



CONTINUOUS INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITY AND TRIBAL PARTNERS

Community partnerships bring wisdom and experience regarding the real issues and basic needs of children and families. Implementing jurisdictions have found the voices and perspectives of community partners clear and effective reminders of what is most important in the day-to-day actions and interactions of child welfare and the broader system of supports and services to improve outcomes for the children and families being served. As these partnerships strengthen practice- and system-level responsiveness to culture and trauma and are considered key to long-term system change, implementing jurisdictions prioritize strengthening and sustaining these relationships.

As with many aspects of CFPM implementation and sustainability, building and maintaining relationships with local communities is an extremely adaptive process. As child welfare and community leadership changes, and as new environmental and contextual variables emerge and play out in unexpected ways, both the individuals involved in the partnership and their engagement and commitment will change over time. Some jurisdictions have found it helpful to incorporate active involved community partnership as an ongoing strategy and way of doing business in local strategic plans, System Improvement Plans, Terms of Reference, and other documents, in order to establish expectations for community partnership in all practice and system change. While this will not keep community partners at the table, it can help greatly in maintaining the needed infrastructure and supports over time for the active involvement of community partners, as well as help the agency to stay on course as agency leadership transitions occur.

Understanding that token representation at an agency table is “business as usual,” implementing jurisdictions have found it important to continually nurture and expand partnership relationships. This has involved continuing to check in and explore whether/how the partnership is meaningful to the community partner, what changes and improvements can be made, and what resources might be needed to stay in partnership. Relationships are built and maintained by listening, respect, understanding, and working together as equals to achieve shared goals and outcomes, so there have been efforts to keep meetings from becoming progress updates or sessions focused on talking about problems rather than working together on solutions.

When partner participation in regular meetings with the agency ebbs more than flows, the form or structure that has been used may need to change. After almost 5 years of monthly advisory committee meetings in which community partners were actively involved, an implementing jurisdiction is re-assessing this connection point with its community partners as meeting attendance has declined. Within the jurisdiction, other sensitive political issues are affecting attendance, and many other connection points between agency and community partners have been developed or identified in the intervening years, so partners are becoming intentional and strategic about how to leverage these opportunities and forums to sustain joint agency and community partner work on local system and practice change.

Practice model implementation surfaces many adaptive issues and challenges that agency and community partners will need to grapple with. Legitimate yet competing perspectives on issues and problems will emerge, and partners may disagree on what the problem actually is or see no clear solution or path forward. In these situations, it is helpful to look for ways to fit ideas together and not

set up an either/or process or a competition between ideas. Understanding that adaptive problems do not have clear solutions and that attempted solutions may surface other dynamic issues and problems, it is important to lean into the conversation, honor what others see and experience, and acknowledge and value the many truths that cultural values, traditions, and perspectives bring into the room. By ensuring that all voices are heard and protected, agency and community partners continue to demonstrate openness to listening and learning together in order to co-create solutions and strategies for managing adaptive issues and challenges in supporting and sustaining the Practice Model.

Leadership in implementing jurisdictions speak passionately about the transformative power of active involved community partnerships on local practice and system change and of the need and their commitment to sustain and expand these partnerships to improve practice, services, supports, and outcomes for the children and families being served. System leaders are ensuring ongoing, practice-level support by Parent Partners, Cultural Brokers or Tribal Social Workers and sustaining active participation by community partners in CFPM training, coaching, fidelity assessment observation, and data review in order to continue strengthening their system's responsiveness, transparency, and accountability to the children, families, and communities being served.