in other jurisdictions around the country, please contact the PPCD.

<sup>6</sup> Straus, *supra* note 1.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about collaborative efforts in Erie County, please see Townsend, S. S. & Carroll, K. (2002). "System Change through Collaboration ... Eight Steps for Getting from There to Here." *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*. Vol. 53(4). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Reno, NV. Pgs. 19-29.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Status Report 2003: A Snapshot of the Child Victims Act Model Courts Project*. (2004) National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from Tuckman, B. (1965). "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups." *Psychological Bulletin*. Vol. 63, Pgs. 384-399.; Tuckman, B. & Jensen, M. (1977). "Stages of Small Group Development." *Group and Organizational Studies*. Vol. 2, Pgs. 419-427.

<sup>11</sup> Senge, P.M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of a Learning Organization*. Doubleday: San Francisco. Pg. 206.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Pg. 211.

<sup>13</sup> Senge, P.M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R.B., & Smith, B.J. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. Doubleday: San Francisco. Pg. 298.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 44.

<sup>15</sup> Senge, P.M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of a Learning Organization*. Doubleday: San Francisco.; Senge, P.M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R.B., & Smith, B.J. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. Doubleday: San Francisco.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Berger, P. & Luckman, T. (1967). *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Doubleday.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Barnwell, R., Scoville, S. & Tobben, J. (1999). *Team Learning: Tools, Techniques, Templates*.  
www.gwbweb.wustl.edu.; Dixon, N. (1994). *The Organizational Learning Cycle: How can we learn collectively*.  
McGraw-Hill: New York.; Straus, *supra* note 1.

<sup>20</sup> Straus, *supra* note 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Pg. 77.

**STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS AND GOOD COMMUNICATION<sup>1</sup>**

Meetings have several functions. They give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives, keep people updated on the status of specific reform initiatives, maintain group cohesion, and provide an opportunity for dialogue and discussion. Meetings allow groups to draw on each other's expertise and experience to support collaborative decision-making. If the meeting starts with a careful plan and finishes with a thorough follow-up, the meeting will "run itself."

A common complaint, however, from people who attend meetings is that they "are boring," "take too long," "do not accomplish anything," or "are a waste of time." Unfortunately, all too often, they are correct. Below are some strategies that can be used to ensure effective meetings and to help avoid these complaints. Regardless of whether you are holding a multidisciplinary collaborative meeting or just a small meeting with several administrators, you should also try to follow these general guidelines for effective meetings.

- **Make sure you need to have a meeting.**

Do not schedule meetings just to have a meeting or because you have not met for awhile. Meetings should be scheduled when a group of people must be involved in an action or a decision.

Particular care has to be taken when the meetings follow a regular schedule (e.g., first Monday of every month). It is counter-productive for a collaborative to meet, just because they are scheduled to meet. Regular meetings need to have a clearly stated purpose, clearly articulated expectations for what activity is to take place between scheduled meetings, and a clear statement of purpose for the next meeting.

- **Set a goal for the meeting.**

Be very clear about why you are holding a meeting and what needs to be accomplished. Break that task into steps, or divide the discussion into sections—that's the agenda for your meeting. At the start of the meeting say, "this is our goal, and if we can get this done, the meeting will be a success." At the end of the

meeting remind everyone that you achieved your goal. This lets everyone leave the meeting feeling successful, and they'll be glad to come to the next meeting.

Specifying a clear objective for the meeting, preferably before the meeting is held, will also encourage people to attend because they will understand the meeting's intent. It will also set the foundation for a focused meeting and increase the likelihood that people will be prepared for discussion. Meetings usually have one or two objectives - to inform or to decide – so emphasize which meeting objective is being met.

- **Identify who needs to participate in the meeting.**

Make sure the appropriate people are at the meeting, especially given the goal of the meeting. Think carefully about whether or not someone needs to be in the room for the duration of the meeting (perhaps they can join you via conference call or for one specific topic).

Be definitive when you invite people to a meeting. You must be considerate of other people's schedules, but you will have an easier time scheduling a meeting if you say "Please plan to attend and if you cannot make it let me know." Always let people know the objective of the meeting, the time it will begin and the time it will end. Be sure to stress that the meeting will begin and end on time – and try to adhere to this rule in practice.

When possible, try to invite representatives from each part of the system to participate in meetings. It is a rare problem or system issue in child welfare that is the single domain of one agency. Think carefully and strategically about who should be at your meeting.

- **Create an Agenda.**

An agenda is a list of the key items to review in order to achieve your meeting objective. It can be something used by the meeting facilitator or leader or it can be handed out to everyone at the meeting. The advantage of handing out an agenda is that it provides a script for people to follow. The problem with providing an agenda is that the agenda may distract your attendees

and tempt them to jump to issues you are not ready to cover. If you need to resolve other issues first, you may want to keep the agenda to yourself. If you are running a project status meeting you can use your project timeline as your agenda.

Your agenda is the tool you use to make sure you are on time and staying on topic. When ancillary issues come up, help the group get back on track. If the issue sounds important, check with the group. “We’re talking about a new issue—is this something important that we should take time to discuss? Or should we put it on our next agenda?”

Set a certain amount of time for each item on the agenda, based on how important it is. If the group starts spending a lot of time on details, ask them “Is this what we want to spend our time talking about?” A lot of details can be worked out by individuals or committees—meetings are for the decisions that need to involve the whole group.

If you decide to hand out an agenda, be sure to include the objective of the meeting and date at the top of the page. All points should be bulleted, and everyone in the meeting should receive a copy – so be sure to make more than enough copies.



All of the Project Sites develop agendas for their collaborative meetings, although the agendas themselves vary in detail and level of formality. In

almost all of the Project Sites, input on agenda topics is solicited from stakeholders in advance of the meeting. In some Project Sites, the potential inclusion of contested or controversial issues on a meeting agenda is “tested” with a few administrators in advance of the meeting. The purpose of “testing” the inclusion of issues is not to exclude or avoid controversy, but rather to ensure that the timing of the issue is appropriate. The final agenda is then disseminated, usually via e-mail, to meeting participants in advance of the meeting.

In the Los Angeles Project Site, for example, stakeholders described collaborative meetings as being well-organized, with set agendas which

are circulated to the group in advance of the meeting. Typically the presiding judge presents the agenda items to the group and then a “fairly free discussion” takes place. Discussion was described as “lively” and focused on the issues at hand (e.g., “goal-directed,” and “issue-driven”). All stakeholders reported that differences of opinion are sought by the presiding judge who also leads the meeting.

*“... Being on paper forces people to think and prepare... it also helps guide where you go for the day.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

*“...[setting an agenda] makes you think about what you have done, where you are going, and what you need to do to reach your goals.”*

*Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site*

Buffalo Model Court stakeholders discussed a change in meeting style that accompanied the transition of Lead Judges. Meetings convened by the previous Lead Judge were described as “more formal” and used written agendas. Meeting minutes were taken and copies were sent to collaborative group members “well in advance” of meetings. Stakeholders noted that with a transition to a new Lead Judge the meetings became more “informal.” An agenda and meeting minutes, for example, are not always in place. Stakeholders explained, however, that both approaches have proven effective.



*“It’s hard to tell which approach is more effective. In fairness, more formality was necessary at the ‘infancy’ stage of the Committee when systems changes were drastic and radical for all involved. Now that things are ‘up and running,’ less formality may be okay ... we’re certainly still getting the same level of discussion.”*

*Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site*



For sample meeting agendas from Project Sites, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

- **Arrange the room to facilitate communication.**

If possible, arrange the room so that members face each other (i.e., a circle or semi-circle). A leader has better control when she or he is centrally located and status issues are lessened when the focus is not placed on any one individual (e.g., the person at the head of the table, or the person who is most visible to all).



In almost all the Project Sites, the collaborative meetings or the core advisory group meetings were held in the courthouse (usually because the courthouse had the best meeting space). In all but one Project Site, the meetings were held in conference rooms, libraries, or meeting rooms. In Alexandria and San Jose, due to a lack of meeting space, collaborative meetings are often held in the courtroom. However, even when the meeting is held in the courtroom, care is taken to re-arrange the furniture so that all stakeholders can sit around the table together (the judge does not sit on the bench, but at the table with the stakeholders).

In several of the Project Sites, collaborative meetings involving the broader community of stakeholders are held in different locations around the community, and in some cases the meeting locations are rotated among agencies and offices.



- **Encourage group discussion and dialogue.**

Encourage group discussion to get everyone's points of view and ideas. This will produce better quality decisions as well as highly motivated participants. They will feel that attending meetings is worth their while and that their contributions are valued.

People often evaluate whether a meeting is useful or not based on one simple consideration: whether they talked. So it is important that everybody has a chance to share their ideas. It is okay to ask specific people what they think if they are not talking – you should also be prepared to gently remind people when they are talking too much.

Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities and commitment to the organization improve when members see their impact in the decision-making process.

*"The judge will ask for everyone's input ... he always asks for input ... if everybody doesn't respond, he will ask for input from those who don't respond."*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*



All of the Project Sites encourage feedback in a number of ways – for example, through meeting dialogue and discussion; by disseminating meeting minutes for review; and by disseminating policy and practice recommendations for review and comment.

In Alexandria, for example, stakeholders report that discussions during collaborative meetings are facilitated by circulating an agenda in advance; holding a discussion regarding old business and then new business; throwing out ideas that will provoke discussion; ensuring that the floor is open to additional issues that may be on the minds of the participants but not necessarily on the agenda; and having a judge who is able to lead the meetings and pull people into the discussion.

Once an issue has been discussed and agreed upon within the Alexandria collaborative group, stakeholders noted that tasks are established and assigned out to the appropriate persons or agencies. Then, follow-up meetings are scheduled. If necessary, subcommittees are formed and given goals to achieve by the next meeting for a "report back." Meeting minutes are taken and circulated via e-mail to all participants.



*"... [In order to facilitate participation] I have incorporated an informal introductory phase for each meeting that allows each participant to open their mouth and say something."*

*Judge, Buffalo Project Site*

*"When an agenda item comes up it is open to discussion ... All opinions are offered and an open discussion is held"*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

*"Ideas are fleshed out, knocked around, and brought back to the group ... everybody has an open mike and a say in the process ... it's an open forum ... people aren't afraid to tell the truth here because we all want to learn. Then, at the end of each meeting we have a 'process check' that allows for commentary about the meeting ... I've found that this makes people more at ease."*

*Lead Judge, Alexandria Project Site*

- **Put decisions to the group.**

The participants own the meeting. Opportunities should be provided to suggest agenda items. If decisions need to be made about the process (e.g., whether to end a discussion that's going too long) then ask that question to the group and let them decide how to address the issue.

- **Stay on schedule.**

Remember that for every minute a person spends in your meeting, they could be doing other things. They are with you because they have decided your meeting is important, so treat them like their time is important. Do everything possible to start and end on time.

- **Have good facilitation.**

The facilitator is the person who runs the meeting and acts on all the steps listed above. Because meeting facilitation is a big job, it usually does not allow the facilitator to participate fully in the meeting discussion. So, if you need to have your views heard, consider letting someone else facilitate the meeting. Good facilitation does not just happen—it is a skill that can be developed through training and practice.



Most of the Project Sites do not use a formal facilitator. That role is usually performed by the Lead Judge or Chair of the Committee. With respect

to community outreach and working with community collaboratives, both Buffalo and Charlotte have used facilitators on occasion.



- **If it is not a standing meeting, schedule the next meeting at the end of the current one.**
- **Have someone take meeting notes and make sure they are dispersed to meeting participants in a timely fashion.**

Put together and distribute an internal memo summarizing what was covered, what was resolved, and what actions need to be taken for issues requiring further clarification. This should come straight from the meeting notes. This memo should not be too long – a handful of bullet points should suffice.



All of the Project Sites distribute meeting minutes within a few days of the meeting; minutes are usually disseminated via email. Although minutes vary in

detail and scope across the Project Sites, they generally contain a brief synopsis of the meeting, including:

- The date, time, and location of the meeting.
- The purpose of the meeting.
- Who was present.
- Major issues discussed, including some articulation of areas of agreement and disagreement within the group.
- Next steps and who is responsible for them.
- The date, time, and location of the next meeting.



For sample meeting minutes from Project Sites, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

**TIPS AND REMINDERS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION<sup>2</sup>****COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

**Look for common ground** - Find shared values. Consider shared personal experiences. Pay attention to and provide feedback. Be yourself and expect the same of others. Be willing to accept differences in perceptions and opinions.

**Find out about others** - Learn about others' interests and needs. Consider their perspectives. Appeal to the highest motives. Let others express themselves freely.

**Attack problems, not people** - Do not waste time on personal hostility. Make other people feel good. Avoid criticizing people and engaging in personal put-downs.

**Give and get respect** - Show respect for others' opinions. Be considerate and friendly. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Be responsive to emotions. Speak with confidence, but remain tactful.

**Proceed slowly** - Present one idea at a time. Check for understanding and acceptance of each idea before moving on to the next. Speak in an organized and logical sequence.

**Be explicit and clear** - Share your ideas and feelings. Pay attention to nonverbal communication. Speak clearly and look at your partners. Select words that have meaning for your listeners.

**Remember the five "C's" of communication - Clarity, Completeness, Conciseness, Concreteness, and Correctness.<sup>3</sup>**

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

**Listening** - Listening helps us learn and shows others that we respect their views. There are three major steps to listening. First, focus your mind on the person speaking. Second, use body language to signal attention and interest. Third, verbally reflect and respond to what the speaker feels and says. That is, repeat what the speaker said to you back to them in your own words and ask for clarifications to ensure that you understand their position.

**Stop talking** - You cannot listen when you are talking. Concentrate on what others are saying. Do not interrupt or change the subject.

**Slow down your thoughts** - Realize that you can listen much faster than a person can talk. Pay attention and summarize what a person is saying. Do not be too quick to judge the other person or offer a solution.

**Understand the other person** - Review and summarize what they are saying. Get their meaning, not just the words. Paraphrase what you just heard. Listen not only to what was said, but also pay attention to what was not said.

**Control your own emotions** - Do not argue with the person. Avoid jumping to conclusions or going on the defensive. Avoid arguments or personal criticism.

**Ask questions** - Ask for clarification. Invite the other person to provide more detail or present new ideas.

**Control your body language** - Remember that actions often speak louder than words. Look at the other person and maintain eye contact. Respond as appropriate.

**COMMUNICATION BARRIERS**

Even if you use the strategies listed above and are a skilled communicator, problems can arise. When communication breaks down, partnerships get stuck and people lose energy and enthusiasm. It may help to remember these barriers so that they can be addressed in a non-threatening and productive manner.

**People are different** - They vary in knowledge levels, communication skills, and cultural and class perspectives. They also have different backgrounds and frames of reference.

**People are impatient** - They jump to conclusions. People think faster than they listen, which often means they assume they know what another person will say next.

**People are selective** - They tend to only hear what they want to hear. People are also more likely to accept something that supports what they already believe and to be critical of information that conflicts with their beliefs.

**People can be negative** - They can be bossy or sarcastic. They may take things personally and get angry. People can be cynical and mistrusting.

**DISCUSSION**

Much of the work done in collaborative partnerships involves face-to-face discussions. Leaders, and if someone else is serving as a meeting facilitator, have the responsibility for keeping the discussion moving.

**Ask questions** - If you are not sure what a person means or why they are taking a particular position, ask for clarification. Ask people to repeat their statements in a different way. Open-ended questions, like "Why?" or "How?", generate more discussion than close-ended questions that only require a yes or no response.

**Seek information and opinions from all participants** - Some people are naturally quiet or have trouble talking in groups. Provide these people with a chance to state their opinions. Listen actively and carefully to what people say, and pay attention to who is not participating so that you may draw out their opinions.

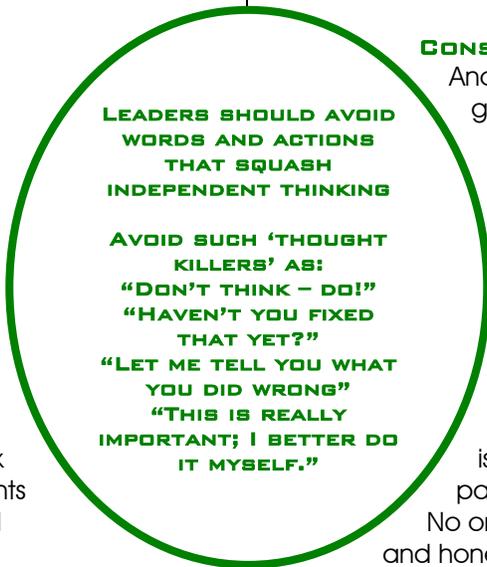
**Summarize as you go** - After discussion winds down, ask for or give a brief summary of what was discussed and decided. This will point out any misunderstandings and ensure everyone has the same recollection of the discussion.

**Stay on track** - Do not let people go too far off the subject. Avoid examples that are irrelevant or last too long. Reach agreement and move on.

**Manage time efficiently** - If your discussion seems to get off-track or bogged down, point out the other items on your agenda. Remind everyone that there is a need to finish on time.

**Recognize when to end discussion** - Learn when there is nothing to be gained from further discussion. Help the group close discussion and make a decision.

**Test for consensus** - State any decisions that seem to have been made. Check if everyone agrees with the summary and can live with the decision.



**CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK**

Another important skill needed for good communication is the inclusion of opportunities to give and receive constructive feedback. Good feedback skills are needed to have productive meetings and to promote cooperation among partners.

Everyone should agree that giving and receiving feedback is an important and acceptable part of how you will work together. No one should be surprised by open and honest feedback.

Be sure to provide both positive and negative feedback. We often take good work for granted and only give feedback when problems arise. It is just as important to point out something that is positive as it is to point out something that is negative.

Think carefully about what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. Make sure the time and place are right.

**How to give and receive feedback**

**Giving...**

- Be descriptive. Use specific and concrete information.
- Do not use labels. Be clear and objective.
- Do not exaggerate. Be exact and avoid using absolute words like "always" or "never."
- Do not be judgmental. Do not compare the person you're talking to with others.
- Speak for yourself. Do not refer to what "others" say or think, only focus on your reactions.
- Talk first about yourself. Start statements with "I" not "you." This helps reduce the potential for a defensive reaction on the part of the person receiving the feedback.

- Stick to what you know. Do not present opinions as facts.

### Receiving...

- Take a deep breath. Relax before responding.
- Listen carefully. Do not interrupt.
- Ask questions for clarity. Ask for specific examples.
- Acknowledge the feedback. Repeat the message in your own words to make sure you understand.
- Acknowledge valid points. Agree with what is true and what is possible.
- Take time to think about what you heard. Check with others if you are not sure.

#### Advice from Project Sites for facilitating discussion

- Create an atmosphere of trust that gives everyone an opportunity to be heard
- Set grounds and model appropriate behavior
- During the meeting identify topics for discussion for the next meeting so people can prepare
- Assign homework to group members and have them report back at the next meeting
- Call on people who have not responded or participated, but do so respectfully
- Save time at the end of the meeting for people to raise issues that are not on the agenda

### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict occurs when individuals or groups are not obtaining what they need or want and are seeking their own self-interested goals. Sometimes the individual is not aware of their need to have their goals addressed and unconsciously starts to act out. Other times, the individual is very aware of what he or she wants and actively works at achieving the goal. Either way, the end result can be conflict.

Conflict, however, is normal. Conflict can even be seen as positive behavior exhibited by a group because it indicates that the group is challenging itself and that an adequate communication network is present in the group to allow for it.

### About conflict...

- Conflict is inevitable
- Conflict develops because we are dealing with people's lives, jobs, pride, self-concept, ego and sense of mission or purpose
- Early indicators of conflict can be recognized
- There are strategies for conflict resolution that are easily accessible and effective
- Although inevitable, conflict can be minimized, diverted, resolved, or used to accomplish positive things

### Beginnings of conflict...

- Poor communication
- Seeking power
- Dissatisfaction with management style
- Weak leadership
- Lack of openness
- Change in leadership

### Conflict indicators...

- Body language
- Disagreements, regardless of issue
- Withholding bad news
- Surprises
- Strong public statements
- Airing disagreements through media
- Conflicts in value system
- Desire for power
- Increasing lack of respect
- Open disagreement
- Lack of openness on budget problems or other sensitive issues
- Lack of clear goals

**Conflict is destructive when it...**

- Takes attention away from other important activities
- Undermines morale or self-concept
- Polarizes people and groups, reducing cooperation
- Increases or emphasizes difference
- Leads to irresponsible and harmful behavior, such as gossip and name-calling

**Conflict is constructive when it...**

- Results in clarification of important problems and issues
- Results in solutions to problems
- Involves people in resolving issues important to them
- Causes authentic communication
- Helps release emotion, anxiety, and stress
- Builds cooperation among people by allowing them to learn more about each other
- Involves others in resolving the conflict
- Helps individuals develop understanding and skills for coping with conflict

**Techniques for avoiding and/or resolving conflict...**

- Meet conflict head on
- Set goals
- Plan for and communicate frequently
- Be honest about concerns
- Agree to disagree - understand healthy disagreement builds better decisions
- Get individual ego out of management style
- Let your team create - people will support what they help create
- Discuss differences in values openly
- Communicate honestly - avoid playing "gotcha" type games
- Provide more data and information than is needed



**Managing Group Dynamics: Examples from the Project Sites**

Stakeholders in all Project Sites report that differences of opinion are solicited and expressed, and that for the most part, group conflict is well managed.

According to stakeholders, differences of opinion are often expressed in Charlotte’s committee meetings. In general, when differences of opinion arise, discussion takes place until the matter is reconciled.

Strategies identified by stakeholders for reconciling differences of opinion included:

- *“The group takes a vote and the majority rules;”*
- *“A subcommittee is formed to conduct further research on the issue and report findings back to the group at the next meeting;”*
- *“The issue is mediated – often by the judge or another leader;”* and
- *“The issue will stay on the agenda until it is resolved.”*

Assigning a subcommittee to explore the contentious issue in more depth was identified by a number of stakeholders as a particularly effective strategy for addressing disagreements and eventually achieving consensus.

*“Assigning subcommittees for follow-up research also helps to prevent discussion of one issue from dominating or manipulating a meeting.”*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

*“We talk differences through and spend as much time on an issue as we need to in order to be mindful of everyone’s needs for input and to acknowledge the concerns of everyone.”*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

In the Los Angeles Project Site, collaborative group members report that differences in opinion and perspective are sought from all participants during meetings. Due to the “variety of backgrounds and perspectives,” collaborative members recognized that they “do not always agree on issues.” When differences of opinion

arise they are “handled very tactfully” and “everyone is given an opportunity to share their views.”

Strategies used for reconciling differences of opinion included:

- *“If there is a difference that can’t be handled in one meeting, the judge will continue the meeting to allow people to reflect;”*
- *“Agree to disagree, if necessary in order to make progress on our goals;”*
- *“Submission of positions in writing before the meeting;”*
- *“Stressing that the goal is to reach a common ground;” and*
- *“Recognizing the issues that we can work together on and focusing on the goals we have established helps us to set aside some things in order to find or reach consensus.”*

A strategy that was identified as particularly effective at generating “thoughtful dialogue” about potentially contentious issues was the submission of a “position paper” in writing. The document (e.g., memorandum) outlining the proposal, position, or suggested approach, is then circulated to the group before the meeting. An open discussion occurs during the meeting with the judge asking everyone to present their side. The judge then comes to the next meeting with a new proposal which synthesizes the discussion and any agreements reached. Discussion continues, until consensus is reached.

While collaborative group members indicated that everyone is encouraged to participate in meeting discussions, some individuals reported that because of the “status and power differences” in the room “some people may be afraid to speak up and express their opinions.” Allowing these individuals to express their views in writing is seen as a positive way to ensure that their input is sought, that they have indeed participated, and that they are comfortable with the process.



*“We have huge differences of opinion and the judge lets everyone argue their opinions.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

*“[The purpose of meetings] is to discuss relevant issues, discuss different perspectives and opinions, and then see how to proceed.”*

*Lead Judge, Los Angeles Project Site*

*“We have worked out an effective working model of protocol... when issues or conflicts arise we fight in a gentlemanly manner...there is an openness to opposing views, but everyone understands that we need to reach a final consensus decision to be able to move on to other goals. We’re doing something right; people keep coming back for more!”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

**Advice from the Project Sites ...**

- Reinforce that the group has common goals and a common vision
- Use subcommittees or working groups to collect additional information on the contested issue and report back
- Allow people to submit “position papers” for review prior to meetings
- Assign a final decision-maker if failure to reach consensus means that goals will not be reached – but make sure everyone agrees and knows who the final decision-maker is and who has the final authority
- Agree to disagree
- Be sensitive to status and power differences – create a comfortable forum for disagreements to be appropriately expressed

**CHAPTER NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> White, C. (1998). "Managing Meetings." In *The Making of a Good Meeting*. Kevin Wolf and Associates. [www.dcn.davis.ca.us](http://www.dcn.davis.ca.us); Doyle, M., and Straus, D. (1976). *How to Make Meetings Work*. Berkley Books: New York.; Straus, D. (2002). *How to Make Collaboration Work: Powerful Ways to Build Consensus, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions*. Berrett-Koehler Publications, Inc.: San Francisco; Wolf, K. (1998). *The Makings of a Good Meeting*. Kevin Wolf and Associates. [www.dcn.davis.ca.us](http://www.dcn.davis.ca.us); Sandelin, R. (2000). "Running Effective Meetings." Consensus Works. [www.infoteam.com](http://www.infoteam.com); Lakey, B. (1994). *Meeting Facillitation: The No Magic Method*. Movement for a New Society.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Wolf, *supra* note 1.

**THE NEED FOR GOOD DATA AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TO SUPPORT SYSTEMS CHANGE**

**THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION AND MEASUREMENT**

Evaluation generates new knowledge and enables discovery of what works, for whom, and in what circumstances. Systematic evaluation helps change agents increase their accountability, articulate the value of their efforts, and compare the effectiveness of different reform strategies. Evaluation helps generate buy-in and support for change efforts and can marshal new resources, both in people and in funding, for the change initiatives. Good data and performance measurement are also essential for the long-term expansion and sustainability of successful reform efforts. Only with clear and objective demonstrations of success will most courts and child welfare agencies be able to access the funding needed to successfully develop and sustain reforms. In the current fiscal environment, funding for improvements is possible only with compelling and objective evidence that improvements will achieve concrete and favorable results for families and children.

Access to good data is important for the learning organization – focusing on data confronts individuals with hard evidence that may challenge existing perceptions of success; discrepancies raise sharp questions about what is happening and why. In addition, monitoring data provides a good way of tracking the effects of change efforts. Data can be especially important in convincing collaborative group members that they can achieve more than they thought possible by showing the amount and degree of impact systems change efforts are having. Access to data often leads to a desire for more information. As reform efforts proceed in learning organizations, the collaborative group can generate increasingly sophisticated data and use it in more and more meaningful ways.

Evaluation of the policies, programs, and practices developed by the collaborative group can increase “client” involvement in the reforms of the collaborative and enhance the collaborative’s standing in the larger community. When a group is viewed as one that “evaluates what it does,” it typically attracts more interest. In addition, a focus on systematically measuring and evaluating the impact of reform efforts shows the community that the people involved in the collaborative group and the different organizations and systems it represents really do care about the quality of practice they engage in.

Evaluation is also necessary to maintain the integrity of the collaborative group’s vision – in the absence of good data the collaborative may continue the activities they have used in the past, even if other activities are more relevant. They may fail to see that what they are doing can be done better. Or, conversely, they may discard a practical reform that is having a positive impact and should be retained. Activities that have drifted away from the vision of the collaborative are also more likely to occur when the collaborative is not held accountable by an organizational culture that demands constant measurement of whether goals are being (have been) achieved.

*Evaluation is not always easy, but the rewards outweigh the difficulties.*

*“Systematic assessment and evaluation are powerful means to educate the public and legislature about the successes of collaborative efforts ...there’s nothing like hard data to make your point.”*  
Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site

*“Having goals is not important unless they are measurable.”*  
Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site



**EVALUATION AS ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING**

- Evaluation allows you to record the history of collaborative efforts from their early development, through implementation, to outcomes. Documenting the history of collaborative efforts can be particularly important if efforts are to be instituted in other jurisdictions or if there are potential changes in leadership.
- Evaluation provides ongoing feedback for all those involved in the collaborative initiative -- it identifies areas needing improvement and refinement throughout the change process so that resources can be channeled most effectively and efficiently.
- Evaluation emphasizes collaborative goals; it underscores the importance of continually revisiting and reassessing goals and the level of commitment on the part of individuals in achieving those goals.
- Evaluation builds accountability into the collaboration by clearly identifying who is responsible for what and when.

Adapted from: Dobbin, S. A., and Gatowski, S.I. (1998). "Thinking About Program Evaluation: What Is It and Why Should You Do It?" *Technical Assistance Bulletin*. Vol. II (4), April. Pg. 7. NCJFCJ. Reno, NV.



**DATA COLLECTION: EXAMPLES FROM THE PROJECT SITES**

Implementation of improved data collection procedures has been a major court improvement initiative of the Cincinnati Model Court. Early in its court improvement effort, the Model Court recognized the need for specialized data to track specific details on children and families, to measure case progress through the dependency system, to provide performance statistics on parties involved in the court process, and to provide case documents for immediate use.

Hamilton County's (Cincinnati) "Juvenile Case Activity Tracking System" (JCATS) was developed to achieve these goals. As improvements in the Model Court's information system made it possible to track case movement more efficiently, it helped the Model Court initiative to

identify areas of the court process in need of improvement and to design interventions targeted at addressing those areas. For example, statistics generated by the JCATS system made it apparent that cases were stalling at the post-termination of parental rights stage – too many children whose parental rights had been terminated were spending lengthy periods of time awaiting adoption. As a result, the Cincinnati Model Court embarked on a comprehensive adoption reform initiative that included a public awareness campaign, the development of a coalition to address barriers to adoption, the development of an adoption website, and the development of an adoption mediation pilot program.

The Cincinnati Model Court continues to revise and enhance its management information system, especially its ability to generate comprehensive performance reports. The Model Court is also creating a committee to work with a design team from a local contractor to perform a needs assessment of the court and create a new systems requirement document.<sup>1</sup> This committee included magistrate judges, case managers, end users from all divisions of the Hamilton County Juvenile Court, and an individual from the court's information services department. The input of all representatives in the court system was also sought through an interview process.

*"Collaborative group discussions always address how well we are performing, what's working and what isn't working, and what we are or aren't doing well."*

*Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site*

*"We use evaluation reports and any other measurements we can to ensure that we have a clear purpose and are achieving the goals we set out to ...reflecting on outcome measures provides us with a reality check on our effectiveness as change agents."*

*Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site*

One of the Buffalo Model Court's initial efforts to provide better and more up-to-date information to targeted improvements was the "Spring into Permanency" Project. The original goal of this project was to alleviate the backlog of adoptions for as many children as possible, and, in so doing, to implement system

improvements so that such a significant adoption backlog would never occur again – in 1998 when this discussion was started, there were 746 children designated as having the goal of adoption.<sup>2</sup>

In order to address the backlog of cases, the court and the Department of Social Services (DSS) developed a Microsoft Access database system to facilitate case monitoring and case management. One of the first tasks for this database system was to identify and categorize the list of children who had been freed for adoption. The court and DSS then monitored these cases throughout the year and tracked their progress against certain case processing milestones. This enabled the Model Court to chart the number of children in adoptive placements, the number of adoptions pending, the number of children adopted, and the number of children freed for adoption. Regular reports of these statistics are now shared with the court and DSS. For example, a "Pending Adoptions Report," is distributed to all judges and supervisors at DSS.

The ability to share accurate information about the children waiting for adoption not only enabled the Buffalo Model Court to pinpoint junctures where their improvement efforts would make the most impact on the backlog, but also generated meaningful discussions that led to creative solutions for addressing the backlog problem. Some of the ideas that arose from this process and were selected for implementation included the creation of an "Adoption Liaison" between the court and DSS to discuss delays on pending adoptions; implementing "Adoption Days;" shifting of personnel responsibilities for case processing from a clerk to judicial law clerks; and an "Adoption Manual." By 2001, a total of 579 adoptions had taken place.<sup>3</sup>



*"Every year we set Model Court goals ... at the six month mark steps that have been made to achieve those goals are reviewed and any data we have about how we've done [are] shared... we try to make sure that all goals we set are realistic, clear, concise, time-limited, and measurable."*  
Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site

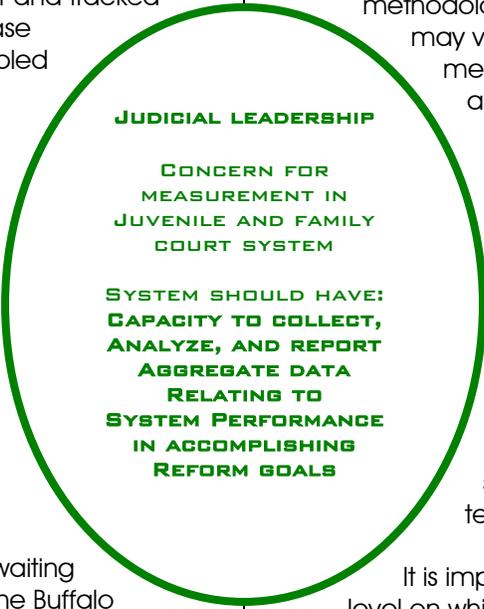
**UNDERSTANDING THE MULTI-LAYERED NATURE OF EVALUATION**

How "success" is specifically measured will depend on the nature of the collaborative work being undertaken. While specific methodologies and research designs may vary, as well as the outcome measures that are studied, there is a basic evaluation process that can be applied irrespective of the change initiative under study.

For an evaluation to be comprehensive, it should be conducted on many levels ranging all the way from individual level data, to group level information, to usage (process) variables, to short-term outcomes and long-term impacts.

It is important to know the appropriate level on which to focus. This will usually depend on the goals and scope of the change initiative under study, as well as the resources and time available to conduct the evaluation. For example, a training program designed to build capacity for collaboration among various stakeholders can be evaluated, at a basic level, by counting the number of participants in the training and assessing their level of satisfaction with the training. Moving deeper, the quality of the training practices themselves can be studied, and a determination can be made about what participants learned, how they applied their new knowledge, and how their behavior changed.

Ultimately, although it is much more difficult to measure, the evaluation can strive to determine the long-term impact of capacity-building for collaboration on the system, its clients, and the community at large. Many child welfare



collaborations strive for change to lead to improved performance, improved services, and stronger communities. It becomes increasingly difficult, however, to measure impact as you move from the individual to organizational, to systems, to community levels of analysis.

*When embarking on any evaluation activity, it is important to decide the most appropriate level to focus on – this will depend on the goals, scope, and duration of the collaborative initiative, as well as the resources available to the collaborative group to apply to evaluation activities.*



While it is beyond the scope of this *Technical Assistance Bulletin* to provide instruction on evaluation, its design and methods – resources on this topic are available by visiting the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

**USING LOGIC MODELS TO GUIDE EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT EFFORTS**

What effect do collaborative efforts have on systems’ functioning? How do changes in individual approaches to work within the system translate into systems’ change? How do these changes affect performance? What is the impact of collaborative efforts on the lives of the children and families? Admittedly, these are not easy questions to answer but there are tools available to guide the thought process. A “logic model” is one such tool, and can help articulate the underlying assumptions of collaborative efforts and provide a guiding framework for answering these questions.

*A logic model is a picture of why and how a collaborative effort will happen.* It is a diagram that ties collaborative strategies to a vision and to expected outcomes in a cohesive and orderly manner. An example of a logic model applied to a Model Court Project Site’s change efforts is outlined on page 104. Much as a flow chart serves to map and direct movement from one place to another, a logic model maps the planned reform effort onto increasingly concrete and measurable components needed to accomplish these changes and the

short- and long-term effects expected to occur as a result of each component.

Logic models can be used to involve key stakeholders in visioning, strategizing, or initiative design and evaluation planning. Working through the design of a logic model helps to clarify the purpose of each change initiative or program, helps to focus efforts on common goals, and helps to communicate the value of initiatives to funders, legislators, and the public. It also helps guide the collaborative’s thinking as it moves from conceptualizing the abstract ideas and principles of the vision into the relevant and necessary policy and practice changes needed to realize the vision, and to the types of outcomes that must be produced in order to demonstrate success for the change efforts.

A logic model also serves as the evaluation framework from which all evaluation questions, data collection tools, methods, and analytic techniques are derived. It provides a frame of reference for testing assumptions and having a dialogue about ways to make improvements. Logic models clearly identify and link a program, practice, policy, or collaborative intervention’s inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

- **Inputs:** the resources employed (such as funding, staff, expertise, or skills) to direct or cause change
- **Activities:** the implementation of the “inputs” to create change – the what happens of the process (such as the design and implementation of a training program)
- **Outputs:** the direct results of implementation efforts (such as the number of people who attended the training, the number of programs developed, etc.)
- **Outcomes:** the changes, both short- and long-term, that are anticipated to be created by the program (policy, practice, intervention)

*A logic model makes the underlying intervention’s rationale and goals more explicit and provides a framework for dialogue about evaluation findings. A logic model also indicates ways to improve the intervention’s design over time.*

Logic models can be a powerful means of communicating to external stakeholders, in graphic form, relevant elements of program design -- key inputs, activities and processes, outputs, intermediate outcomes, and long-term or end outcomes. It can also help highlight missing pieces and outcomes that need to be included in the change efforts and stimulate new thinking about how interventions can be implemented at different stages and directed at different elements in the process.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARING EVALUATION DATA WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

Evaluation findings can be used to determine what worked, what did not work, and why. These insights enable goals to be modified and the impact of collaborative work enhanced. Evaluation should be a continuous, ongoing process, and not just a one-shot activity. Periodic evaluations clarify which activities are getting results or proving unproductive, which strategies need to be refined or abandoned, which evaluative techniques need to be improved, and which unforeseen challenges or benefits have occurred.

True learning, however, cannot result from the evaluation process unless findings are shared across system stakeholders. Sharing evaluation results helps everyone learn from their experience, identify the needs and concerns of others, sidestep potential pitfalls, and avoid reinventing the wheel.

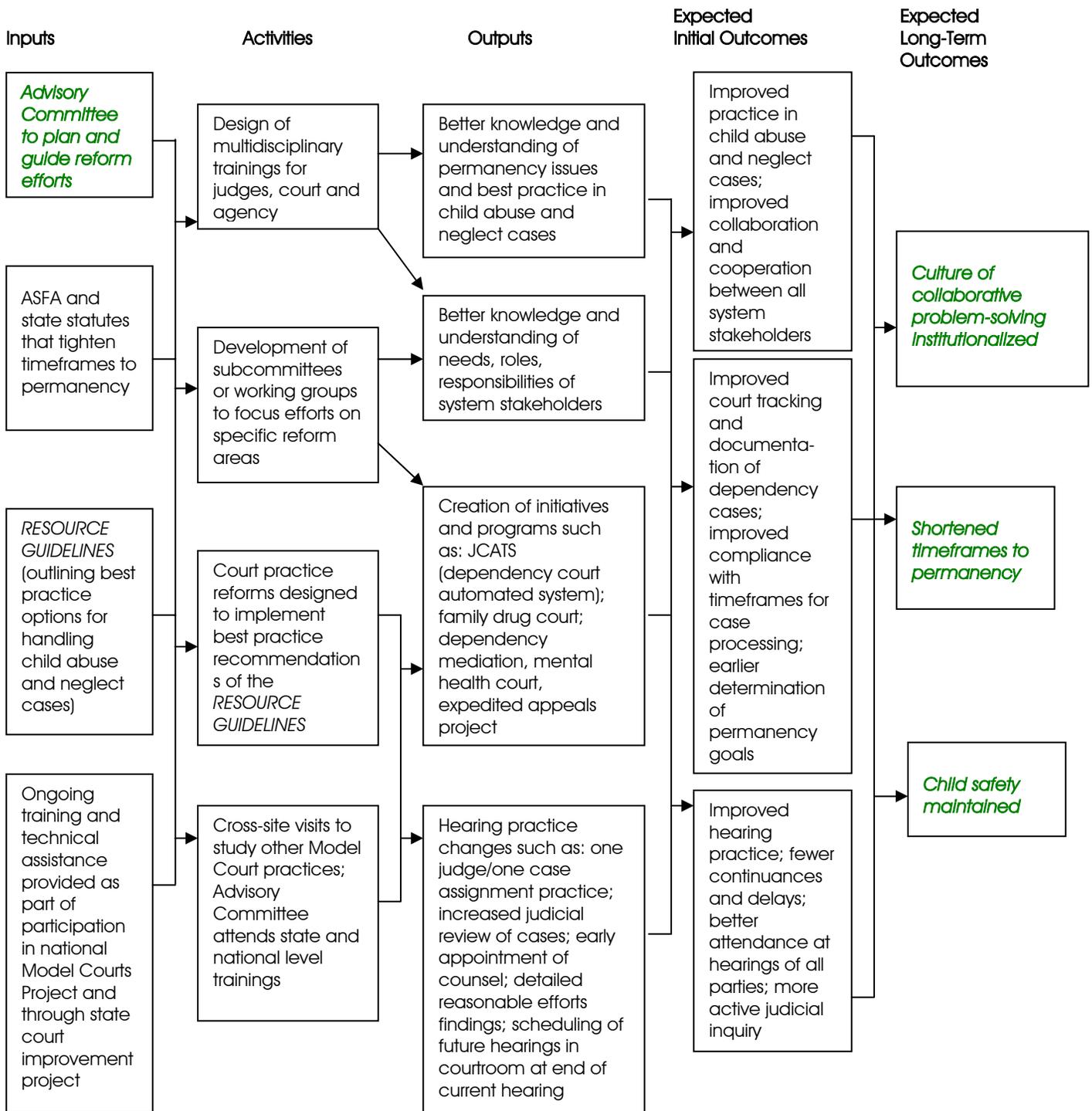
Sharing results of evaluations and performance measurement with each stakeholder involved in the collaboration reinforces key features of a learning organization –

- Reinforces a climate of openness for collaborative efforts;
- Challenges flawed mental models by making them more visible and highlighting their flawed nature; and
- Encourages systems thinking by providing a holistic, realistic picture of systems’ operations and their inter-relations.

Questions to ask before embarking on measurement activities:

- Are the people with the authority needed to make the decisions on what to measure and how to measure it included in the discussion?
- Are the people with the systems knowledge about the current data generation technology included in the discussion?
- Is our vision and strategic plan developed enough to allow us to identify what we would need to measure? Is there consensus on what we will measure and how we will measure it?
- Are there existing data sources or measurement activities already in place that can be used to inform the current discussion?
- What federal and state guidelines do we need to incorporate into our current measurement activities (e.g., ASFA timelines, statute-specific timelines)? Is there consensus on how these outcomes will be defined and measured?
- Do the currently existing data tracking systems used by each organization contain the information needed to assess the performance of the collaborative?
- Can the currently existing data tracking systems be adapted to obtain the information needed to assess the performance of the collaborative?
- Are the currently existing data tracking systems able to share information across organizations if needed? If not, are there ways that this can be facilitated (e.g., legal routes to ensure protection of confidentiality; software or hardware changes, etc...)?

**THE CINCINNATI MODEL COURT SYSTEMIC REFORMS LOGIC MODEL\***



\*A logic model depicts why and how a collaborative effort happens. The logic model depicted is neither comprehensive of the Cincinnati Model Court's change initiatives, nor is it meant to imply that the links between components of the model have been established conclusively by research. Rather, the logic model serves as an example of how Cincinnati's reform strategies are tied to expected results (both short- and long-term).

**THE CHALLENGES OF PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT<sup>4</sup>**

Performance measurement should be built into all of the collaborative group’s initiatives as a critical piece of the change efforts, and not just viewed as providing supplemental information or as being an extra “burden.” Even beyond basic accountability requirements, courts and child welfare agencies should always be asking: “How can we most effectively meet the needs of children and their families?” “Are families receiving the services they need?” “Are services delivered in a way that should produce the desired results?”

*Performance measures are the yardstick by which courts, child welfare agencies, and system partners can measure the successes they are achieving and the progress they are making toward better outcomes for children and families.*

Ideally, performance measurement should not be an activity that collaborative groups perform now and then – it should be an integral part of its efforts.

In the long-term, performance measurement will:

- Identify examples of excellent performance which encourages replication;
- Identify weaker elements of performance which encourage improvement or refinement;
- Identify successful types of reforms and approaches which lead to acceptance and widespread usage;
- Identify “reforms” that *do not* work well or have limited benefits which lead to their redesign or elimination;
- Increase both court and systems accountability which leads to continuing performance improvement; and
- Ultimately help bring about improved outcomes for children, by helping to achieve those outcomes measured by the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) and the goals intended by ASFA.

Initially, a baseline of current practice needs to be established so that improvement efforts can be built from this platform and measured against it to see the real effects that are resulting from improvement efforts. Baseline measurement needs to be followed by regular practice “reassessments” as reforms are put into place, tried, and retooled.

**Current strengths for, and challenges to measurement capacity, Identified in Model Court Project Sites:**

**ALEXANDRIA**

- + Strong state focus on improving dependency Management Information System (MIS)
- + Detailed and comprehensive information on case processing maintained in case files
- + Small caseloads which facilitate case file review to obtain needed information
- No dependency MIS currently in place

**BUFFALO**

- + Strong relationships with other stakeholders in the system
- + Locally developed dependency Management Information System which they are working to integrate with statewide MIS
- + Focus on developing strategies to improve dependency MIS
- Statewide MIS does not recognize, or offer ability for, the incorporation of data collection reflecting local practice needs

**CHARLOTTE**

- + Good relationships with agency for sharing information
- + Strategies in place to create and enhance MIS
- + Strong institutional commitment to addressing evaluation needs
- No MIS in place

**CINCINNATI**

- + Excellent Management Information System in use
- + MIS able to generate extensive and detailed case processing information
- + All dependency hearings are videotaped and can be copied to a CD-ROM which affords an opportunity to evaluate hearing practice

Current strengths for, and challenges to measurement capacity, identified in Model Court Project Sites (cont.):

**LOS ANGELES**

- +/- MIS tracks detailed and relevant information on case processing, but only through disposition
- High costs associated with having data analyzed from MIS and used to generate reports

**SAN JOSE**

- + Detailed information maintained in case files about case processing and client demographics
- + In process of updating the local dependency MIS with the statewide dependency MIS in use
- Difficulty accessing information from MIS and case files for cases recently closed because files are warehoused

**PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SHOULD HELP DETERMINE:**

- **HOW WELL THE COURT, CHILD WELFARE AGENCY, AND THE BROADER SYSTEM ARE HELPING TO ENSURE CHILD SAFETY;**
- **HOW WELL THE COURT, CHILD WELFARE AGENCY, AND THE BROADER SYSTEM ARE FACILITATING PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN;**
- **HOW FAIRLY COURTS ARE TREATING CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND AGENCIES; AND,**
- **HOW TIMELY THE COURTS' HEARINGS AND DECISIONS ARE.**

*The Critical Importance of Measuring Performance*

- What gets measured gets done
- If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure
- If you cannot see success, you cannot reward it
- If you cannot reward success, you're probably rewarding failure
- If you cannot see success, you can't learn from it
- If you cannot recognize failure, you can't correct it
- If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support

From Osborne, D. & Gaebler, T. (1992). *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector*. Addison-Wesley Publishing: Reading, MA. Pgs. 146-152.



For resources on court performance measurement and judicial workload assessment, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

**It is not just the agency that must measure its performance. Measuring the court's performance also is critical to ensuring safe, timely, permanency for children.**

Court performance measurement is important to the successful implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). ASFA makes the safety, well-being, and permanent placement of abused and neglected children its paramount goals. Court performance measurement can help courts improve their record in safeguarding abused and neglected children. Court performance measurement enables courts to measure whether they:

- Comply with ASFA's timelines;
- Hold substantive, meaningful, and timely hearings;
- Achieve timely permanency for children with minimal disruption in placement;
- Conduct permanency hearings that decide on *permanent* outcomes for children (return home, adoption, legal guardianship, and permanent placements with relatives); and
- Provide procedural protections for parties — such as notice to parents and foster parents.

Performance measurement identifies those courts that are achieving positive results. This helps to identify and document good practice, while informing the field. For example, by measuring judicial timeliness in various courts, court administrators can identify those courts with the timeliest judicial processes. After identifying such courts, court administrators can further examine how these courts accomplish such timely decisions, while ensuring the quality of the decision-making, and then share the information so that other courts can learn what they need to do to replicate such results. By establishing concrete measures of judicial activities, states will be able to set certain goals for the courts and determine whether these goals are being met.

Court performance measurement is needed to demonstrate the value of successful pilot or demonstration projects. Where successful pilot projects lead to more timely permanency, measurement of the result can help courts prove that such reforms are cost-effective and should be replicated. For example, courts that have the capacity to link reforms to shortened lengths of stay for children in foster care can prove that carefully targeted resources can actually reduce the overall level of public expenditures for the child welfare system.

Ultimately, measuring court performance will help bring about improved outcomes for children — helping to achieve those outcomes measured by CFSRs and intended by ASFA.

The court performance measures cover four basic outcomes.

- **Safety** – to ensure that children are safe from abuse while under court jurisdiction.
- **Permanency** – to ensure children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- **Due Process** – to ensure cases are decided impartially and thoroughly on the basis of evidence brought before the court.
- **Timeliness** – to enhance case expedition of permanency by minimizing the time from the filing of the petition or shelter care order to the achievement of permanency.

For more detail on this topic see: *Building a Better Court: Measuring and Improving Court Performance and Judicial Workload in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases.* (2004). American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, the National Center for State Courts, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. This project was funded with generous support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

Each of the Project Sites demonstrated a commitment to critical reflection and evaluation activities that can be seen in their own comments and in the activities they are engaging in within their collaboratives. Being open to recognizing and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of reform efforts will only improve the ability of the collaborative to be successful in accomplishing short- and long-term goals.

Interviews with stakeholders from each of the Project Sites reinforced the importance of engaging in evaluation activities to keep reform efforts going. Each Project Site, while at different stages in the collaborative process, shows the type of critical thinking and concern for dealing with assessment in their self-evaluation of change efforts and why the changes are occurring...

- "...we revisit the goals to find out why it is or is not working. We track logistically—issues/goals stay on the agenda until achieved or discussed and revisited—always on forefront of our minds" — Alexandria
- "There are less radical changes [occurring in our efforts because]...we are tweaking what is already in place because we really dealt with all of the burning issues in the beginning." — Buffalo
- "The fact that we have annual goals pushes us to achieve them prior to the year end—also the fact that they are in our minutes every meeting." — Charlotte
- "When the judge was involved...things got done. There was clear authority and things fell into line. You need authority plus measurable outcomes for kids. The two must go hand in hand." — Cincinnati
- "The difference between this and other meetings is that the people get things done here. When they say they are going to do it, it happens." — Los Angeles
- "...by collecting better information more effectively, it is the first step to make things better for the systems' change efforts." — San Jose

Additionally, however, the interviews also showed why attention to the issues involved in evaluation are necessary and that there is still room for improvement even in these forward-thinking jurisdictions...

- "The judge does [has goals], but [I] don't think we have yet [have goals]. Our main goal is permanency. We do have a mission statement, but no formal goals or numbers." — Alexandria
- "The data thing [is a primary challenge], we have systems that don't talk to each other. We don't have common data." — Buffalo
- "We have built in monitoring for some goals. Sometimes it is just 'how is it going?' " — Charlotte
- "There is no articulated over-arching mission, which results in not having clear, measurable goals." — Cincinnati
- "An issue stays on the agenda until it is resolved. That is the extent to which there is formal tracking [of goals]." — Los Angeles
- "We don't issue an end of year report [showing progress on goals] or establish them [goals] at the beginning of the year—it is more ... ad hoc, addressing issues as they arise." — San Jose

**CHAPTER NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> The development of Cincinnati's JCATS, its capabilities, and current activity related to automating and integrating all divisions of the Hamilton County Juvenile Court into one programming platform, is summarized in Portune, L. (2002). "Model Court Approaches to Information Technology: A Dependency Court Data System Implementation Guide." *Technical Assistance Bulletin*. Vol. VI (5), December. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.

<sup>2</sup> "Child Victims Act Model Courts Project Status Report: 1999." (2000). *Technical Assistance Bulletin*. Vol. IV (1). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV. Pg. 29.

<sup>3</sup> "Child Victims Act Model Courts Project Status Report: 2000." (2001). *Technical Assistance Bulletin*. Vol. V (2). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Reno, NV. Pgs. 37-38.

<sup>4</sup> This section is excerpted from: *Building a Better Court: Measuring and Improving Court Performance and Judicial Workload in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*. (2004). American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, the National Center for State Courts, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. This publication was made possible by a grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.



**STRATEGICALLY PLANNING FOR CHANGE**

Strategic planning is not something that occurs as an independent step in the process of developing a learning organization. Nor is it something that occurs independently of developing a collaborative culture and engaging in a process of creating a shared vision. Rather, strategic planning is central to all of these activities – it just means doing all of these things in a strategic, planned, and coordinated way. Strategic planning for change is essential to ensuring meaningful and sustainable systems change.

*By constantly focusing attention on shared vision and on specific goals and objectives, strategic planning can keep the organization and the broader system on track towards achieving its vision for reform – becoming a useful tool for creating systemic change.*

Strategic planning is a continual process of improving system performance by developing strategies to produce results.<sup>1</sup> Strategic planning requires looking at the overall direction of where the collaborative group wants to go, assessing the system’s current performance, and developing and implementing strategies for moving change efforts forward. In contrast to traditional long-range planning, strategic planning is flexible and adaptable – it assumes that organizations and systems must monitor and continually adapt to external forces affecting them. At the same time, the system must be aware of its internal processes and be willing to analyze and change them in an open and cooperative manner. Collaborative groups that embark on a strategic planning process will engage in an in-depth review of itself (i.e., its mission, vision, goals, and strategies) and the individuals and other groups with which it

interacts. Based on the recognition that change is a constant, ever-present circumstance of life, strategic planning should be viewed as an on-going, continuous activity rather than as a one-shot occurrence.<sup>2</sup>

**BASIC GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**STRATEGIC PLANS ARE WORTHLESS UNLESS THERE IS FIRST A STRATEGIC VISION.**

**THE PROCESS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IS A PROCESS OF LEARNING.**

- Involve the right people in the planning process.
- Write down the planning information and communicate it widely.
- Develop **SMART** goals and objectives – **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**cceptable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-Limited<sup>3</sup> goals and objectives.
- Build in accountability (e.g., regularly review who is doing what according to the plan and by when).
- Note deviations from the plan, explore why deviations occurred, and re-plan accordingly.
- Evaluate the planning process and the plan itself.

**THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS SHOULD INTEGRATE AND ACKNOWLEDGE:**

**SYSTEMS THINKING  
SHARED VISION  
PERSONAL MASTERY  
MENTAL MODELS  
TEAM LEARNING**

- Acknowledge, share, and appreciate the results, including the achievement of intermediate benchmarks and short-term goals, as well as long-term plans and goals.

A strategic plan identifies where an organization is going within a specified period of time (e.g., within one, three, or five years) and how it is going to get there. The “strategic” part of the planning process is the continual attention to the current context and organizational climate, and exploration of how this larger context affects the future of the organization or system, and the change efforts being implemented.

*The planning process is at least as important as the plan itself.*

*The planning process is never finished. The planning process is a continuous cycle of learning.*

Child welfare agencies use a number of different planning processes that have the potential to improve agency performance – among these are:

- ✓ The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) and Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)
- ✓ The IV-E Review Program Improvement Plan (PIP)
- ✓ The 5-Year Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)
- ✓ The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) plan

Because this strategic planning process is in place on the child welfare agency side, it affords a powerful opportunity for courts, agencies, and communities to partner in their planning process. Such a partnership promotes integrated planning and sharing of knowledge and resources – a benefit that can only lead to improved outcomes for children and families, as well as lower costs in the long run -- for each of the agencies and systems involved in the sharing of information.

**FORWARD THINKING – WORKING BACKWARDS**

Whether the strategic planning process involves multiple institutions working in partnership toward a common goal, individual organizations, or a core advisory or working committee, a good strategic planning process requires working backward through the system.<sup>4</sup> Good strategic planners start at the results – the vision they want to achieve – and then work backwards through the system to identify the processes needed to produce the desired results, which include identifying growth and limiting factors, and the resources and inputs that need to be put in place to achieve the vision.

**DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN**

There are lots of different ways to develop a strategic plan, ranging from very formal processes to more informal ones. There is also no single “correct” process and no single “correct” plan that will work for everyone. Because of the importance of recognizing and responding to unique organizational and systemic challenges and resources within your jurisdiction, any strategic planning process you engage in must be tailored to meet these contextual influences.

Although there is no set process for strategic planning, below are some key steps that should be undertaken in the process.<sup>5</sup> Remember, however, that each step should be tailored to your particular jurisdictional context and the overall vision for reform.

**1. Obtain commitment for the strategic planning effort and decide how it will be managed and who will be involved.**

Obtaining commitment for strategic planning is critical to its success because a concerted effort on the part of the collaborative group as a whole and each of its individual members is required for the strategic planning process to be successful.

- **Assess readiness for change**

To get ready for strategic planning, a system must first assess its readiness for change. Although a number of factors may determine an organization’s or system’s readiness for change – including recent changes in federal legislation, the increased oversight role of the juvenile and family court, a systemic focus on outcomes, and decreasing resources – the visible presence of a strong, committed, transformational leader is critical.

**( Transformational Leadership -**

Strategic planning works best when there is strong personal investment from leadership, and when the leaders are active, fully participating (but not controlling) members of the strategic planning working groups or committees.

- **Fully inform collaborative group members**

Fully inform the collaborative group members about the nature of strategic planning and what to expect from the process – including the time and resources that may be required for the planning process. There is a great deal of confusion over the terminology of strategic planning. This becomes particularly problematic when working with different organizations in a strategic planning process. To avoid misunderstandings and confusion, clearly define terms at the beginning of the process and ensure that there is a common understanding across partners. It is also important to clearly define task assignments and responsibilities for group members (e.g., for bringing information to the group, facilitating discussion, action-

planning, documentation of the plan, and tasks related to plan implementation).

- **Decide who should be involved in the planning process**

Strategic planning should be conducted by a planning team. This team can include the entire collaborative group or some subset of members. Ultimately, the size of the team may depend on the time and resources available to conduct the strategic planning session. Regardless of its size, the planning team needs to include the individuals who have the authority to make strategic decisions (i.e., system leaders). Besides leadership, the need for other stakeholder involvement may be determined by the stage of the collaborative process that your jurisdiction is in. For example, strong leadership involvement will be needed when the collaborative group is determining its strategic direction – mission, vision, and values. But more expansive stakeholder involvement will be needed when helping to determine current issues, goals, and strategies to address those goals. In general, where there is any doubt about whether an individual or group should be involved in the strategic planning process, it is best to include them. It is better to involve as many key stakeholders as possible in all the phases of planning than to err in the other direction and realize later that a critical person was left out. It is also important to involve someone whose responsibility will be to administer the planning process by arranging meetings, helping to record key information, and helping with flipcharts.

( **Systems’ Thinking** – Mixing the status and authority levels of the individuals involved in the planning process encourages systems’ thinking, as it helps collaborative group members understand the day-to-day issues faced by line-level staff as well as the top-level issues faced by the organization as a whole.

( **Involvement of Multiple Advocates** – It is important for strategic planning to be managed by key stakeholders from each system. This encourages a sense that everyone is involved and has a stake in the outcomes of the strategic planning process. Ownership of results will enhance the implementation of action plans. In

addition, having multiple stakeholders involved in the strategic planning process makes the identification of, and access to, needed resources and inputs for creating change that much easier.

**2. Establish a vision for reform, including a statement of mission and guiding principles.**

The collaborative group’s vision, as well as the child welfare systems’ broader vision, should reflect why the collaborative group and the system exists, how it achieves its purpose and goals (e.g., the process or activities through which it accomplishes its goals), and its operating values and principles. The strategic planning process builds on this vision by outlining a strategy for achieving it.

**3. Assess what is going on inside the organization or system, including its current performance – Scan the internal environment.**

Once a collaborative has a clear idea of why it exists, what it does, and where it wants to be, the members must take a clear look at its current performance. There must be an assessment of organizational and system strengths, weaknesses, and performance generally, and the group must develop a strategic plan to enhance strengths, address weaknesses, and improve performance. Questions to ask at this step include: What processes are in place? To what extent are we accomplishing current goals? What are facilitators of, and barriers to, success?

**4. Scan the broader environment and culture within which the organization or system operates.**

In addition to “taking stock” of the internal situation, during strategic planning it is also important to conduct an external or environmental scan. This scan involves considering the various driving forces, or major influences, that might affect change efforts. Such external influences might include changes in national and regional leadership, funding constraints, and current media attention or news events.

( **Scanning Imperative** – An “internal scan” examines the activities of the system with respect to its inputs, outputs, outcomes, strengths, and weaknesses. An “external scan”

involves examining the external environment for factors that may prove to threaten or limit change efforts, or facilitate or enhance them. Such factors might include demographic changes in the population (such as increases in child abuse and neglect filings); trends in economic conditions; and legal-political factors (such as legislative mandates). Regardless of whether the collaborative's focus is on internal or external factors, the members need to adopt a "scanning imperative" which will lead them to regularly and purposefully attend to such issues.

### Conducting a SWOT Analysis

What are the systems' Strengths?

What are the systems' Weaknesses?

What are the systems' Opportunities?

What are the systems' Threats?

\*From: McNamara, C. (2003). "Basic Guidelines for a Successful Planning Process."  
www.managementhelp.org

### 5. Develop a set of strategic issues and prioritize them.

This step in the strategic planning process involves taking the results of the internal and external scans and synthesizing them into strategic issues, problems, or conditions requiring action on the part of the collaborative group in order to have future success. The group members then set priorities by individually ranking the issues in terms of what can or should be accomplished first (as outlined in the vision), or by voting for the most important issues to attend to. Setting priorities focuses the group on the most critical issues on which to begin collaborative work.

### 6. Develop action plans to address priority areas.

Once the mission and vision have been affirmed, the internal and external environment assessed, and critical issues identified and prioritized, it is time to figure out what to do. That is, an action plan should be created. An action plan will include the broad range of approaches that should be taken (strategies), and the

general and specific results to be sought (the goals and objectives).

- Establish both short- and long-term goals that are aligned with the long-term vision

Based on the analysis of the overall mission, the set of goals that are established should build on the strengths of the system and take advantage of opportunities. Goals should also be designed to address perceived weaknesses and ward off any potential threats to reform efforts. This step in the planning process is usually the most time intensive. Honest and ongoing discussion and dialogue among system stakeholders is essential. If needed, leaders may want to move back to an earlier stage in the process to further clarify issues and assess performance. For example, new insights and understandings will probably occur at this stage in the planning process, which may require revisiting earlier phases to incorporate this new knowledge.

- Identify how goals will be reached (strategies, responsibilities, and timelines)

Objectives should be established along the way to achieving goals – having a clear objective on the way to a goal is an effective way to demonstrate early success and continue progress towards achieving long-term goals. This can be extremely motivational for those charged with implementing the plan.

Clear tasks and responsibilities should be assigned, including responsibility for implementing aspects of the plan and for achieving various goals and objectives. Timelines for meeting each responsibility should be set.

( Continuous Education and Training – Include in your action plan organizational or personal supports for changed behavior (e.g., education or training to enhance skill levels necessary to implement the change initiative).

*"Providing quality training to collaborative members can help overcome barriers to change ...people need to be educated ... what they don't know makes them anxious ... to be effective, training must be superb and top-notch, and tied to goals."*  
Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site

## 7. Write and communicate a plan document

Strategic plans should be widely disseminated throughout the system to multiple stakeholders, even if the plan is an informal one. If the plan has been developed through a collaborative process, it is, after all, their plan and they should receive a copy of it. If there is confidential information in the strategic plan, this information can be included in a non-disseminating appendix. The importance of sharing the plan, however, cannot be overstated – it will make the collaborative’s efforts more concrete and encourage buy-in and persistence for accomplishing goals and the objectives the plan sets forth.

As a general guide, organize the strategic plan to reflect the culture and purpose of the organizations involved and the broader system. The strategic planning process ranges in levels of formality as well as the plans generated from the process. As general rule, however, a good, formal strategic plan should have the following components:<sup>6</sup>

- **An Executive Summary**

The Executive Summary should provide a brief overview of the plan – its overall mission and goals, and the key strategies to reach those goals.

- **Authorization**

The signatures of all the appropriate administrators, directors, presiding officers, and judges should be included, showing that they approve of, and support, the strategic plan.

- **Organizational (or System) Description**

This section should provide an overview of the history and purpose of the organization or system, its primary initiatives or accomplishments, etc.

- **Vision, Mission, Value Statement**

This section provides the “strategic vision” and operating philosophy of the organization or system.

- **Goals and Strategies**

This section should list all the major goals and associated strategies and timelines associated with them.

- ✓ **Action Plans** – including specific objectives, responsibilities, and timelines for completion of objectives
- ✓ **Description of Strategic Planning Process Used** – including who was involved, the number of meetings, major lessons learned, etc.
- ✓ **Strategic Analysis Plan** – including information gained during the analysis of internal and external factors and organizational performance
- ✓ **Budget and Resource Plan** – including the resources and funding needed to obtain and use the resources that are to be used to accomplish the strategic goals
- ✓ **Operating Plan** – including a description of the major goals and activities to be accomplished each year, and who is responsible for the various activities (e.g., time and task plan)
- ✓ **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan** – including criteria for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategic plan, the achievement of benchmarks, defining what counts as “success” or “failure,” etc.
- ✓ **Communication Plan** – including the actions that will be taken to communicate the plan, whose responsibility it is for this task, how progress on the plan will be shared, etc.



### Strategic Planning for Change: Experiences from the Project Sites

The Alexandria Model Court engaged in a strategic planning “retreat” in 2003 that brought together child welfare system stakeholders from throughout the Model Court Project, including a wide range of community partners. Nearly 100 professionals and community guests participated in the retreat. The retreat was focused on enhancing everyone’s commitment to improving Alexandria’s response to child abuse and neglect and beginning a planning

process for supporting current initiatives and engaging in new ones.

Participants began by re-visiting their vision for the Model Court Project and the strategies they have already put in place to achieve that vision. For example:

- The truancy initiative, a partnership between the schools and court services;
- Dependency mediation project;
- Family group conferencing in the delivery of Child Welfare Services;
- Family Drug Treatment Court;
- Adoption Saturday; and
- Collaborating with Virginia's Court Improvement Program in creating the Best Practice Court Initiative across the state.

Participants then convened into smaller groups to discuss the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current system and to develop goals to enhance these strengths and address any weaknesses. The areas identified as priorities for action planning included: developing programs aimed at improving children's health and mental health; improving educational outcomes for children in foster care; designing effective strategies to address the intersection between domestic violence and child protection; expanding community outreach; and, providing better services for teens transitioning out of care.

The results of the small group discussions were reported back to the larger group and recorded. This information was then used by the Model Court Core Group who convened immediately after the retreat in a smaller, more focused, planning session. This session was aimed at updating the Model Court's mission in light of the discussions held during the retreat, finalizing strategic issues, setting goals, and prioritizing strategies for future Model Court activities.

*"The Model Court holds an annual retreat in which projects and goals are discussed and established ... the way we actively get ourselves involved in achieving these goals by conducting research and doing committee work to put plans in place proves our commitment to Model Court and, more importantly, our clients - children and families."*

*Stakeholder, Alexandria Project Site*

Charlotte Model Court collaborative group members reported that once an issue has been discussed in collaborative group meetings, and agreed upon within the group as a priority area for improvement efforts, the following steps are often made:

- A subcommittee is formed. The subcommittee reports to the larger group and then the larger group will vote to adopt the subcommittees plan or will make recommendations for further investigation.
- Additional research, if needed, on the issue is conducted.
- An outcome-based strategic plan is developed which includes goals and timeframes for achieving those goals.
- Tasks are established and assigned to the relevant parties.
- Goals and action plans are summarized in a document and shared.
- Progress in relation to goals is discussed at future meetings. Methods used to track progress are: review of meeting minutes, setting timelines and assigned tasks, using outside evaluators, reporting back to the committee on objectives that have been achieved, and regular distribution of summaries of progress on goals.

*"We create a strategic plan that is outcome-driven ... we come up with a certain number of outcomes that we want to achieve in the next six months, and then we rank them in priority ...we assign the issues to the relevant committee, and then assign the appropriate individuals with a due date ... that person then comes back to the full committee and reports on what has been done..."*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

*"We go through a process of presenting issues for discussion in the group ... we take the meeting time to break the issue down and then set up a plan to determine how we are going to get there ... once goals are formally set they are published and distributed in a formal document to all collaborative members."*  
 Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site

In both Buffalo and San Jose Project Sites, subcommittees develop written plans of action that are reviewed and coordinated through the Central Model Court Committee or Steering Committee.

The Buffalo Model Court has done several collaborative strategic planning sessions, including small, informal sessions one community-wide strategic planning initiative. 

*"Each subcommittee of the collaborative group works on an identified issue or area and comes up with a written plan for action ... this plan is then shared with everyone in the group by email and we review it and give feedback ... this feedback is incorporated and we come up with a final action plan."*  
 Stakeholder, San Jose Project Site

*"I've found that it's key to plan projects that will produce short-term wins - early successes can energize people and gain buy-in from people whose support you didn't have before."*  
 Lead Judge, Los Angeles Project Site

*"At the annual Model Court All-Sites meeting we engage in a process of setting some initial goals and plans to implement them ... we make sure these goals are realistic, clear, concise and time-limited ...at the six month mark the steps that have been made to achieve these goals are reviewed ...additional goals are added by the larger collaborative group and assigned to specific subcommittees who develop strategies, develop an action plan, establish timelines and report back to the larger group."*  
 Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site

How transformational leadership can be used to develop a results-oriented, reality-testing perspective:

- Create and nurture a results-oriented, reality-testing culture;
- Take the lead in deciding what outcomes to commit to and hold selves accountable for;
- Make measurement of outcomes thoughtful, meaningful, and credible; and
- Use the results to guide and inform change efforts.

*\*Adapted from: Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization-Focused Evaluation, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.*

**SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC PLANNING ...**

- **LEADS TO ACTION**
- **BUILDS A SHARED VISION THAT IS VALUE-BASED**
- **IS AN INCLUSIVE, PARTICIPATORY PROCESS THAT FACILITATES SHARED OWNERSHIP OF THE FINAL PLAN**
- **IS BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY FOCUSED AND IS SENSITIVE TO THE ORGANIZATION'S AND SYSTEM'S ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE**
- **IS BASED ON QUALITY DATA**
- **REQUIRES A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS OPEN AND HONEST DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION AND SUPPORTS CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO**
- **IS KEY TO EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**



For resources and tools to assist with the strategic planning process, please visit the PPCD website at [www.pppncjfcj.org](http://www.pppncjfcj.org).

**CHAPTER NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Witkin, B.R. & Altschuld, J.W. (1999). *From Needs Assessment to Action: Transforming Needs into Solutions Strategies*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Jutkins, R. (1999). *Power Direct Marketing: How to Make it Work for You*. McGraw-Hill. New York, NY.

<sup>4</sup> Bartunek, J.M. (2003). *Organizational and Educational Change: The Life and Role of a Change Agent Group*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: New Jersey.; Hendry, J., & Johnson, G. (Eds.). (1993). *Strategic Thinking: Leadership and the Management of Change*. Wiley: New York.

<sup>5</sup> Witkin, B.R. and Altschuld, J.W. (1995). *Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments: A Practical Guide*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA; See also *supra*, note 1.

<sup>6</sup> McNamara, C. (2003). "Basics of Writing and Communicating a Strategic Plan." [www.managementhelp.org](http://www.managementhelp.org); See also Hendry & Johnson *supra*, note 3; Witkin & Altschuld, *supra*, note 4.

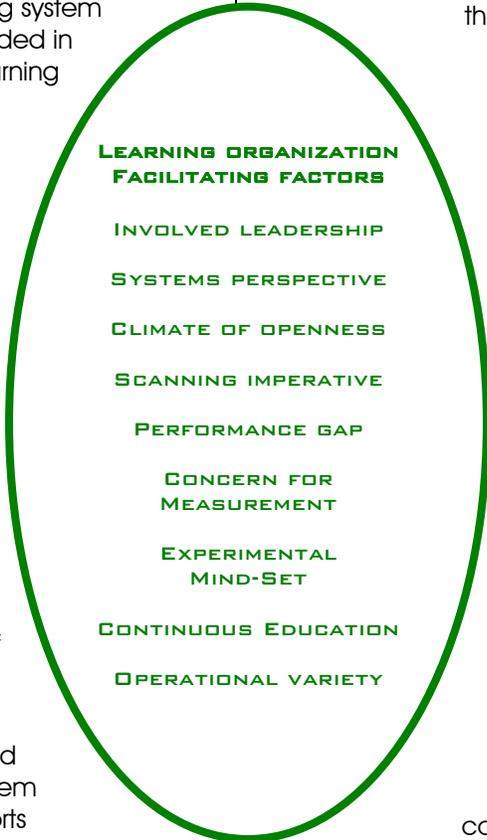
**PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:  
SUSTAINING THE CHANGE IN LEARNING  
ORGANIZATIONS**

How to sustain change efforts is not something to consider after change has happened. Rather, you must strategically plan for sustainable change from the moment you initiate your change process. Strategies to sustain the momentum of change, to institutionalize and sustain specific reform efforts, and to generally support ongoing system improvements, must be embedded in the ongoing activities of your learning organization.

Each of the previous chapters discussed key elements of the collaboration process that facilitate systems change – key elements that help initiate change, establish momentum, and, ultimately, *sustain* systems change.

Sustainability of systems change efforts is greatly enhanced by ...

- **Transformational leadership**—leadership that is focused on creating a system of self-sustaining change by:
  - Facilitating the development of a shared vision that unites the system and guides change efforts
  - Being aware of individual, organizational, and cultural forces that influence the ability of the collaborative to achieve its goals
  - Recognizing the value of including a diverse range of opinions, experiences, and perspectives in the group
  - Inspiring others to want to be part of change efforts.
- **Shared leadership throughout the system and at multiple levels within the system**—sharing leadership at different levels within and across the organizations represented in the collaborative helps establish buy-in and ensure



that resources and barriers from each system are accounted for in the change efforts

- The **development of a “learning organization”** or “system” –a system that is, itself, founded on the belief that people and organizations have the ability to change. To develop a learning organization requires attention to:

- **Systems thinking**—looking beyond the immediate situation and people impacting the change efforts to include the larger system of organizational and personal relationships and inter-dependence

- **Shared vision**—a co-created vision of what the collaborative hopes to achieve that builds on individual and agency goals and needs

- **Personal mastery**—encouraging and rewarding individual collaborative members for having a continuous desire to learn and grow

- **Mental models**—sharing, learning about, and challenging the unique mental frameworks each person in the collaborative brings to the table

- **Team learning**—learning engaged in at the collective level that builds on personal mastery and diversity of experience in order to act on the shared vision

- The **involvement of stakeholders from all levels of the organizational hierarchy**—ensures that all of the organizational knowledge is represented and allows for changes to be implemented from the top-down and from the bottom-up

- The **development of a collaborative culture** that supports innovation and collaboration throughout the system and a shared vision—creating a new way of working that requires and

motivates individuals to think and act beyond themselves

- A **strategic planning process** informed by reliable and valid data, with clearly articulated goals and outcomes—engaging in strategic planning at all phases of the collaborative process helps ensure the most effective and efficient use of collaborative efforts and resources
- A **concern for measurement and evaluation data** to inform change efforts and determine success—a focus on defining outcomes, data collection and periodic analysis of these data is critical for gauging progress, helping to re-focus efforts, and for guiding the change strategies used by the collaborative

### **SUSTAINING MOMENTUM ONCE YOU HAVE BEGUN THE CHANGE PROCESS**

Besides ensuring that the change environment is conducive to developing a learning organization, Senge<sup>1</sup> notes that efforts to sustain the momentum of change past an initiating stage need to address three challenges: fear and anxiety; the gap between the stakeholder's perception of how things are going, the organization or system's requirements for demonstrating success, and the delay between the two; and the tendency for profound change to be perceived as both individually and organizationally threatening.

#### *Handling Fear and Anxiety*

Fear and anxiety are natural, healthy responses by individuals to changes in the level of openness among a group of people who are embarking on new and innovative "ways of doing business." Feelings of anxiety may surface among collaborative group members as concerns, objections to unanticipated consequences of change, or as passive resistance to the changes proposed.

Strategies for handling fear and anxiety:

- ✓ set an example of openness – listen to concerns
- ✓ work towards a co-created common vision –keep the focus on children and improving outcomes
- ✓ demonstrate a commitment to expand knowledge of what works and why

- ✓ create a collaborative environment that values and encourages diversity of opinion and experience

#### *Handling Assessment and Measurement Discrepancies and Delays*

The collaborative group often sees their change efforts as "working" or producing "positive results." But, these "positive results" may not be visible to anyone outside of the collaboration. Objective measurement may be required before others are as supportive of the change effort as members of the collaborative team. It may also take time to provide the type of objective measurement expected by organizational leaders, funders, legislators, etc, if they are to believe the "positive" results of the change. This can be a frustrating experience.

Strategies for handling assessment and measurement concerns:

- ✓ appreciate the time delay that is involved in making significant or profound changes
- ✓ learn to make interim assessments to provide data along the way towards achieving long-term goals—assess the small steps and short-term impacts being made as part of the journey to achieving long-term change efforts
- ✓ build partnerships with individuals who can bring an assessment expertise to the collaborative table
- ✓ make assessment a priority
- ✓ communicate process improvements as well as progress on outcomes
- ✓ communicate improvements in relationships, systems-thinking, creativity and innovation as benefits of the collaborative

#### *Handling Perceived Threat (Individual)*

As change efforts proceed, individuals who were originally supportive may find the innovation implemented by the collaborative group "threatening" or "uncomfortable."<sup>2</sup> This may occur when change efforts prove to be incompatible with an individual's needs or personal vision. It may also occur when individuals perceive that the time and effort needed to learn new skills, or a "new way of doing business," is not worth their effort. When this happens, individuals who were supporters of

the change initiative can become “resisters”<sup>3</sup> or “non-believers.”<sup>4</sup>

Strategies for handling perceived threat by individuals:

- ✓ listen to “resisters” and offer them opportunities to express their concerns and get them out in the open
- ✓ promote “reflective openness”<sup>5</sup> in the group – re-visit group assumptions and make sure everyone is on the same page (do you still share the same vision?)
- ✓ connect all group members through a common sense of purpose and values
- ✓ if “nonbelievers” cannot be converted to “believers” find a way for them to contribute comfortably to the change effort – these individuals can provide the group with important feedback about how change efforts may be perceived by others outside of the collaborative (i.e., they may serve as a good reality check or barometer against which to measure acceptance of proposed changes)

*Handling Perceived Threat (Organizational)*

As collaborative groups develop and begin to achieve some of their intended results, they may appear to operate as “autonomous” and outside of the governing organizational structure.<sup>6</sup>

Strategies for handling perceived threat from the organization:

- ✓ include leaders on the collaborative team who have decision-making authority in the organization
- ✓ include stakeholders from multiple levels of the organizations that are being partnered with
- ✓ make organizational priorities part of the collaborative group’s creative thinking and brainstorming activities
- ✓ articulate the case for change in terms of observable results (i.e., improved outcomes for children and families)
- ✓ encourage dialogue across organizational boundaries – develop working groups or subcommittees that include cross-organizational members

- ✓ reinforce that the goal of the change effort is to shift from conversational interactions to a true dialogue in which members develop shared understandings with a common vision

*Advice from Project Sites - Sustaining Momentum*

*“Develop person-to-person relationships. You have to build trust. We tried for years to create reform from the top down and that did not work. It didn’t work to try from the bottom up either. It must be lateral so there are equals working together to create change.”*

*Stakeholder, Charlotte Project Site*

*“It is both frustrating and fulfilling. You have to give it time. The results are not immediate. Especially when [someone] wants to see it now—because they are not involved in the day-to-day, they don’t see the smaller steps that are incredible changes.”*

*Stakeholder, Buffalo Project Site*

*“By embracing systems change as a common goal, by improving things for children, by fostering an attitude and approach that asks what can ‘we’ do instead of what can ‘I’ do, and broadening our goals.”*

*Stakeholder, San Jose Project Site*

*“Find ways to engage people in it to help them take possession of it as part of their own.”*

*Stakeholder, Alexandria Project Site*

*“Be careful not to do [only] wide sweeping change. A lot of work goes into sustaining changes that you have made. A lot of people make the mistake of always trying to make something new.”*

*Stakeholder, Cincinnati Project Site*

*“It’s hard—don’t expect it to be easy. In the end it is certainly worthwhile. Budget problems affect people’s willingness to work together and [keep people from] focusing on the bigger picture. It’s hard not to fall back to how things were before when big issues hit.”*

*Stakeholder, Los Angeles Project Site*

**THE DANCE OF CHANGE**

With respect to sustaining the change, Peter Senge argues that the most critical thing to remember in systems change is the “dance of change”<sup>7</sup> – the inevitable interplay between reinforcing growth processes and limiting processes.

It is important to remember that change is evolutionary, it occurs over time. As with any biological entity, all growth arises out of interplay between growth factors and limiting factors. Nature tries to find a balanced state. When you are pushing the system to change, eventually the system will push back.

Therefore, to sustain the change, leaders and system stakeholders need to ...

- Identify and understand reinforcing growth processes and what is needed to catalyze them
- Identify and understand limiting processes and how to overcome them

Moreover, Senge argues that if the basic learning disciplines – systems thinking, shared vision, mental models, personal mastery, and team learning – are deficient, their deficiency becomes a limit to organizational and systems growth and long-term sustainability.

You need to appreciate the “dance of change.” This requires ...

- Thinking of sustaining change more biologically, less mechanistically
- Patience as well as urgency
- A real sense of inquiry, a genuine curiosity about limiting forces
- Seeing how significant change invariably starts locally, and how it grows over time
- Recognizing the diverse array of people who play key roles in sustaining change – people who are ‘leaders’

The fundamental flaw in most change strategies is that they focus exclusively on innovation, on what they are trying to do – rather than on understanding how the larger culture, structure, and norms will react to their efforts. No progress is sustainable unless innovators learn to understand why the system is pushing back and

how their own attitudes and perceptions (as well as forces) contribute to this “push back.”

*Research in organizational change and sustainability has demonstrated that often too little attention is paid to identifying the forces and processes that impede progress and, therefore, too little time is spent developing workable strategies to deal with and overcome these limiting factors.*

- Limiting processes do not usually become visible until they are provoked. By the time you provoke them, it may be too late to properly deal with them.
- The best strategy for overcoming limiting processes is to anticipate them. Become proactive, not reactive.
- Limits to growth occur when a reinforcing process runs up against a balancing process – some form of naturally occurring resistance; balancing processes are a means by which systems maintain integrity, continuity and stability. The interplay of growth and limiting factors should be expected, recognized, and planned for.
- Balancing points are not always obvious or explicit – but they do govern the boundaries of system activity. Balancing processes have different “time delays” - some appear slowly, some quickly, some take years to provoke. But, limits are inter-related; they all affect each other.

*Organizations and systems which embrace evolutionary change through process improvement and process redesign achieve sustainable change.*

## STEPS TO CREATING A NEW BALANCE

1. IDENTIFY THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE
2. IDENTIFY THE FORCES THAT
  - WILL HELP YOU ACHIEVE THAT CHANGE
  - WILL RESTRAIN THAT CHANGE
3. DECIDE
  - WHICH OF THESE YOU ARE GOING TO STRENGTHEN OR WEAKEN
  - HOW YOU ARE GOING TO DO THAT
  - WHEN YOU ARE GOING TO DO THAT
4. ACT

Adapted from Kotelnikov, V. "Creating Change: Steps to Establishing a New Balance."  
1000ventures.com



All of the collaborative stakeholders in Project Sites were asked what advice they would give to other jurisdictions embarking on or already involved in improvement efforts so that they can better sustain momentum, and ultimately, ensure that their systems' change efforts have longevity. Their responses serve to reinforce the points made in each of the previous chapters – the sustainability of ongoing system improvements are greatly enhanced if the collaborative group has incorporated features of a true "learning organization."

The advice offered by each of the Project Sites from their own experiences engaging in the collaborative process also conforms to the findings from organizational literature showing that organizations that are able to successfully carry out long-term change share seven general features. Each of the features of successful change efforts identified by the organizational literature is presented below with illustrative quotes from the Project Sites.

**Organizations that undergo successful, long-term change processes seem to share seven characteristics:<sup>8</sup>**

- ☛ A vision of the future that provides people with an opportunity to contribute to something larger than themselves.

When people see the possibility of making a significant contribution, they operate differently. The emphasis shifts from focusing on "why it can't be done" to "how can we make this happen?" There is a tangible difference in the atmosphere of organizations that have made this shift—they feel alive with possibility and excitement. The need to create and continually revisit the collaborative group's vision of system change in order to sustain change efforts was repeatedly brought up by Project Sites.

*"Keep your eye on the brass ring." – Buffalo*

*"It's hard... Don't expect it to be easy...but in the end, remember, it's certainly worth it." – Los Angeles*

*"You have to have your mission on all of the agendas and minutes – it should be posted on everything so that you stay focused; so that everyone remembers why we are doing this." – Buffalo*

*"The glue is the cause...we are all interested in providing a positive experience for the kids." – Alexandria*

*"Don't give up and continue on even when frustrations arise." – Los Angeles*

**☛ Involvement of the whole person—the head, heart, and spirit of the members of the organization.**

Over the years, words such as "hands" or "heads" have become a way to count numbers of people in organizations. They reflect a focus on what is considered important—hands to do the manual work; heads to do the thinking work. A successful approach to change re-engages the whole person: hands for doing, heads for thinking, hearts for caring, and spirits for achieving inspired results. In order to accomplish this, there needs to be involved leadership to engage people and the right people need to be included in the process.

#### *Involvement Leadership*

*"...get leaders who invite people to the table but don't do it just for show..." – Buffalo*

"You need to make sure you have the right leader. This person must be dynamic and trusted. Later, the leader can be more of a manager. The Bench has to take an active role in leadership." – Charlotte

"You must have someone of authority leading the group with a vision to get things done" – Cincinnati

"Leadership born from various agencies representing unique perspectives, without egos affecting their performance... it can be wonderful. It's not who gets credit; its how do we get it done." – Los Angeles

"It's important to have the right mindset, particularly with those in leadership. If those people come in wearing their authority hats, and believe it's going to be 'my way or not at all,' you don't have a meaningful process." – Buffalo

"Be sure to have a good transition plan for leadership... start working on this while your leaders are still around to mentor their replacements." – Alexandria

**Multiple Advocates**

"Invite everyone you can think of and have them invite everyone they can think off ... this will move the dialogue away from the traditional and into the practical." – Buffalo

"In order to be effective you must be inclusive of everyone in the design of the system reform process so that everyone feels they have a stake in the outcome." – Charlotte

"You have to get everyone who can make decisions at the table." – Los Angeles

**☛ Understanding that knowledge and wisdom reside within the organization's people.**

This belief, that the people in the system know best, represents a profound shift from the days of bringing in outside experts with "the answer." Instead, successful change strategies engage

people in the organization in making choices about what's best for them.

**Climate of Openness**

"I can't stress more the importance of openness and honesty." – Buffalo

"You have to be open and check your ego at the door ... You have to develop a thick skin ... don't take things personally ... build relationships to the point that you feel that you can call on each other." – Charlotte

"You have to be respectful of everybody's opinion and perspective ..." – San Jose

"Be flexible to changes and competing ideas." – San Jose

"Allow stakeholders an opportunity to address their own issues." – Cincinnati

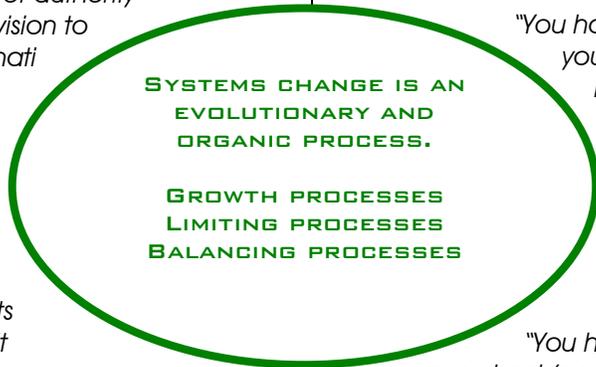
"Be neutral and open-minded ... and listen to what others have to say before you fight to the death for what you want, because there is always a middle ground." – Cincinnati

"It takes time to build relationships ... you need to be open and not defensive; try to see things from others' perspectives; you have to be willing to compromise ... it takes time and can be a headache ... but a good feeling too." – Cincinnati

"Constant communication is critical ... you can use the information shared to bridge differences." – Alexandria

**Operational Variety**

"Be sure to include different perspectives on issues ... design projects that address all aspects of systems improvement, not just the latest trend or program of interest ... don't lose sight of foundational practice ... without a strong foundation you won't be able to sustain any short-term successes over the long haul." – Alexandria



"Time, patience, and persistence are needed for good leadership...Particularly good minority leadership [is needed] to ethnically represent the groups that you are trying to help...attract diverse membership to reflect and encourage different perspectives, good listening, and work towards consensus."—Buffalo

**Continuous Education**

"Education is important ... what people don't know makes them anxious." – Charlotte

"Cross-training is extremely effective for explaining how the jobs of various individuals within the system and the collaborative are inter-related and important to the system as a whole." – Charlotte

"... It's a challenge to see things in a different light. That's why constantly educating people about ModelCourts is so important."  
– Alexandria

**🌀 A perspective that change is a process, not an event.**

Events help focus people's attention, but they are only one part of the change equation. It is ongoing practice that enables long-term success. The need to be attentive to internal and external influences on change efforts is critical if change efforts are to be sustained.

**Scanning Imperative**

"Make sure that what you do is adapted for your jurisdiction ... then begin to assess what the strengths and weaknesses are of your jurisdiction and decide how to proceed."  
– Cincinnati

"Learn what other jurisdictions have done and be inspired by it ... Come back home, figure out how to adapt it locally, and do it."  
– Charlotte

"The big C word—change! The structure of [the] Department of Social Services is unwieldy. New ways of thinking are difficult to implement. It's very difficult to put new policies in place. Barriers are there...need to come up with ideas to overcome barriers. We need to keep hope."  
– Buffalo

"Try to find out from others what they did ... what their strengths and weaknesses are, whether or not they succeeded or failed, what worked for them and what didn't." – Charlotte

"It has broadened awareness of the overall systems needs and [made me more] appreciative of what all of the other stakeholders do."—San Jose

"The biggest lesson [is that you] have to go slow and work together and recognize that everyone (agencies) are facing different obstacles within their agencies. We got past the early fighting and now work together for the same goals and outcomes."—Charlotte

"Any group like this—it is cyclical. Relationships can improve, deteriorate, improve, deteriorate. But that deterioration is the gist—that's where the opportunity for improvement begins." – San Jose

**🌀 A systems view of the organization.**

When people understand that they're collectively creating their organization, they begin to understand the system at a deeper level. They see interconnections among departments, processes, or relationships. Because more people understand the whole system, they can make intelligent, informed contributions to substantive decisions.

"We try to make things easier for everyone not just individual agencies. Other collaborative groups just look at themselves and their issues. Our Model Court embraces everyone to better suit the system and the clients we serve. We focus on things other than individual issues – we focus on all of the system." – Alexandria

"Have a clear direction that is reflected by everyone." – Buffalo

"We've learned that the whole is better than the sum of its parts ... so individuals have started thinking that if its something that is in the best interests of the whole then they should support it." – Charlotte

"Try to work to find a middle-ground that will work for everybody. For example, the delinquency and dependency courts are trying

*to work together regarding placement issues ... everyone is trying to figure out what is best for the child.” – Los Angeles*

*“A mutual mission statement needs to be in place.” – San Jose*

**👉 An effort to make critical information publicly available to members of the organization and system.**

What keeps the system whole over time is a commitment to sharing information that is traditionally provided on a “need-to-know” basis. When people are informed of what is important to the system and how it is performing, they make better decisions about their own activities.

*“At these meetings information is shared which might not normally get filtered down and if it did, it wouldn’t be so fast. Prior to it everyone was functioning on their own and didn’t have a view of the broader picture.” – San Jose*

#### **Performance Gap**

*“Provide accurate information, if it is available, about how you currently do things as a system and engage everyone in a discussion of where improvements are needed. Provide information about ‘best practices’ and put in place a plan to get from ‘current practice’ to ‘best practice.’” – San Jose*

*“[Use] embarrassment...doing public pieces that highlight barriers ... take a look at it from all of the angles.” – Los Angeles*

**👉 A sense of the power of the individual to make a difference.**

When people understand the whole system, when they feel that their voices matter, they are more inclined to make a commitment to the change process.

#### **Concern for Measurement**

*“It’s very important to articulate the goals of the group ... there has to be agreement among the goals and they need to be clearly stated ... there also has to be a way to determine if you are reaching your goals, and if not, why not.” – Buffalo*

*“There is going to be resistance and fear of change. It is very hard to have comfort. Very hard because people fear doing something they haven’t done before. There needs to be training, realistic goals, positive reinforcement, and institutional rewards for positive change. We make them struggle to keep funding instead of telling them they did a good job. We need to find different ways to recognize courage and positive change.” – Charlotte*

*“Evaluate sustainability at the beginning of new programs.” – Alexandria*

*“Break down a systems change effort into specific goals and [see] where change can be made. Delicately weigh challenges; everyone who is affected by the change should be at the table. Assessment has to be done first to see what the potential effects may be.” – San Jose*

#### **Experimental Mind-Set**

*“...encourage and support ‘thinking outside of the box.’” – Alexandria*

*“Don’t recreate the wheel ... Take models and fit them to your jurisdiction ... but be willing to tweak and test until you get it right.” – Charlotte*

*“Just get started ... people tend to want to plan ... just start. Spontaneity can be good; it’s important to just do it.” – San Jose*

*“Keep talking...it’s important to meet on a regular basis, focus on issues that are solvable so that you can create a better relationship so that you can tackle more difficult issues down the road.” – Los Angeles*

*Remember, In Order to Sustain Change Efforts You Should....*

- Develop a network of change champions and facilitate the ongoing expansion of the network
- Support a system-wide dialogue by capturing and sharing lessons learned
- Set-up a network of peers in each part of the system for mentoring and support – be sensitive to burn-out and provide ways to visibly reward continued effort
- Communicate your successes and communicate them widely – have a communication campaign (plan for frequent dissemination of information on group activities as well as results)
- Include the voice of your “clients” in change efforts – this will keep you grounded in reality as well as help make in-roads by improving the systems’ response to their needs
- Celebrate your successes
- Measure and track what you do

**CLOSING NOTES**

*“Trust the process. We found a model that works for us. We are bringing in major players and leaving egos at the door. We have to have responsible stewardship [of the vision] ...we realize that there are no bad guys, we are all working together. There are people who wouldn’t even be in the same room together before. Now they are leading by example.”*  
– Buffalo

*“Leadership born from various agencies representing unique experiences, without egos affecting their performance, can be wonderful. It’s not who gets credit, it’s how do we get it done.”* – Los Angeles

*“Our system is continuously changing to improve the lives of children. More people are becoming engaged and excited about what we are doing—people are getting excited about their jobs. You feel that the work you are doing has value.”* – Alexandria

*“Definitely do it, even if you don’t think it’s done right. It creates a sense that we are all in it together.”* – Cincinnati

*“Don’t underestimate it [the collaborative process]. It reflects an important consensus building that has a lot of unanticipated*

*consequences that can be positive or negative. Develop efficiency and partnerships. The broader the consensus, the broader the vision.”*  
– San Jose

*“This has been a very valuable process and an extremely satisfying one. All of the participants are personally staked [in it] which is important if you want it to stick...Give it plenty of time. Meet. Develop trust. Stick to it when it feels like you are just talking because you are developing trust and empathy. Our interactions are good and something magical happens. It is bigger than the individuals and the egos...I’ve appreciated the opportunity to work with all of the folks.”* – Charlotte



**CHAPTER NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline*. New York: Doubleday; Senge, P., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R., Roth, George, & Smith, B. (1999). *The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations*. Doubleday: New York.

<sup>2</sup> Rogers, E.M. (1995). *Diffusion of Innovations, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. New York: Free Press; Senge et al., *supra* note 1.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, *supra* note 2.

<sup>4</sup> Senge et al. *supra* note 1, pg. 320.

<sup>5</sup> Schneider, B., Brief, A.P., and Guzzo, R.A. (1996). "Creating a climate and culture for sustainable organizational change." *Organizational Dynamics*. Spring, pgs. 7-19.

<sup>6</sup> Senge et al., *supra* note 1; Cooperrider, D.L. and Srivastava, S. (1987). "Appreciative inquiry in organizational life." In R. Woodman and W. Pasmore (Eds.), *Research in organizational change and development*. Volume 1 (pp. 129-169); Argyis, C. (1985). *Action Science*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>7</sup> Senge et al., *supra* note 1.

<sup>8</sup> Holman, Peggy, (1999, November). "New Perspectives on Organizational Success." *Leverage*, No. 35.

# SNAPSHOT OF COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PROJECT SITES<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> This information is adapted from: Status Report[s] [1997-2003]: A Snapshot of the Child Victims Act Model Courts Project. *Technical Assistance Bulletin*. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.



**ALEXANDRIA JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS DISTRICT COURT  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA  
MODEL COURT ESTABLISHED NOVEMBER 1995**

**Snapshot of Model Court Collaborative  
Group Accomplishments**

The following examples are provided to demonstrate the progress made in the Project Site through collaboration. However, these examples are not comprehensive of the collaborative work being done in the Project Site.

<u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u>	
<i>(as of 12/31/03)</i>	
Number of new abuse/neglect petitions filed:	<b>207</b>
Number of children under court jurisdiction:	<b>183</b>

- *Implementation of regular cross-training for all dependency participants*
- *Increased public awareness of child abuse and neglect and the role of the court in these cases*
  - **Outreach to the Faith Community** — information about children in care, the needs of the system, and legal aspects of the dependency case process are shared with Alexandria’s faith community to raise public awareness. This information is included in faith community bulletins so congregations can learn more about children who otherwise remain hidden from the general public.
  - **Televised Events** — Model Court judges have appeared on local cable television shows to raise awareness of the needs of abused and neglected children in the Alexandria community. Model Court judges and Department of Social Services representatives also teamed up to write a script for the video, “Day in the Life of a Dependency Case,” to demonstrate how cases of abuse and neglect are processed through the court system.
  - **Town Meetings** — the Model Court and its Advisory Committee held a town meeting in order to learn what the community felt were the needs of children and families in Alexandria.
- *Increased communication among stakeholders in the dependency system*
  - **Monthly “Brown Bags”** – agency representatives, judges, court service unit personnel, police officers, and others regularly discuss issues in an open forum.
- *Collaboration to improve services and opportunities for Alexandria’s foster youth*
  - **The Alexandria Arts Initiative** — the Model Court continues to collaborate with Alexandria’s arts community to provide opportunities for youth who are in foster care to engage in music and theatre activities. As a result, the Alexandria Arts Commission approved funding for an ongoing children’s art exhibit in the hallways of the juvenile court. The court has also collaborated with the Alexandria Detention Home to have the youth who are detained participate in art projects that will be displayed at the court.
- *Statewide Outreach to spread best practices and involve other jurisdictions in collaborative efforts to improve outcomes for children and families*
  - Two Model Court judges participated in meetings regarding the creation of “Best Practice Courts” in Virginia. The “Best Practice Court Meeting,” held in December 2002, was a collaborative effort between the Supreme Court of Virginia, Office of the Executive Secretary, and the PPCD. The two-day training was attended by 12 jurisdictions from around the state. Each jurisdiction was represented by a Juvenile and Domestic Relations Judge, Clerk of the Court, Department of Social Services representative, and two attorneys. The meeting educated

## COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PROJECT SITES

---

and trained the jurisdictions on Model Court practices, collaboration, and implementation. At the conclusion of the meeting, the jurisdictions developed goals to guide future collaborative work.

- *Design and implementation of innovative programs, including:*
  - Family Treatment Drug Court
  - Family Mediation
  - Family Group Conferencing
  - "Adoption Saturdays"

### Model Court Goals for 2004:

- Develop a mission statement for the Model Court Project that is inclusive of all the case types that the court hears
- Implement joint court/social services leadership of the Model Court Project including establishment of subcommittees to undertake the various projects related to this initiative
- Identify and engage in practices over the coming year that will support the local program improvement plan goals established by the Department of Social Services to meet the newly established federal standards of best practices in child welfare

For more information about the Alexandria Model Court please contact:  
Joey A. Orduna, J.D., Model Court Liaison  
Permanency Planning for Children Department  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
(775) 784-7040  
jorduna@ncjfcj.org

**ERIE COUNTY FAMILY COURT  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK  
MODEL COURT ESTABLISHED JULY 1998**

**Snapshot of Model Court Collaborative Group Accomplishments**

The following examples are provided to demonstrate the progress made in the Project Site through collaboration. However, these examples are not comprehensive of the collaborative work being done in the Project Site.

- *Cross-training for all court participants*
- *Statewide outreach and leadership*
- *Implemented adoption systems improvements*
  - **Expedited Adoption Project** — alleviated the backlog of cases awaiting adoption finalization by changing how these cases were processed (both by the court and DSS) and initiating closer monitoring of the status of all children freed for adoption by the judges.
  - **Adoption Days** — held “adoption days” to accommodate a calendar of several adoptions at once to make the day more of a celebration for children and families.
  - **Foster/Adoption Collaborative Family Recruitment Efforts** — engaged community in a collaborative made up of agencies from the eight counties of western New York to recruit and support foster and adoptive families committed to children.
- *Evaluation, improvement, and monitoring of the implementation of kinship policy*
  - **Grandparent Advocacy Project** – implemented advocacy project designed to provide legal representation to grandparents and other kin not eligible for an assigned counsel.
  - **Kinship Unit** – creation of a DSS kinship unit to specialize in cases where relative resources are used.
  - **Kinship Resource Center** – located in the family court building, the kinship resource center provides a variety of services, including: expanded advocacy program; needs assessments; arranging, brokering, and referral of families to support services; individual and group support services to the kinship family; assistance in navigating multiple systems; and, on a limited basis, providing funds for the short-term needs of families such as transportation, child care, furniture, and respite services.
  - **Kinship Caregivers’ Conference** – the Model Court collaborated with other county, city, and private entities to co-sponsor an all-day kinship caregivers’ conference designed to share new ideas, legislation, and program improvements with relative caregivers.
  - **Kinship Manual and Pamphlet** – designed materials to provide information about legal procedures and available services.

<p><b><u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u></b></p> <p>Number of new abuse/neglect petitions filed: <i>(as of 12/31/03)</i> <b>1,019</b></p> <p>Number of children under court jurisdiction: <i>(as of 12/31/00)</i> <b>1,477</b></p>
<p><b><u>MISSION/VISION</u></b></p> <p><i>To provide safe, healthy, permanent families in the shortest possible time.</i></p>

## **COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PROJECT SITES**

---

- *Design and implementation of innovative programs, including:*
  - Dependency Mediation
  - Family Treatment Drug Court
  - Benchmark Permanency Hearings

### Model Court Goals for 2004:

- Improve the quality of information provided to the Court and its stakeholders to ease transitions in leadership and continue to implement best practices
- Engage in a multidisciplinary workgroup to discuss system improvements in the area of visitation and begin a process of implementing small changes
- Develop and begin a process of outreach to the regional Tribal Courts from the Family Courts of the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

For more information about the Buffalo Model Court please contact:  
Joey A. Orduna, J.D., Model Court Liaison  
Permanency Planning for Children Department  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
(775) 784-7040  
jorduna@ncjfcj.org

**26<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT, MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA  
MODEL COURT ESTABLISHED OCTOBER 1998**

**Snapshot of Model Court Collaborative Group Accomplishments**

The following examples are provided to demonstrate the progress made in the Project Site through collaboration. However, these examples are not comprehensive of the collaborative work being done in the Project Site.

- *Implementation of regular cross-training sessions for all stakeholders including a day long community meeting to draft a collaborative mission statement to launch collaborative efforts*
- *Regular meetings with leadership of the court, youth and family services, and the area mental health authority to facilitate a "common vision"*
- *An expert in organizational change developed a "process mapping" for the court and stakeholders*
  - **Process Mapping** — the roles, responsibilities, tasks, and expectations of each of the system professionals who touch a case were outlined (including the ways in which the work of one stakeholder group influences others'). This task and relational mapping was charted on a timeline, illustrating in very concrete, chronological steps, the ways one individual's job contributes to overall case processing – and, may impact other individuals' contributions to the case. The resulting "process map" has been used in cross-training of stakeholders.
- *Implementation of a "System of Care" approach to children and families*
  - **System of Care (SOC)** – the SOC initiative is designed to increase agency cooperation and create "children and family teams" in every case involving children with special needs. Collaboration among court and community stakeholders resulted in protocols for SOC staff that outline expectations of children and family team meetings and staff interaction with families. A court feedback form was developed that seeks information regarding family interaction with court staff and personnel.
- *Collaboration with local officials and the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts to bring an enhanced management information system to juvenile court*
- *Outreach to county to increase public awareness of the model court project and collaborative efforts aimed at improving the lives of children and families in the community*
- *Redefined the juvenile court case manager's position to facilitate court involvement and active participation in a number of collaborative subcommittees*
  - **Juvenile Case Manager** – among the many duties of the juvenile case manager, the position also involves serving as an active member and participant in collaborative subcommittees. This ensures that a member of the model court team is always present at as many collaborative

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

*(as of 12/31/03)*

**Number of new abuse/neglect petitions filed:**

**472**

**Number of children under court jurisdiction:**

**956**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*To help resolve cases involving children and families through the combined effort of the family, the court, and community services in ways that are the least adversarial and intrusive, appropriate, and that are just, safe, timely, efficient, courteous, and accessible.*

## **COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PROJECT SITES**

---

meetings as possible. Information shared, and decisions made, at these meetings are then communicated to other model court team members who are not able to attend.

- *Design and implementation of innovative programs, including:*
  - Dependency Mediation
  - Truancy Courts
  - F.I.R.S.T. (Families in Recovery Stay Together) Drug Treatment Court

### **Model Court Goals for 2004:**

- Implement a management information system for the juvenile court
- Strategic planning to better coordinate multi-system and community collaborative efforts aimed at improving outcomes for children
- Develop a domestic violence policy for the juvenile court

For more information about the Charlotte Model Court please contact:  
Julie A. Wise, J.D., Model Court Liaison  
Permanency Planning for Children Department  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
(775) 784-1254  
[jwise@ncjfcj.org](mailto:jwise@ncjfcj.org)

**HAMILTON COUNTY JUVENILE COURT  
CINCINNATI, OHIO  
MODEL COURT ESTABLISHED 1993**

**Snapshot of Model Court Collaborative Group  
Accomplishments**

The following examples are provided to demonstrate the progress made in the Project Site through collaboration. However, these examples are not comprehensive of the collaborative work being done in the Project Site.

- *Developed and implemented a management information system to track child abuse and neglect cases and measure case processing outcomes*
  - **JCATS/Juvenile Court Management System (JCMS)** — integration of management information systems for child abuse and neglect, delinquency, support and paternity, private custody, and probation. The system tracks specific details on children and families, provides information on exactly how cases move through the system (including tracking permanency time lines outlined in ASFA), provides information on trends in court practice, generates statistics on parties involved in the court process, and provides case documents for immediate use. Using the information provided by case specific entries, the JCMS automatically updates its system with the results of hearings.
- *Increased community efforts to address barriers to adoption*
  - **Adoption Task Force** — comprised of the major stakeholders from the dependency system, the adoption task force reviewed and analyzed adoption practices. This process resulted in a number of recommendations for practice improvements, including specific improvements to the matching and selection process (e.g., new protocols for transfer of cases to an adoption unit), permanency decision-making (e.g., creation of checklists for caseworkers to use in determining whether to pursue termination of parental rights), expediting litigation and appeals, addressing barriers to foster care and relative adoptions, and adoption recruitment.
  - **Permanency Mediation** — with funding from a federal Adoption Opportunities Grant, a permanency mediation program was designed and implemented. Cases targeted for permanency mediation are complaints requesting permanent custody (TPR) and motions to modify a disposition to permanent custody.
  - **Tri-State Adoption Coalition** — the adoption task force expanded and enhanced community partnerships to overcome barriers to adoption by creating the Tri-State Adoption Coalition. This coalition implemented the "Ohio Adopts Campaign," a strategic plan to recruit adoptive homes by establishing partnerships with 50 community organizations or businesses.
  - **Adoption Website** — the result of a collaborative effort of five local agencies, the court, and Hamilton County Job and Family Services, an adoption website was created. This website allows internet users to access up-to-the-minute information about children awaiting adoption.

<p><b><u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u></b> <i>(as of 12/31/03)</i></p> <p><b>Number of new abuse/neglect petitions filed:</b> <b>452</b></p> <p><b>Number of children under court jurisdiction:</b> <b>1,343</b></p>
<p><b><u>MISSION STATEMENT</u></b></p> <p><i>To help resolve cases involving children and families through the combined effort of the family, the court, and community services in ways that are the least adversarial and intrusive, appropriate, and that are just, safe, timely, efficient, courteous, and accessible.</i></p>

## COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PROJECT SITES

---

- *Participation in the "Breakthrough Series Collaborative"*
  - **Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)** — to maximize systems' collaboration, the juvenile court, guardian *ad litem*, Pro-Kids (the CASA agency), and other key system stakeholders joined Hamilton County Job and Family Services in this initiative, funded by Casey Family Programs. The goal of the BSC is to identify effective strategies to recruit and retain foster, adoptive, and kinship families (often referred to as "resource families"). Resource and educational materials will be distributed to the larger Cincinnati community and the internet to provide better information to, and improved communication with, resource families. A "family profile" containing a family picture and description of each resource family is provided to ensure children have some introduction to the homes they are entering.
- *Design and implementation of innovative programs, including:*
  - Hamilton County Family Treatment Drug Court
  - Permanency Mediation
  - Child Protection Mediation
  - Family Group Decision-Making Conference

### Model Court Goals for 2004:

- Design and implement a strategic plan for sustainability
- Use results of the Packard Evaluation<sup>2</sup> to inform policy change, practice reforms, and stakeholder training
- Design and implement a juvenile mental health court
- Implement the use of written reports for all post-dispositional review hearings to enhance courtroom presentation and streamline the hearing process
- Expansion of the Hamilton County Family Treatment Drug Court, including enhancement of services and development of a mentoring program

For more information about the Cincinnati Model Court please contact:  
Julie A. Wise, J.D., Model Court Liaison  
Permanency Planning for Children Department  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
(775) 784-1254  
jwise@ncjfcj.org

---

<sup>2</sup> The Packard Evaluation is the research project conducted by the PPCD with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation described within this *Technical Assistance Bulletin*. Each project site received a site report detailing specific findings and recommendations for improvements.

**LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT, EDMUND D. EDELMAN CHILDREN’S COURT  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA  
MODEL COURT ESTABLISHED SEPTEMBER 1999**

**Snapshot of Model Court Collaborative Group Accomplishments**

The following examples are provided to demonstrate the progress made in the Project Site through collaboration. However, these examples are not comprehensive of the work being done in the Project Site.

<p><b><u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u></b> <i>(as of 12/31/03)</i></p> <p><b>Number of new abuse/neglect petitions filed:</b> <b>8,276</b></p> <p><b>Number of children under jurisdiction of the court:</b> <b>30,073</b></p>
---

- *Ongoing collaboration between the Juvenile Court and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to reduce the total number of children in care and the amount of time children spend in care*
  - Strategies designed, among others, include employing structured decision-making as a risk assessment tool to ensure consistency in decision-making and implementing a family group decision-making program as an alternative to filing dependency petitions.
- *Increased cooperation, better communication, and improved coordination among the dependency, delinquency, family, probate, and mental health courts*
  - **Dependency/Delinquency Cross-Over Committee** – developed an operational agreement which links the probation department with the DCFS immediately after a foster youth’s arrest. This link includes notice to the foster youth’s dependency attorney at the same time so that his/her attorney can intervene at the earliest possible time, if necessary. The committee also developed a comprehensive protocol defining the role of the Department of Mental Health in the youth assessment process in cross-over cases, which requires communication between the attorneys representing the youth.
  - **Family Law/Dependency Committee** – addressed the creation of more comprehensive exit orders from the juvenile court; created a “Children’s Index” to identify children involved in multiple systems; developed criteria to determine when a social worker should refer domestic violence victims to the family law court instead of juvenile court; improved communication about restraining orders among systems; and improved coordination between the Juvenile Court and Family Support Court to prevent support orders from interfering with reunification.
  - **Mental Health Court** – the juvenile court has worked with the delinquency court and the mental health court to refine notice procedures, resulting in the mental health court notifying the juvenile court at the earliest possible time when dependent youth have cases in the mental health court.
  - **Probate Court** – the juvenile court is working with the probate court to establish criteria for determining when families can or should utilize the probate court and when they should utilize the juvenile court.
- *Increased awareness of foster care and the needs of children and families*
  - **“Foster Care Awareness Week”** – a multi-entity collaboration led by the Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles established “Foster Care Awareness Week,” which included activities and events to spotlight the foster care system.

## COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PROJECT SITES

---

- **“Education Summit on Needs and Challenges Facing Foster Youth”** – included in “Foster Care Awareness Week” was a day devoted to addressing the educational needs of foster youth. The summit brought together 150 educators, judges, social workers, child advocates, community leaders, and former foster youth to share expertise and perspectives on the issues affecting the education of foster youth. The summit led to the creation of an Education Coordinating Council by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, which includes the juvenile court, the Children’s Law Center, the DCFS, probation, the California Youth Connection, local school districts and others. The goals of the council are to develop an educational blueprint for dependent youth and a clear definition of the roles of all participants in the system.
- *Reform of the adoption process to eliminate adoption backlog, including implementation of “Adoption Saturdays”*
  - A partnership among the court, DCFS, and the private bar (which has been trained by the Alliance for Children’s Rights and the Public Counsel Law Center), continues to work to reform the adoption process to make it more efficient. This partnership has led to increased court oversight through the use of an adoption progress form, and a court requirement that begins the adoption home study at an earlier point in time.
- *Enhanced communication among those working to improve the dependency system*
  - **“Partners, Programs, and Resources for Children and Families”** – a quarterly newsletter is distributed throughout the juvenile court and to all agencies, entities, and individuals affiliated with the court. Program descriptions, new policies and procedures, legal updates, cultural and community information are featured.
- *Implemented county-wide cross training of dependency stakeholders*
  - **“A New Beginning for Partnerships for Children and Families in Los Angeles County”** – the Los Angeles Superior Court and California State University, Los Angeles collaborate annually to develop and present county-wide training. The conference attracts over 1,000 participants each year, including judicial officers, attorneys, social workers, educators, service providers, medical professionals, community leaders, public officials, and others to discuss and learn better ways to serve children and families in Los Angeles County.
- *Design and implementation of innovative programs, including:*
  - “Adoption Saturdays”
  - I.C.W.A. Court
  - Dependency Mediation
  - Family Group Decision-Making Program
  - Juvenile Delinquency Mental Health Court

### Model Court Goals for 2004:

- Elimination of adoption backlog
- Creation of an educational blueprint for dependent children
- Development of a health care initiative for dependent children

For more information about the Los Angeles Model Court please contact:  
Elizabeth Whitney Barnes, J.D.,  
Model Court Liaison  
Permanency Planning for Children Department  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
(775) 784-7524  
ebarnes@ncjfcj.org

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT  
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA  
MODEL COURT ESTABLISHED NOVEMBER 1997**

**Snapshot of Model Court Collaborative Group Accomplishments**

The following examples are provided to demonstrate the progress made in the Project Site through collaboration. However, these examples are not comprehensive of the collaborative work being done in the Project Site.

- *Implementation of regular cross-training for all dependency participants, including one-day local "Beyond the Bench" conferences and half-day seminars*
  - **"Beyond the Bench"** — a local conference is held annually with approximately 300 judges, attorneys, social workers, service providers, and community members in attendance to learn about local practice and topics related to systems collaboration and improvement efforts.
- *Developed and implemented policy and practice changes to better address the issues that arise when domestic violence and child protection intersect*
  - **"Greenbook Initiative"**— the Model Court team is participating in the national "Greenbook" initiative, a project designed to reform the ways in which courts, child welfare agencies, and domestic violence agencies respond to families experiencing both domestic violence and child maltreatment. As a project site, the Model Court has been working collaboratively with both the child protection and domestic violence communities to implement the recommendations of *Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice (the Greenbook Initiative)*.<sup>3</sup> As a result of participation in this project, the model court team has promoted the use of differentiated case plans and domestic violence advocacy, both in the juvenile court and within the child welfare services delivery system. Stakeholders from both the Family-to-Family initiative<sup>4</sup> and the Greenbook project regularly participate together in committee activities so that program and service differences are reconciled in the planning stage.
- *Improved response to educational needs of children in foster care*
  - **Improved Protocols** — protocols and accompanying forms were developed to enable social workers to request transfer of educational oversight from the parent(s) to an educational surrogate. This has streamlined the process of identifying an educational surrogate for foster children.
  - **Educational Assessment Center** — the Model Court team has worked with the County of Santa Clara to utilize the Educational Assessment Center established by the county.

<p><b><u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u></b> <i>(as of 12/31/03)</i></p> <p>Number of new abuse/neglect petitions filed: <b>916</b></p> <p>Number of children under court jurisdiction: <b>2,865</b></p>
<p><b><u>MISSION STATEMENT</u></b></p> <p><i>To protect children, preserve families, and provide permanency for children while treating all with dignity, respecting diversity, and valuing each child as our own.</i></p>

<sup>3</sup> Schechter, S. & Edelson, J. (1999). *Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice, Recommendations from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Family Violence Department*. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Reno, NV.

<sup>4</sup> The Family-to-Family Initiative, funded by Annie E. Casey Foundation, focuses on developing community resources so that children who must be removed from parental care may remain in their neighborhood or community.

## COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PROJECT SITES

---

- **Education Advocacy** — the Model Court team has worked with the Child Advocate Office and Project YEA (Youth Educational Advocates) to identify adults who will work with and advocate for foster children in the school environment.
- *Efforts to improve parental ability to solve the problems they face in the court system*
  - **“Mentor Moms” program**— the mentor moms program allows selected mothers who have successfully completed the dependency drug court program to return to court to “mentor” other mothers still struggling with substance abuse issues. Mentoring activities are spearheaded by the Dependency Legal Services Program, which employs mothers who have successfully completed dependency drug court and have been reunited with their children. Mentor moms help explain the road ahead to mothers entering the drug court program, and answer any questions, basing their answers on the perspective they gained as parents who have successfully worked through the system. The Model Court team has implemented efforts to expand this program to domestic violence cases and to design father-mentor outreach activities as well.
  - **Survey of “Clients”** — the Model Court team developed a survey to evaluate “clients” perceptions of their needs and the quality of legal services throughout the dependency court process. Results from the survey will be used to expand legal services beyond dependency court issues, make access to attorneys easier for clients, and increase communication between the client and the attorney.
- *Design and implementation of innovative programs, including:*
  - Dependency Mediation
  - Family Conferencing Program and the Family Conferencing Training Institute
  - Juvenile Delinquency Domestic and Family Violence Court (focusing on minors committing domestic violence)
  - Dependency Drug Treatment Court
  - Juvenile Mental Health Court

### Model Court Goals for 2004:

- Upgrade the quality and quantity of visitation in the dependency system
- Encourage and support parents’ reunification efforts through development of new programs and expansion of current programs
- Convert all minute orders into electronic format

For more information about the San Jose Model Court please contact:  
Elizabeth Whitney Barnes, J.D., Model Court Liaison  
Permanency Planning for Children Department  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
(775) 784-7524  
ebarnes@ncjfcj.org



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

*est. 1937*

P.O. Box 8970  
Reno, Nevada 89557  
[www.ncjfcj.org](http://www.ncjfcj.org)