ERP TOOLKIT - Principles

CPM Implementation

Engagement, Relationships & Partnership

County Directors and their local planning teams can reference these principles in a variety of ways, at any point in the CPM Implementation process. The principles are designed to highlight qualities of partnerships most relevant for implementation of the CPM. The principles can be adapted as an engagement tool to deepen dialogue and strengthen alignment with organizations, tribes or individuals who partner with child welfare to serve children and families.

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PRE-WORK
Preparing to Share CPM with
the Child Welfare Partner Community

The following principles are important when CWS leaders prepare for engaging with partners essential to the full implementation of CPM. This guidance applies to a range of different relationships—from teaming with caregivers to aligning services across public systems to collaborating with community-based organizations to coordinating with Tribal partners. Thinking ahead about joining each unique partnership with humility, clarity and respect ensures these associations are grounded in the values of CPM.

1 Model CPM behaviors that build value for engagement, relationships and partnership

Demonstrate an ongoing commitment to modeling the CPM leadership and practice behaviors in every interaction with staff and partners. Commit to a deep understanding of CPM values that cultivate and sustain partnerships and the ability to model them through self-awareness and humility. Focus on being open to engaging in difficult conversations, accepting feedback from coworkers and community members and apologizing for past insensitivities. Seek out and engage with other system leaders who share a commitment to the CPM. Counties should start locally and self-reflectively, raising their own awareness about assumptions and biases that appear when approaching partners.

A key element of supporting children and their families is the partnership inherent in the child and family team. Another critical support is a larger community network that works in collaboration with CWS to share the responsibilities and challenges of child and family support. By highlighting the broader perspectives and natural efficiencies of partnering to reach important shared outcomes for children and families, local community can be drawn into mutually beneficial collaborations.

Both within the agency and out in the greater community, supporting children and families must happen in the context of their culture and identity, with inquiry, genuine curiosity and cultural humility defining the nature of the supportive efforts. Focusing on the relational aspects of partnerships, not just tasks to be accomplished, deepens the value and success of partnerships as well.

2 Emphasize broad, inclusive and intentional engagement

CPM Implementation is enhanced when partnering is expanded to include the broadest conception of stakeholders. Counties can outreach to their current stakeholder community (staff, resource family, youth, biological parents, service providers, key community and Tribal leaders, etc.) to assess what additional stakeholders could be engaged to support the work of child welfare. Inquire with current stakeholders to inform and vet future outreach efforts. An intentional review of system assessment data can be an additional source for identifying key potential partners who share an interest in meeting the needs of children and families.

3 Adapt CPM key messages for communication with partners

The deeper their understanding of CPM behaviors and values, the more current and potential partners will be able to effectively collaborate around CPM Implementation. Customize communications so they speak directly to the nature and outcomes of specific partnerships. This can further emphasize and reinforce how each partnership contributes to the implementation of CPM. When adapting communications, consider the cultural norms and community goals of the children and families whose needs are being met by local partnerships.

4 Understand system biases that pose barriers to partnership building

A critical element to the success of partnership-building is the exploration of obstacles impeding the initial engagement, ongoing sharing of responsibilities or long-term collaboration of partnerships. Such obstacles can range from language barriers to power differences to overworked staff. Addressing power differentials, whether real or perceived, is especially important to setting expectations and boundaries of influence in alignment with realities.

Not only do counties need to identify these barriers as they prepare for CPM Implementation, but they need to conduct the kind of self-reflection that exposes system biases and generates creative approaches to problem-solving.

5 Invite stakeholders to participate in local system review process

Invite community, Tribal and cross-agency partners to pinpoint how institutional actions are, or are not, organized to support intended system and community goals. Determine which stakeholders have a perspective to share about local CWS service system (e.g., provider, recipient, funder, advisor) and identify meaningful roles for each in the system review process.

Establish clear feedback loops to encourage the exchange of perspectives during and following the review.

On-going post-system analysis between CWS and its partners can offer Tribes, communities, system leaders and staff, shared opportunities to improve outcomes through barrier identification and action planning at practice and system levels.

EARLY ENGAGEMENT
Laying the foundation for orienting partners to CPM

The initial stages of partnership development for CPM Implementation involves communication, expectation setting and reaching agreement on shared results. It begins with CWS leadership inviting partners to join with the child welfare agency to better meet the safety, permanency, well-being and trauma needs of children and families. The Child Welfare Core Practice Model is the framework for accomplishing this, yet CWS cannot act in isolation. The CPM can only be fully realized when CWS collaborates with community, system and Tribal partners to bring the values, behaviors and principles of CPM to life for every child and family encountered.

6 Identify and outreach to key partners

Early stakeholder identification and key engagement strategies will help to create partnerships for a seamless continuum of care by asking some of the following questions. Who or what is missing? Are there partners already doing similar work? Do we serve the same clients? What roles do we need them to play? Do our agencies have similar values?

Confirm assumptions on both sides of the equation regarding the intent of coming together around CPM Implementation. Ensure that communications clearly convey what CPM is all about and what role partners play in helping ensure CPM is consistently in place across the system.

7 Establish partnership forums for co-creation, shared learning & problem-solving

Leverage existing forums and venues in which partnership work can happen. Be sure to set mutually agreed upon times and locations so that full participation is more likely. Hold meetings at community locations, rather than agency facilities, whenever possible. Identify a coordinator to ensure timely, consistent and regular communication to the partnership

members. It is important to invite partners to participate in shared leadership roles at forums and events, including agenda building, co-facilitation or other activities. This not only builds ownership of the process, but also helps ensure cross-system accountability for results.

8 Initiate early, targeted communication about CPM

Deliver initial communications reflecting the spirit and intent of the practice model behaviors for building and sustaining the partnership team and diving deeper into practice and system-improvement at all levels of the organization. Be willing to have crucial conversations to build and re-build relationships, heal areas of mistrust, refocus on mutual interests and establish common ground.

When inviting community into the process of CPM implementation, be clear about the role they are being asked to play. Are they simply being informed about the CPM? Are they an equal partner with the agency in shaping CPM to fit with community needs? Or is it something in between? Determine the appropriate level of community engagement for CPM Implementation, clarify the promise to community members, and then fulfill those promises.

9 Co-create the framework for working together

Demonstrate respect, humility and transparency in all partnership-building work with communities. Recognize the historical mistrust and trauma experienced by many communities whose voices have been silenced or rights have been marginalized in the past. Do more listening than talking and be responsive to feedback of partners. Demonstrate courage to lean in and stay in challenging conversations although they may feel uncomfortable. This can be accomplished by setting clear expectations and ground rules for honest yet respectful dialogue. Invite shared problem-solving, rather than justifications for past transgressions. Whenever possible ensure that input is reflected in program, policy and system changes.

Create safe space for meaningful involvement by setting ground rules for honest and respectful dialogue, expectations for participation and clearly defined and designated participant roles. Use CPM language in dialogues and written materials to reinforce desired values, principles and expectations. Allow conversations to take place in neutral settings when possible.

Explore and develop shared terminology, values and desired outcomes meaningful to both the system and community. Co-create and build upon shared vision, mission and purpose that is linked to overall agency mission and strategic plans. Explore clear partner roles to support practice and system improvements.

10 Explore system data together

Results of readiness assessments, system reviews, and outcome data are important to share with partners whenever possible. This joint exploration of data could focus on baseline data about the system, graphs showing trends over time and/or community specific data. Invite partners to suggest important data to examine from their perspective. Let the data inform discussion of desired impact and surface areas that pose a challenge for meeting strategic goals. Sharing data about how children and youth are involved with and experiencing CWS can help build trust with partners who may not have been exposed to this information previously. It will also help set the stage for shared goal-setting toward improved outcomes.

BARRIER BUSTING

Working together to reduce system barriers to CPM implementation

Critical to setting the foundation for any successful partnership is identifying and adaptively working through system barriers that may hamper that success. Barriers can exist around power inequities, lack of institutional accountability, lateral oppression, historical trauma, as well as both institutional and structural discrimination that has led to disproportionality and disparities in outcomes for certain communities that interface with the child welfare system.

11 Collaborate to establish culturally relevant and trauma-informed services

Communities often report that "evidence-based models" are not the only path to proven results. Complex, cumbersome and exclusive contracting processes often limit access to additional services from which the community can benefit. Faith-based and other cultural and community supports are often the first places to which vulnerable families turn, because they trust them over government services. Seeking help from such private organizations often means that a family's needs and issues are addressed without the risks they may associate with involvement in the public system. Partnering with community builds value and visibility for these services and models CPM values which further contributes to trust-building with partners.

12 Co-create solutions to address system biases

Collaboration with partners to jointly develop solutions that tackle system biases can lead to development and acceptance of a diverse array of culturally-relevant and trauma-informed services. Without the historical perspective, cultural expertise and practice knowledge that partners contribute to the child welfare agency and system, a more limited range of options would be available to children and families. For example, an agency meaningfully partnering with Tribes may help the system learn about and accept traditional native healing practices as more supportive of the well-being of Tribal children and their families than therapeutic services provided by professionals trained in "western" doctrines.

13 Partner to adapt CPM to local needs

Collaborate with community, Tribal and system partners to adapt CPM to local community demographics, needs and desired outcomes. Eliciting the input and perspectives of these partners can ensure action plans address local system barriers to improved outcomes for children and families. Continually working with partners also helps engage the community in becoming invested in improved outcomes for children and families. Welcoming community members and collaborators to the table as partners in planning for CPM implementation contributes to a sense of feeling valued as co-creators of solutions to complex issues for children and families.

14 Recognize and jointly tackle common partnership barriers

When an agency and its leadership demonstrate readiness for partnering by opening themselves up to listening, recognizing past transgressions, and demonstrating willingness to explore and take necessary steps to heal historical traumas and partners are willing to engage and, in some instances, forgive, this can create a climate in which partnership barriers can be tackled. Examples of opportunities where space has been created together with partners to identify and address those system barriers include 'Listening Sessions'. These are facilitated discussions by an individual outside of the agency held in a neutral venue that emphasize honoring the voices of those whose input has been unrecognized in the past. For example, powerful insights can be gained by realizing through a Listening Session that the very building in which a child welfare agency is housed may trigger trauma for certain groups. Thoughtful selection of safe, neutral spaces for connecting with community can start a breakthrough dialogue on the right foot.

STRONGER TOGETHER

Aligning partnerships with quality implementation of CPM practice

Cultivating viable, culturally relevant and community-based partnerships during a family's involvement with child welfare services ensures that effective support networks are accessible to the family after formal system interventions conclude. Based in local communities and natural systems of support, these enduring supports fortify the work of CWS in meeting the needs of children and families. Establishing strong relationships with partners also creates more opportunity to ensure understanding and alignment with CPM values and principles in all encounters with vulnerable families.

15 Collaborate with leadership to support community input in CWS decision-making

Partnerships in implementation of CPM will only be meaningful if leaders support community input in CWS decision-making and create strong feedback loops ensuring that community partners are aware of how their contributions are informing decisions. This principle builds upon the previous barrier busting section in acknowledging that truly culturally-relevant services may stretch a child welfare agency to acknowledge that deferring to community partners and embracing multi-disciplinary natural supports may lead to better outcomes.

16 Engage partners in practice level teams with shared accountability for outcomes

Resource families, service providers and others are essential partners in practice level teams. The co-creation of shared agreements and institutionalizing those agreements are opportunities for system supports that emphasize shared accountability. CPM values, principles and behaviors can be integrated into contract language, inter-system Memoranda of Understanding, partner role descriptions and Terms of References that govern how child welfare systems and partners manage conflict, share information and hold themselves accountable for outcomes.

17 Involve partners in CPM training, coaching and skill-building

Partners can play a critical role in the capacity-building of the child welfare agency workforce. In some California counties, partners have designed and delivered training and coaching that is aligned with practice model values and principles and have served as experts to support the ongoing learning of child welfare agency staff. This can include an array of activities such as accompanying social workers on family visits, conducting fidelity assessments and advising child welfare agency leadership of cultural considerations when engaging with specific communities.

SUSTAINING CHANGE

Monitoring CPM implementation in partnership with the community

Establishing relationships between CWS and its community partners is the first step in ensuring long-term connections to the resources, supports and services available to help children and families thrive. Changes in demographics, political leadership, fiscal priorities and other factors, contribute to an ever-shifting community terrain. To best meet the needs of children and families, child welfare leaders must stay vigilant in monitoring the nature and effect of established partnerships. Integrating community voices into the ongoing work of the agency ensures the pulse of the community is continually evaluated, re-evaluated and accommodated to help keep children safe and families strong.

18 Establish linked teaming structures with partners

Agencies and community partners that work together to create the hospitable, collaborative environments critical for CPM Implementation jointly help to ensure that there is accountability and support for socially significant outcomes. In addition to the various activities listed in this toolkit, they do this by intentionally collaborating on regular, on-going system supports and activities (such as staff training, resource family recruitment, family resource centers, etc.) for effective, sustained practice change.

None of this can happen unless partners play concrete, visible and supported roles within linked teams and structures that attend to and support sustained implementation of CPM. Many counties are already practicing this principle through Child and Family Teams and

Community Advisory Groups. Partners bring important perspectives that can guide and advise system leaders on key organization, program and policy decisions with objectivity an\d candor.

19 Support ongoing communication & feedback loops

Community, Tribal and system partners have often reported that even if they are invited to the table to support system change or implementation, they are often inconsistently, if ever, invited back to the table to explore the outcomes of the system's efforts or to help assess quality improvement. Be mindful of the need to communicate with responsiveness and transparency under all circumstances—an approach that is always preferable to no response at all. Finally, make sure partners jointly develop and have access to agendas, meeting notes, data and reports and that they have a way of providing feedback to the system about the efforts in which they have a stake.

20 Evaluate impact of partnership efforts on outcomes

By ensuring that linked teams include community and by sustaining access to partnership meetings, forums and communication loops, partners can continuously guide ongoing practice and system changes to achieve improved outcomes for children and their families.

Systems can institutionalize and strategically align partner involvement by intentionally creating short-term and long-term goals, data measures, outcomes and action plans relating to community partnership in their system and program improvement efforts, strategic planning and CPM Implementation Plan. In this way, leaders can focus on the impact these partnerships are having on desired child and family, system and agency outcomes. Systemic issues such as staff retention, community perception and prevention are good examples of where child welfare must rely on collaboration with its partners to truly influence lasting change.