



The California Autism Professional Training and Information Network (CAPTAIN): Baseline Evaluation of Interagency Collaborations

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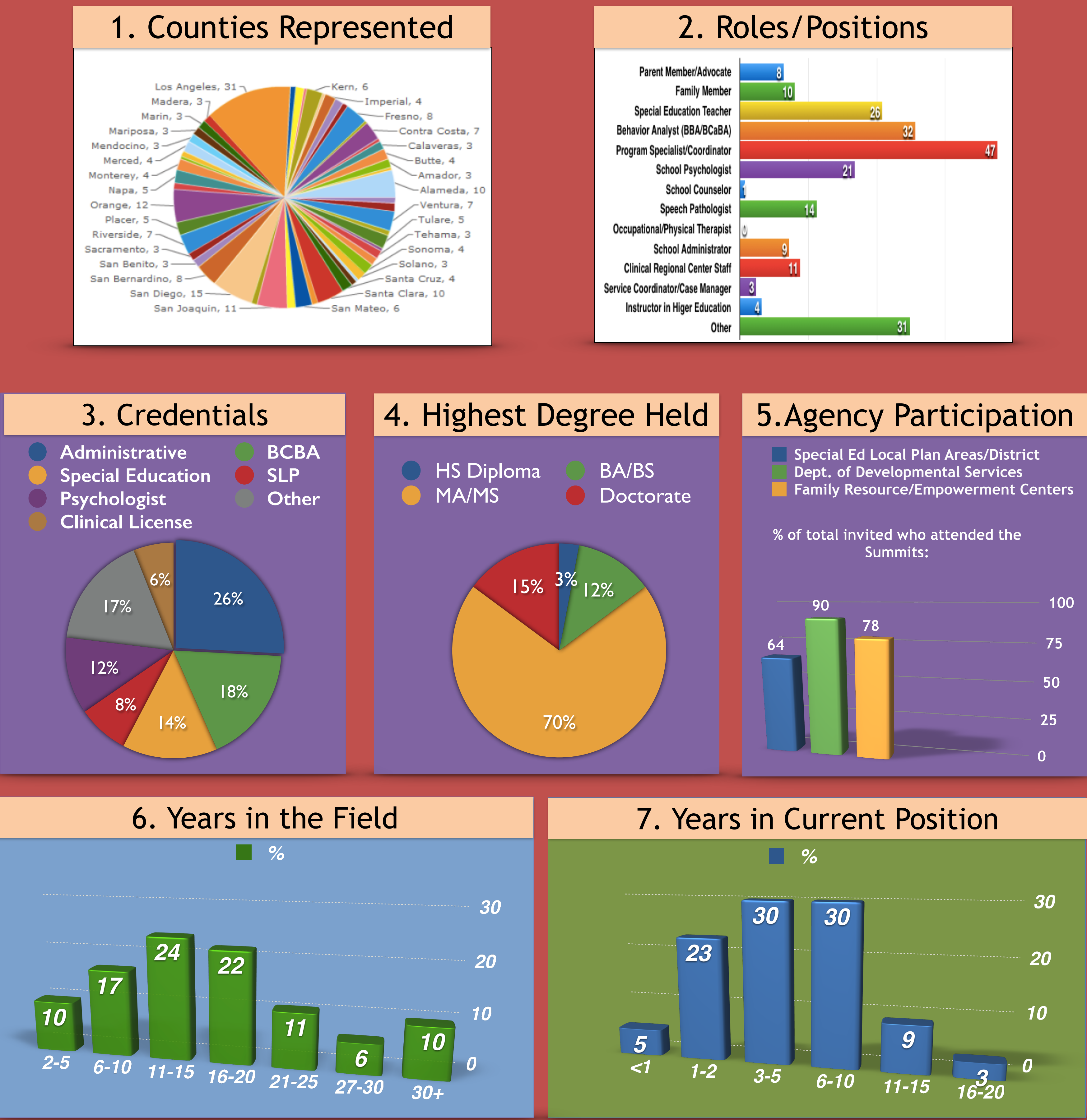
Introduction

CAPTAIN is a multiagency network created to support the understanding and use of evidence based practices for individuals with autism spectrum disorder in California. A primary objective of CAPTAIN is to increase inter-agency collaboration and coordination between the state's key stakeholders, especially during key transition periods for individuals with ASD, per recommendation made by the 2009 Act Early Summit Regional Workgroup. The key stakeholders were identified as the **Department of Disability Services Regional Centers** who operate Part C and Adult Services, the **school district SELPAs** who are local special education regions, and the network of **Family Resource Centers/Family Empowerment Centers** who provide parent training and support from birth through age 22. Each of these groups were asked to nominate members to become part of the CAPTAIN Cadre of trainers. California's UCEDDs and state agencies, including the CA Department of Education and CA Department of Disability Services have served as primary organizers and facilitators in this effort. A core Leadership Committee composed of representatives from UCEDDs, state agencies and key stakeholder groups provides strategic planning and oversight of CAPTAIN.

Methods and Results

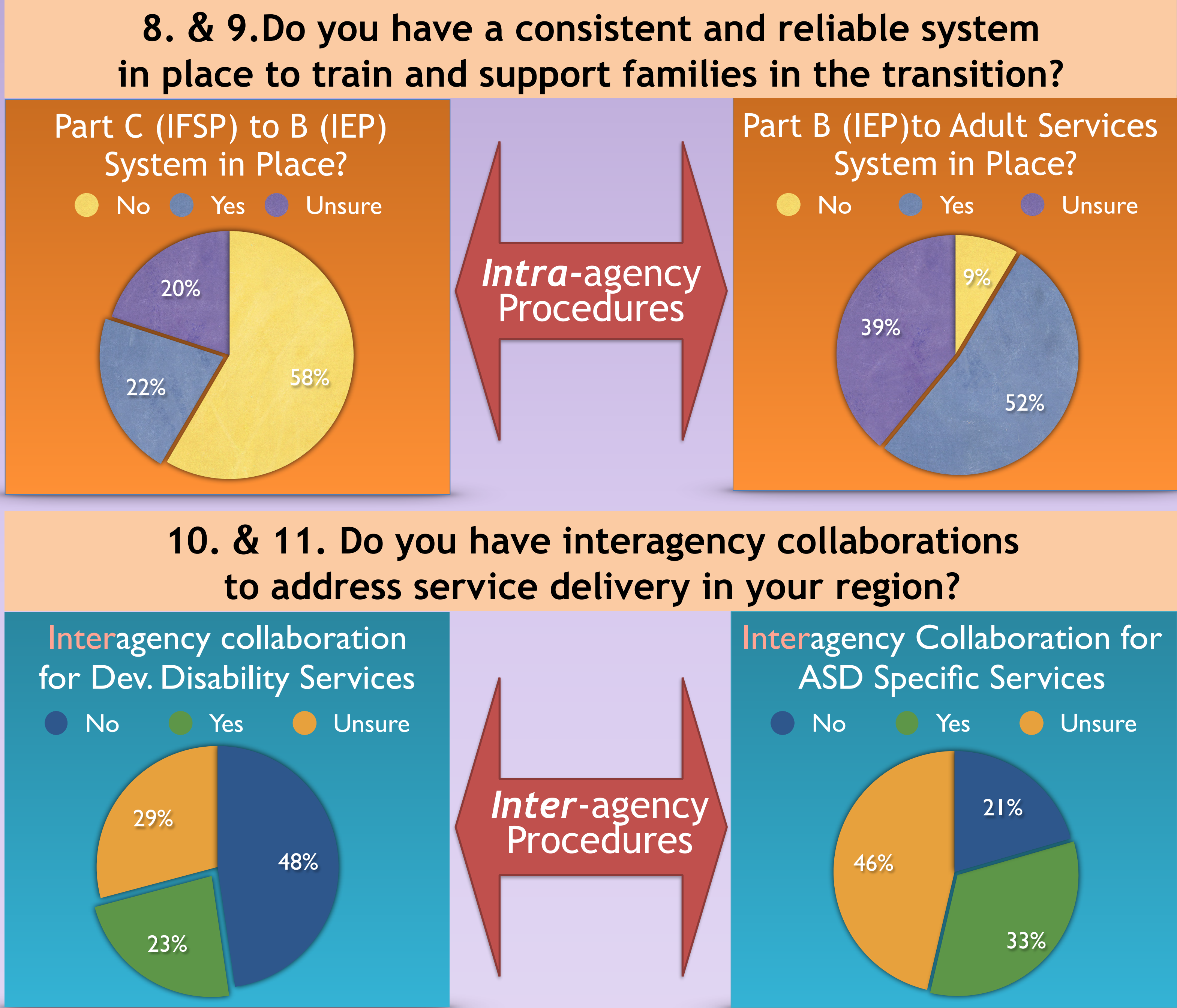
Cadre members were asked to complete an online 40 item survey prior to the first CAPTAIN Trainer of Trainers Summit to obtain baseline measurement on various constructs. Forty-seven percent of the 342 Cadre members completed the survey. Follow-up steps to prompt survey non-responders were not conducted due to logistical difficulties. Figures 1 through 7 provide descriptive information about the Cadre members. Figures 8 through 9 provide information regarding intra-agency coordination related to transition periods; only 52% believed that there was a reliable procedure for the transition between Part B to Adult Services of IDEIA and even fewer, 22%, believed there was a reliable procedure for the transition between Part C to Part B of IDEIA. Figures 10 and 11 suggest an even bleaker outcome for interagency collaboration, with only 23% believing there was interagency collaboration for any type of disability services in their region, and 33% for autism specific services.

Who are the CAPTAIN Cadre members?



This project is an exemplary model of effecting broad and systems level change by identifying and engaging key stakeholders from the beginning and leveraging their existing infrastructures and resources. What began as the vision of a few state leadership members has evolved into active cross participation from all 3 of CA's UCEDDs, CA's Department of Education LEAs, CA's Department of Disability Services, and CA's network of Family Resource and Empowerment Centers. Many of these agencies, while mandated to serve the same geographic catchment areas, frequently operate independently. Our CAPTAIN network has facilitated the interagency collaboration for more effective impact within these catchment areas.

Key Findings



Discussion and Next Steps

To most effectively leverage resources, especially in economically difficult times, interagency collaboration and coordination should be the norm and not the exception. A preliminary step is agency member awareness of what types of both formal and informal policies and relationships their agency has with other agencies serving the same populations. The survey results suggest that agency personnel are not often aware of these policies, and for effective collaboration, relevant individuals must be informed. In addition, standardized protocols to facilitate collaboration should be considered. CAPTAIN has established procedures and requirements for interagency communication and collaboration between our three primary stakeholder groups, including the establishment of quarterly planning meetings and the development of cross-agency regional training plans. Thus far, these plans have focused on training and resource sharing, but it is clear from the results of this initial survey that CAPTAIN can facilitate improved awareness of and perhaps development of intra-agency and inter-agency procedures, especially around key transition periods such as Part C to Part B and Part B to Adult Services.

Systems level change - the power of engagement and collaboration