



## MEANINGFUL PARTNER ROLES IN IMPLEMENTATION

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Partnerships with families, communities, and Tribes are as important to practice-level casework as they are to identifying and addressing system-level barriers and creating a culturally relevant system of supports and services. At the practice level, community partnerships bring a much-needed cultural perspective to agency interactions with children, families, communities, and Tribes.

To get the full effect of transformative partnerships, community partners must have concrete, visible, and supported roles in the child welfare agency's infrastructure and linked teaming processes supporting practice model implementation. The foundation of Partnership, Culture, and Humility is clearly modeled for staff through community partner involvement in training, coaching, and fidelity assessment.

In engaging community as implementation partners in the work, some jurisdictions are clear about their implementation needs and how the strengths and resources in the community can be leveraged in local practice model training, coaching, and fidelity assessment activities. Other jurisdictions may experience community partners looking to the agency to tell them how they can play meaningful roles in implementation, while the agency in return may ask community partners to communicate where their interests lie that can support implementation. There is not a preferred way of approaching these discussions, as long as they lead to active involvement and meaningful roles in supporting culturally responsive, trauma-informed practice for which the involved partners are compensated through stipends, contracts, etc.

### *Partner Roles in Training*

The cultural and community awareness and humility that community partners bring as co-trainers and supporters in the training room is helpful and refreshing. Community partners can play a key role in ensuring that the training curriculum developed and delivered is sensitive to the culture, trauma, and needs of disproportionately represented children and their families in the local child welfare system. Implementing jurisdictions found that their training input and support was needed to help build the competency of social workers and agency leadership in applying the Practice Model in diverse cultures, contexts, roles, and situation.

One jurisdiction implementing the Practice Model did not have community partners interested in the role of co-trainer. The jurisdiction found it important to have a group of community partners in the training room participating in the training with trainees in order to provide a cultural lens and presence for staff and to demonstrate the importance of community partnerships in local practice implementation.

Tribal partners in another jurisdiction are developing, adapting, and delivering curricula. Their cultural immersion training is required for all staff and leaders as part of practice model implementation. They also co-train the foundational practice model curriculum used locally to ensure integrated learning about the practice behaviors in the model and application of them in culturally respectful and responsive ways with children and families in the region.

Several community partners in another jurisdiction were highly skilled and motivated trainers around issues of racial equity and have been integrated in local practice model training, consistently delivering training regarding cultural humility and racial sobriety, which is required for all staff (including leadership).

### Partner Roles in Coaching

The CFPM requires a multi-logical approach to interactions, which means looking at a situation through many different lenses simultaneously. Community partners are essential in developing a coaching approach, infrastructure, and resources that can support and deepen this multi-logical approach. The cultural and community perspective of partners is needed to help clarify and translate the general cultural responsiveness that is called for in the Practice Model to real-world interactions, supports, and services which are responsive to the unique culture and needs of the specific children and families being served. Coaching occurs at the practice level for practitioners and their supervisors and at the system level for supervisors, managers, and executives.

While coaching is not a typical infrastructure support in child welfare, implementation-focused studies have repeatedly demonstrated its importance in supporting implementation of an intervention to achieve desired outcomes. To develop coaching support for the Practice Model, some implementing jurisdictions have recruited, selected and contracted for coaching hours with respected members of local communities and Tribes. Others have worked with local child welfare training academies or other providers to identify current staff or recruit staff with the cultural/community perspectives and skills needed to support child welfare agency practice model coaching.

While there may never be enough coaching hours available to staff and leadership in our public systems, beginning to build child welfare agency coaching supports, in partnership with the communities and Tribes whose children are disproportionately represented and who experience disparate outcomes, will bring much-needed cultural awareness and sensitivity to everyday child welfare interactions with children, families, communities, and Tribes. It will also support the dedicated staff and leaders in child welfare in applying the Practice Model in their challenging and diverse roles.

#### ***Sample Coaching Goal and Scope***

**Goal:** To improve relationships at all points of contact between the agency, families, and communities through development and implementation of an authentic, sustainable, culturally responsive practice

**Multi-logical World Views**—Demonstrate awareness and understanding of multi-logical thinking, such as familiarity with indigenous worldviews, which are relational, circular, and holistic, and draw upon implicit information.

**Culturally Responsive Practice**—Support social workers, supervisors, managers, and administrators in critical thinking and reflection as they develop and integrate their own culturally responsive practice and lens in working with Tribal and other diverse communities.

**Support Agency Paradigm Shift**—Provide system coaching to staff and leaders to address issues around culturally responsive practice, promote development of a coaching organization, and maintain a sustainable system for understanding and working with Tribal and other diverse communities.

**Use of Practice Behaviors and Tools**—Provide coaching and guidance to build confidence and competence in using the Practice Model in diverse cultures, contexts and situations. .

**Support Supervision**—Help build social worker, supervisor, and manager skills in providing cultural and practice coaching support in supervision and in modeling the Practice Model in all interactions and system processes.

### Partner Roles in Fidelity Assessment

As the Practice Model is implemented, the child welfare agency and its community partners need data and information regarding whether the Practice Model is consistently and effectively being used in interactions with children and families. CFPM fidelity assessment processes provide this important data so supports for the Practice Model can continue to be strengthened and refined. Community partners bring in valuable knowledge and experience about the best ways to take a glance at practice-in-action that is sensitive to the local context and community. As with all aspects of the Practice Model, community partnership is at the core of its fidelity assessment. A community partner and an internal system partner act as a fidelity assessment observer team. Both have received training and act as independent observers during a teaming event or meeting with the family and its natural supports. This combines the important insights of community and Tribal partners with agency and system perspectives to detect whether staff are applying the Practice Model in ways that are responsive to the culture, trauma, and needs of individual children and their families. The role of the observer team is not to watch the family, but to observe agency staff and representatives interact with the family. Observers provide ratings on nine measures, which are closely tied to the core practice elements and behaviors in the Practice Model.

“The observation process makes use of one’s ‘wise mind’ rather than being reactionary.”

“Positive, worthwhile experience partnering in this way. This is helping to change the way staff operates, feels genuine.”

“People make global statements and complaints about the department, but I get to see the practice firsthand.  
I have a role that matters.”

“I have an opinion based on specific facts that I witness.  
I get to be a part of addressing that issue.”

**-CFPM Community Partner Fidelity  
Assessment Observers**