

Potential **POWER** in Partnerships:

Families and Evaluators

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Systems of Care Communities' Meeting in Dallas, Texas

February 10, 2005



How to start? Concepts

- Get to know who the families are and what they already know and think about evaluation and research
- Learn about historical trauma and how to talk about it without being defensive –Family members can protect their communities by participating in the question making – respect what they know
- Outreach to diverse families receiving or eligible to receive services from the system of care
- Engage early
- Engage at an understandable and useful level



How to start?

Practical example

- Service providers sent invitations to existing clients/families at the SOC start-up
- Families were given copies of the grant proposal – Family Advisory Council created
- Families are on all committees implementing the system of care
- Evaluator approached all committees present and get approval evaluation design – starting with Family Advisory Council



Examples of how to start cont.

- Evaluator got questions from families and showed them how the instruments could provide answers
- Evaluator is on-site with system of care staff and attends all staff meetings
- Attends Family Advisory Council & Support Groups with updates or when invited to answer questions
- What engaged us personally? *She is friendly, fun, and down-to-earth. She talks with us in a natural way, and yet she is on top of everything that is going on all the time.*



Power?

Concepts

- *Power* can undermine collaborative efforts
- *Imbalance of power* undermines communication
- The invisible messages in relationships have *power* (context & form can undermine the messages)



Power?

Practical examples

- Evaluators listen to family partners
- Families recommendations are genuinely considered & often implemented
- National evaluation design was presented to families & partners first – then the rest of the staff
- Families had a vote in the hiring of data collectors



Perspectives & Needs

Concepts

- A diverse evaluation team will have diverse perspectives & needs.
- Having honest information about each other's perspectives and needs helps team members understand and support one another.
- It also creates a safety factor.
- *Trust* is about safety and consistency.



Perspectives & Needs

Practical examples

- In the beginning, every question I had was about how this pertained to or would impact *my kid*.
- Now, it's about *our kids*.
- Our evaluator never judged me. She supported me and allowed me to go through my process. She allowed me to learn.
- Families had input into safety measures protecting your confidentiality.



Communication Concepts

- It's all about relationship
- Understand yourself before you can understand someone else
- Listening is harder than talking
- Be willing to engage in dialogue – not just “make your point”
- Culture plays big in communication



Communication Practical examples

- The dialogue is in everyday language – not in “evaluation-eze”
- Communication is informal and takes place in families’ communities – never in the evaluator’s office
- *“Evaluator knows me. She’s even helping me look for another job and is writing a letter of recommendation.”*
- Evaluator stops meetings frequently to check in and make sure everyone understands what’s going on



Look outside the Children's Mental Health field for strategies

- This is about democratizing decision making and building community capacity for sustainable problem solving
- CRN and the Loka Institute
- Science Shops in the Netherlands
- United Nations
- Department of Transportation
- Tsunami relief



*The questions we ask
drive the future.* (The Cluetrain Manifesto)

Families & evaluators
together create better
questions.



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