SYSTEMS MAPPING AND UNIVERSITY PARTNERS HELP GEORGIA COLLABORATIVE’S STRATEGIC FOCUS

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BACKGROUND: SUPPORTING COLLABORATIVES

The Georgia Interagency Directors Team's (IDT) partnership with the Georgia Center of Excellence in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health (COE) assisted the IDT's efforts to “manage, design, facilitate, and implement an integrated approach to a child and adolescent system of care which shares funding [and] resources and informs policy and practice.” The partnership yielded a systems map ushering in a more preventive focus and a revised strategic plan with manageable objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Interagency collaboration is a core element in the system of care concept and philosophy. While many states and communities have worked to build this infrastructure across child-serving systems, it is only more recently that local university partnerships—beyond national-level technical assistance centers—have been recognized as a supportive external resource for interagency groups. This poster describes how the Georgia Interagency Directors Team’s (IDT) partnership with the Georgia Center of Excellence in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health (COE) assisted the IDT’s efforts to “manage, design, facilitate, and implement an integrated approach to a child and adolescent system of care which shares funding [and] resources and informs policy and practice.” The partnership yielded a systems map ushering in a more preventive focus and a revised strategic plan with manageable objectives.

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There is much research explaining what constitutes effective collaboration. The Wilder Research Center’s work encompasses most of these elements: environment, membership characteristics, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources. Research also shows that a separate entity, such as the COE, is integral to the growth and sustainability of an interagency collaboration. Such an entity supports the collaborative through “ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad of logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative.”

The IDT’s membership includes nonprofits, government agency representation from child-serving agencies, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a Federal Consultant, and the COE at Georgia State University in an administrative and research/evaluation capacity. In this context, the COE serves as “Georgia’s kids.” The discussion also helped members realize their current goals included: 1. Preventing children from entering the juvenile justice system; 2. Enhancing care and treatment of children already in the juvenile justice system; 3. Better identification and treatment for children in the justice system; 4. Better identification and treatment for trauma in children in the justice system; 5. Support and advocacy for children in the justice system; and 6. Evaluation of the system.

The systems expert helped the IDT create a map of children’s progress from birth through adulthood, either staying “on track” behaviorally or falling “off track.” The map and resulting discussion made clear that the children served cannot be divided into siloes and are not only the concern of agencies funding their care, but “belong” to all the partners as “Georgia’s kids.” The discussion also helped members realize their agency resources were currently directed toward the middle and high school years—and the potential cost savings of a more prevention-focused approach for younger children.

The second change involved bringing the group together to revisit its original strategic plan. With an eye toward prevention, the group concentrated on five manageable—and fewer—strategic areas: namely #1 and #4 from the previous six strategic areas. Their new goals included:

- #1: Identification of best practices of ADHD treatment and a survey of current practices in Georgia. Results from the survey will inform implementation approaches for training Georgia’s workforce.
- #4: Identification of the best methods for integrating these trainings into the policies and practices of IDT child-serving agency partners.
- #4: The writing of a policy statement on the recent Georgia juvenile justice code revisions, responding to state-level policy.

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