The Georgia Interagency Directors Team (IDT): A case study in the successful collaboration of child serving agencies

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INTRODUCTION

Central to the System of Care (SOC) concept is interagency collaboration. Research on effective collaboration has identified barriers and facilitators to successful interagency collaboration.1 However, qualitative information on how a successful collaborative looks and works, and what kinds of success can be achieved as they relate to the concept of SOC is still lacking.

Learning Objectives:
1. Describe concrete steps and specific actions that have contributed to successes realized by the Georgia IDT.
2. View how other agencies and policymakers steps to support interagency collaboration to achieve concrete results around the creation and support of the SOC.

This poster presentation will be helpful to agency directors, administrators, policymakers, and academic partners. Specific examples of success and collaboration will be provided.

BACKGROUND

The IDT was formed to design, manage, facilitate, and implement an integrated approach to a child and adolescent SOC that inform policy and practice, and shares resources and funding. IDT is made up of over 20 representatives from state agencies and non-governmental organizations that serve children with behavioral health needs. Utilizing the principle of stewardship to implement a SOC approach, the team has achieved progress toward several goals in efforts to create a collective impact on systems, agencies, and ultimately for children and families throughout the state.

The work of the IDT both inform and helps disseminate information about policy and practice, and they have accomplished past successes in the areas of ADHD and prescription medications, Juvenile Justice Reform, and Trans-Adolescence Youth and Young Adults. Additionally, they have managed to create and adopt a Memorandum of Understanding between the state government agencies and partnerships from IDT have resulted in grant-funded projects.

TOOLS AND METHODS: COLLECTIVE IMPACT AND SYSTEMS THINKING

Five Key Concepts for Collective Impact and the IDT

The IDT has utilized the Collective Impact Framework in its formation and evolution, which is based on five key conditions that distinguish collective impact from other collaborative initiatives.

- To better child and adolescent behavioral health in Georgia
- Directly, manage, and facilitate and implement an integrated approach to promote the System of Care
- Data sharing between agencies
- Juvenile Justice Reform (all children-serving agencies)
- Project AWARE (DBHDD, DPH)
- Project LAUNCH (DBHDD, DPH)
- Monthly face-to-face meetings
- Listens

The COE (backbone organization) can serve as a “data hub” for agencies.

The COE serves as the external backbone organization, for guiding vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, and providing research and evaluation services.

System Mapping Exercise

In order to help the group retool to collaborative capacity in these areas, the COE brought in a dynamic systems expert to help them frame the important issues in children’s behavioral health in Georgia, analyze the root causes, and consider solutions. A handful of maps were created as a result of the systems mapping session, however the map with the most resonance among group members was the Children’s Behavioral Health Collaborative Systems Map.

The map and resulting discussion among the IDT group made clear to the members that:
- Children served cannot be divided into silos and are the responsibility of all partners.
- Most agency resources were directed toward the middle and high school years, as opposed to a more prevention-focused approach for younger children.
- Efforts should be refocused toward prevention and early interventions that could result in more children staying “on track” and ultimately result in significant cost-savings for the entire system.

Granting GRANTS AND OVERSIGHT

The IDT collaborates and its member agencies work to secure federal funding to support child-serving agencies and initiatives in Georgia. Many of the SAMHSA grants awarded to the state to support children’s behavioral health needs have developed through IDT partnerships or require a broad, interdisciplinary oversight team. The IDT serves in this capacity for the following initiatives:

- Project AWARE: The Georgia Department of Education (DOE) was awarded a $1.9 million grant from SAMHSA to implement Project AWARE to build and expand the capacity of state educational agencies to increase awareness of mental health issues among school age youth.
- Project LAUNCH: The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) were awarded a project LAUNCH grant from SAMHSA. The purpose of Project LAUNCH is to ensure the social, emotional, and behavioral health of all children born to age eight and to promote safe, supportive, and nurturing families residing in Muscogee County, Georgia.
- The SOC Expansion Grant awarded to DBHDD provides opportunities to further implement infrastructure and services to support a more effective service delivery system for youth with SED and their families. The grant supports the development of integrated service infrastructures, agreements, and partnerships for the coordination and financing of behavioral health systems.

CONCLUSIONS

Child-serving agencies in Georgia have a long history of collaboration. Systems thinking has led the group to shift focus to prevention. The more recent utilization of the Collective Impact Framework, and a backbone organization in particular, has contributed to the achievement of a number of system goals, and has increased the collaborative capacity of the group.