

PRACTICE MODEL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are key to implementing the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model and doing the work we want to do with children and families. By creating a foundation of partnership across a continuum of implementation and system change work, we can strengthen and support the safety, permanency, well-being, and cultural identities and connections of the children and families served.

To identify key partners, jurisdictions and their leadership teams often ask the following questions:

- Who can help us better understand the lived experiences and needs of this group of children and their families?
- Who does or could play a significant role in supporting this group of children and their families in culturally responsive ways within the community?
- Who brings valuable system knowledge, perspectives, and resources to solving the problem?

While there may be a tendency to be broad and inclusive, it can be helpful to focus initially on identifying internal and external partners who bring critical cultural, community, and system influence and expertise to address the specific issues the child welfare agency is trying to solve. As outreach proceeds and agency and community partners come together, the group can then consider together “Who is missing?” and “How do we engage them?”

Community partner outreach and engagement is a high-level leadership function that is most successfully done by the child welfare director. While “who” the agency or community partner is and the form and developmental path these partnerships take will vary across jurisdictions, the following core ingredients contribute significantly to developing and sustaining successful child welfare partnerships.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

- ❖ Conducting listening sessions for child welfare agency leaders and system partners to begin to address mistrust of public agencies and systems and to strengthen or rebuild working relationships with the community. Leadership, learning, and exchange is strengthened by:
 - Acknowledging that bias and assumptions exist in policy, practice, and system functioning despite well-intentioned staff and leaders.
 - Approaching interactions with a willingness to humbly listen to and hear about historical trauma and lived experiences of the communities whose children and families are being served.
 - Staying in the conversation through tensions and challenges, understanding that this is a developmental process of building relationships and trust that sometimes get worse before it gets better.
 - Convening multiple listening sessions to truly begin to address the unique histories of the various communities being served within the jurisdiction.

- ❖ Fostering shared goals and outcomes and working with partners to develop a clear problem statement as well as joint goals and outcomes to guide the partnership. This is supported by:
 - Bringing community and system partners to the table with key agency leaders and staff to explore data and consider alternative interpretations of the data that take into account community values, traditions, and norms.
 - Developing a shared understanding of key terms, such as safety, permanency, and well-being, so they so become meaningful and culturally relevant for both agency and community partners.
 - Creating a clear problem statement based on the data; then exploring how the Practice Model can help address the problem.
 - Facilitating shared agreements on the purpose and goals of the partnership and how agency and community partners will work together to achieve their shared goals and outcomes.

ADDRESSING SYSTEM BARRIERS

- ❖ Collaboratively assessing and addressing system barriers to improved outcomes for children and families and working together on solutions. Efforts to “get the system out of the way” is supported by:
 - Acknowledging that community partners bring cultural understanding and perspectives needed to implement the Practice Model and effect system changes that are responsive to the *specific culture, trauma, history, and needs* of the children and families being served.
 - Conducting system reviews or other local processes designed to surface system barriers and biases that may be contributing to poor outcomes.
 - Creating action plans and next steps for addressing key themes and barriers which agency and community partners together prioritize.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

- ❖ Working together to establish pathways to culturally relevant and trauma-informed services to meet the underlying needs of children and their families. This is likely to include:
 - Intentionally focusing on building a culturally responsive and community-based service delivery system using key advisors from the community.
 - Learning the community’s perspective about services and supports that are working and that are needed.
 - Focusing on services and supports that are the most relevant, responsive, and effective for the children and families whose outcomes you are trying to improve.
 - Developing needed business processes, funding streams, and communication strategies to facilitate access and utilization.

MEANINGFUL PARTNER INVOLVEMENT IN IMPLEMENTATION

- ❖ Involving partners in various aspects of implementation to build competency at all levels of the organization and system in applying the Practice Model. Given the diverse family and cultural contexts, roles, and situations in which staff and partners will be applying the Practice Model, leadership plays an important facilitative role by:
 - Setting the context and helping staff understand the agency's commitment to partnership and how staff and partners are/will be meaningfully involved in implementation and system change.
 - Inviting the meaningful involvement of individuals from local communities and Tribes and from many parts of the organization and system in supporting implementation, such as in developing and/or delivery Practice Model training, coaching or fidelity assessment.
 - Ensuring strategic opportunities for partners to play concrete, visible, and supported roles and receive compensation for their time and expertise.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

- ❖ Ensuring partnership meetings, forums, and feedback loops are supported and embedded so partners are continuously connected to and help guide ongoing practice and system changes to meet the diverse and changing needs of children and families, including:
 - Brainstorming with community partners about which meeting locations, structures, and processes will ensure ongoing communication and partnership work.
 - Ensuring clear partner linkages with local Practice Model implementation and leadership teams for coordination of efforts to achieve shared goals and outcomes.

While implementation and system change are complex, messy, and solutions do not take place overnight, staff, agency and community partners bring unique and diverse perspectives and pressures that are essential in Practice Model implementation, system change, and the journey to improved outcomes for children and families.