

May 18th Webinar Questions from the Webinar

Q: Was Dauphin County able to continue to SOC work after the grant ended? What funding did they use?

Peter Vriens - Much of the work that has continued as a result of our SOC initiative does not require funding. The community has been empowered to do much of the work through our various committees (youth, family, community and faith based). Also, for our events, the families and community come together to provide much of what is needed. We had our annual holiday event last December and had over 400 people in attendance. Food, entertainment and resource tables were all provided at no cost by the families and community. It was an event by the community for the community.

We do have funding through the county's Integrated Human Services Plan to pay stipends to our family coaches and provide training to the community. We also have limited funding through the Human Services Development Fund to pay for meeting supplies and some events.

Q: You talked about posting clients needs and getting responses from different resources on how they can meet those needs. What kind of communication system did you use, i.e. blog, email, website, etc..?

Peter Vriens - Email, phone, meetings, word of mouth

Helen Spence – We posted clients needs and got responses on email. More importantly, we used a community communication connection whereby one person would tell another person in our network and filter through community for different items we were looking for. At each committee meeting, I would bring the different requests to the attention of the groups and we would address needs that way, also.

Q: Our state is currently building a resource development unit that works with building community partnerships and is using systems of care as our framework, what types of staff positions would you suggest having in this unit on a state, regional and local level?

Peter Vriens - At the county level we have Helen Spence's position which is

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SOC Community Liaison. More important than specific positions, I believe, is the process that you put in place. We have attempted to bring everyone we can to the table to be a part of this work: all of our human services agencies, providers, families, youth, community members, schools, juvenile and adult probation, the faith-based community, the Child Welfare Training Program, etc. The work is now overseen by the Integrated Human Services Planning Team (which includes all of the above) and we have a strong committee structure in place that does most of the work and reports back to the larger group. A similar structure could be replicated at the regional and state levels. My only suggestion is to limit the number of positions to avoid a bureaucracy that has difficulty understanding grass roots work and complicates such efforts.

Helen Spence – The main thing that I do as the System of Care Community Liaison is that I'm very visual in the community, 24/7, being at various events, planning meetings, that the community has, certainly being involved with family members hands on and engaging others to be involved with me. This position certainly requires someone to not only use their professional but also their community skills. In addition to having knowledge of mandates of the formal categorical agencies, [a person in my role] should also have an innate connection with working directly with families and community partners, both grassroots and more formalized community organizations as well as the various businesses, schools, police departments, an array of different kinds of partnerships to be available to build the relationships with on an individual basis which requires the person to be in the community almost 24/7. This cannot be a person that's willing to work an 8-hour shift. The person in my role has to commit themselves to working around the clock. The biggest thing in my position is to have someone willing to avail themselves to connect themselves to utilize their skill set on a professional level and to be right there [in the community] hands on

Q: Did you involve foster care youth in your partnerships, if so how were you able to engage them and keep them involved in the process?

Helen Spence – Through the collaborative partners, we built programs for and about the youth, like the Summer Enrichment program, and then having the youth understand that it's built for and about them. And, that their voices were important to us. So, we demonstrated how they could have a voice and how their voices could build on what we had started, and showed them through their own development of things once they identified issues of concern. The biggest thing we have found is to engage people, whether youth, family, or

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community members, is not only to give them a voice but a place for their voice. That's been paramount to them being truly engaged in the process. Knowing that they are not there to just listen to what [formal agencies] have to say about the concerns they have but to also give [youth, families, and community members] a place to discuss the strengths that they bring to the table and have them empowered enough to use those things to create solutions for the things that did bring them to the attention of any system or any kind of community issue. Once people realize what they can do with very little and they break that barrier around themselves that they have more control of their life and life situations than they understand. And, helping people and youth to understand that by continuing to identify the innate things that they have within themselves and showing them how to use [those things] it always engages because it empowers them to continue to want to have a place to make positive change.

Q: Were concerns raised through legal partners about integrity of due process for their clients?

Peter Vriens – Much of the work done through SOC and since has focused on better serving youth and families in their own homes and families whenever possible. Family Group Conferencing, family coaches and community based services have all been implemented to do just that. When a child or family does become involved with one of the formal systems, a continuum of family engagement strategies are utilized to empower the family to be a true partner in decision making. We now also utilize Pre-Court Meetings during which families and professionals develop a plan agreeable to all so that when they go into Court everyone is on the same page and the Judge, if in agreement, simply has to ratify the recommendation. All of this is supported by our President Judge, our juvenile court judges and hearing masters who have been involved in this work with us. Clients receive their due process but we have tried to take the potential antagonism out of these situations whenever possible.

Helen Spence – One of the things we did early on in our implementation of our practices, utilizing the system of care principles and Family Group Conferencing as our foundational practice, we immediately allowed our legal partners to come to the table and to observe families in the process of being engaged in the Family Group Conference or being on one of the system of care committees as a community partner, and see how [families and communities] can make the decisions if given an opportunity based around the mandates that are required by the categorical agencies.

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Q: Regarding the 25% reduction in re-entry and over 16.2% reduction in out-of-home placements - was there a similar reduction in incident reports for these children?

A: Answered in webinar

Q: How did you measure the overall effectiveness of the community partners and grant success?

A: Answered in webinar

Q: In the Demonstration Grants, how were collaborative development and capacity building measured?

A: Answered in webinar

Nicole Bossard (supplemental response) - The national cross-site evaluation examined systems change and assessed important collaborative dynamics and variables that have been empirically shown to facilitate or hinder collaborative development and effectiveness. The evaluation team surveyed collaborative members in each of the grant communities at three times over the grant period (2005, 2006, and 2008). A total of 521 respondents participated across all three time points, for an average of 174 at each administration. The survey focused on the immediate and intermediate collaborative processes (e.g., leadership, shared vision, communication, and formalization) needed for community collaboratives to effectively foster systems and organizational changes (Roussos & Fawcett, 2000; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006). Toward the end of the demonstration initiative, collaborative members also were asked about their perceptions that Systems of Care activities had resulted in improvements at the child welfare agency and in changes in child welfare outcomes, such as safety, permanency, and well-being (Systems and Organizational Change Resulting from the Implementation of Systems of Care Evaluation Report, National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, November 2010: p. 21: Available online: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/evalreports/index.cfm>).

Q: Is the Integrated Human Services Plan for services beyond child welfare?

A: Answered in webinar

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Q: How did you overcome barriers related to confidentiality?

A: Answered in webinar

Q: What was the approach or some strategies used for engaging the community and providers to buy into this system of care process?

A: Answered in webinar

Q: How were you able to facilitate a change of mindset/culture of the systems where they were able to buy into the concept of collaborative systems of care?

A: Answered in webinar