

Improving Care of Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Through Multi-Agency Collaboration

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INTRODUCTION

Multi-agency collaboration is essential to promoting the wellbeing of children and youth with special healthcare needs (CYSHCN) and their families¹. Children's Clinics (CC), an Arizona medical home, identified the need to improve their relationship with the Department of Child Safety (DCS) to assure the best health care and outcomes for their most vulnerable clients. ArizonaLEND trainees were invited to facilitate this process.

BACKGROUND

Children's Clinic is a pediatric outpatient clinic located in Tucson, AZ. The clinic provides primary, specialty, behavioral and rehabilitative care to CYSHCN from the five southern counties in Arizona. Children's Clinic recognized that patients involved with DCS present with unique challenges to providing medical care. To meet these challenges, CC identified the need to improve their relationship with DCS based on four concerns:

1. Adding another system of involvement to patient care often overwhelms families;
2. Existing communication/collaboration gaps between the medical home and child welfare system impede service provision;
3. In the child removal process medical care is often disrupted;
4. An absence of cross-training between DCS and CC staff may contribute to a breakdown in collaboration.

Arizona



METHODS

This project used principles from the Community Organizing Model and Organizational Change Theory² to identify 5 project action steps.



Step 1: Identify Leadership and Points of Contact

Step 2: Develop a Common Vision by identifying stakeholder needs, assets, and ability to contribute and develop a common goal.

Step 3: Develop a Strategy to meet long term goals and short term objectives, develop a timeline, identify roles and responsibilities.

Step 4: Implement

Step 5: Evaluate

COLLABORATIVE OUTCOMES

Through a series of team meetings, stakeholders recognized the need for structured collaboration and training opportunities between and within both organizations. Ongoing collaboration revealed the need for, and development of, five products:

- 1) Organizational trees to assist with inter-agency communication,
- 2) Quarterly meetings between CC and DCS supervisors and administrators,
- 3) Lunch & learns to facilitate inter-agency rapport and communication,
- 4) Web resource pages for DCS and the public,
- 5) Educational courses regarding CC structure, insurance and payment options, common diagnoses and patient population.
- 6) Ongoing efforts with the new 2017-2018 LEND cohort.

EDUCATIONAL COURSES

The ArizonaLEND-CC team collaborated with the Western Regional Public Health Training Center (WRPHTC) to develop a series of web-based short courses. These courses are designed to strengthen the understanding of complex processes within partnering agencies, and provide continuing education on complex medical diagnoses for agency staff members, families, and community members. Initial short course titles include:

- 1) An introduction to Children's Clinics medical home model and payer system
- 2) Medical implications of and treatment planning for children with Spina Bifida, and
- 3) Medical implications of and treatment planning for children with Cerebral Palsy.

Certificates of completion will be offered to healthcare and allied professionals to incentivise participation. Course assessments and tracking the number of people accessing and completing the trainings will be used to inform future educational endeavors.

LESSONS LEARNED

In facilitating this collaboration key lessons were learned:

- 1) Establish clear roles and communication methods early in project;
- 2) Establish an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing concerns;
- 3) Build in extra time to account for revisions in plans;
- 4) Ensure a shared understanding of project goals and objectives;
- 5) Plan for sustainability.

REFERENCES

1. Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs and National Academy for State Health Policy. (2017). Standards for Systems of Care for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Version 2.0. Available at: https://www.lpfch.org/sites/default/files/field/publications/standards_v2_0.pdf
2. Riverside Community Health Foundation. (Nd). Theories and Models Frequently Used in Health Promotion. Retrieved from: [file:///C:/Users/sbryan/Downloads/theories-and-models-frequently-used-in-health-promotion%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/sbryan/Downloads/theories-and-models-frequently-used-in-health-promotion%20(1).pdf)