Effective Collaboration for Child Welfare Advocacy

Workshop Overview

- Dispelling old approaches
- “Gradients of Agreement”
- “Appreciative Inquiry”
- Effective coalition building
- Identify potential challenges
- Setting ground rules
- Revisit advocacy opportunities
- Moving forward

About This Webinar

- You will be able to see the webinar slides on your computer. To hear the presentation, either listen through your computer speakers or use the Audio portion of the GoToWebinar control panel and switch to Use Telephone. You’ll then call the number listed in the control panel and enter the PIN.
- All participants are muted throughout the presentation.
- If you have questions, please type them in the Questions box at the bottom of the GoToWebinar control panel and click Send. We’ll take a few opportunities during the session to ask the questions aloud so everyone can hear the answers.

How do you want to work?

- Stop preaching to the choir
  - Limit circular conversations
  - Intentionally seek out new voices
  - Set an “active” agenda and stick to it
  - Embrace the opportunities that controversy can provide
  - Share leadership

Stop preaching to the choir

Moving from carrying the weight of the world to collaboration requires thinking differently
It's okay to not please all, always

Your efforts will get watered down if you only do what everyone can agree on
Agree to take turns on agenda items that are important to some
Use gradients of agreement

Move away from “one for all”

Try not to set rules or issue notices to all members that are based on only one or two individual difficulties
Have private one-on-one conversations BUT only for the purpose of clarification and/or problem-solving
Those who are not causing difficulty feel disrespected when lumped in
Be open to negotiating against “policy” if it is in the best interest of the group or event

Gradients of Agreement

Endorsement 'I like it.'
Endorsement with a Minor Point of Contention 'Basically I like it.'
Agreement with Reservations 'I can live with it.'
Abstain 'I have no opinion.'
Stand Aside 'I don't like this, but I don't want to hold up the group'
Formal disagreement, but willing to go with the majority. 'I want my disagreement noted in writing, but I'll support the decision.'
Block 'I veto this proposal.'
Formal disagreement, with request to be absolved of responsibility for implementation. 'I don't want to stop anyone else, but I don't want to be involved in implementing it.'

Assessing Agreement

• Show of hands
• Pick one and say why
• Secret ballot
• “Post-it” ratings

Problem vs. Appreciation (appreciative inquiry)

What to fix
Language identifies what’s wrong
Breaks things into pieces & specialties, guaranteeing fragmented responses
Slow! Takes a lot of positive emotion to make real change.
Assumes organizations are constellations of problems to be overcome

What to grow
Language identifies what is working and what could be
“Problem focus” implies an ideal. AI breaks open the box of what the ideal is first.
Expands vision of preferred future. Creates new energy fast.
Assumes organizations are sources of infinite capacity and imagination

Examine the Positive

What is working?
What are the benefits?
Tell me about a time when you successfully worked together?
What do we agree on?
What are our individual/team strengths?

Appreciative Inquiry Commons: www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu
Why It Works

Doesn’t focus on changing people → Relief that the message isn’t about what they’ve done wrong or have to stop doing.
Invites people to engage in building the kinds of organizations and communities that they want to live in.

Helps everyone see the need for change, explore new possibilities, and contribute to solutions.
Through alignment of formal and informal structures with purpose and principles, it translates shared vision into reality and belief into practice.

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Why It Works

Process responds to three truths about human nature:
◦ Exceptionality: We’re all exceptions. We respond best when this is noticed & conditions for exceptional performance are enhanced.
◦ Essentiality: We each need to be seen as essential to the group. If we “lift up” meaningful contributions, it creates a compelling guiding image for others
◦ Equality: Creates a way for the organization to be in “full voice” about the true, good, better, possible.

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Sustaining Change

• Nurture the new relationship
• Reward improved performance
• Develop & renew resources on a regular basis
• Be proactive

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Effective Coalitions

Win-Win scenarios
Turn negatives to positives
Find the common ground
Remember radio station WII-FM
Compromise without selling out

Keys to Success!

✓ Buy-in from all parties to a common agenda
✓ Nurturing relationship and developing trust
✓ Understanding each other, imagine walking in each other’s shoes.
✓ Believing everyone has something to learn
✓ Believing everyone has something valuable to contribute

Teaming for Advocacy Wins

• Identify common ground, issues of mutual interest
• This is not one org/group doing for another, it is everyone working together equitably
• There may be some areas of disagreement
• Dig deeper for underlying issue
• Step back and look for common interest
• Choose another priority
• Develop a strong foundation for partnership
• The work can be powerful and exciting – it is also hard
### Challenges to Anticipate

- **Groupthink**: go along to get along
  - False consensus
  - Concede to “boss”
- **Devaluing ideas from within**
  - No experts in their own land
  - Condescending language
  - Making assumptions without inquiry
  - Holding onto stereotypes
- **Trying to “boil the ocean”**
- **Professional jealousy**
  - Derailing, minimizing contributions
  - Sharing personal experience/beliefs without hearing others’
- **Emotionalism**
  - Hearing statements as attacks, even when they are not meant so

### Strategies

- **Facilitator skills**
- **Mix groups**
- **Post-it brainstorming**
- **Contain “talkers” and…**
- **Engage quiet ones**
- **Appreciative inquiry**
  - Skills assessment
  - Shared or rotated leadership
  - “How?” rather than “We can’t”
- **Create equilibrium**
- **Memorandums of Understanding**
- **Statement of values/goals**
- **Reciprocal collaborative agreements**
- **Develop calendar of priorities and opportunities**
- **Manage differing opinions**
- **Encourage emerging leaders**

### Setting the Ground Rules

**Model Language**

These kids/those caregivers

Us and them = They

Parking lot grumbles

Respectful language

Keep the person before the issue
  - NOT “my bipolar son” or “that rigid mother”
  - BUT “my son, John, is challenged with some mental health issues” or “a mom in my group is really struggling with how to keep her daughter safe”

### Examples of Negative Stereotypes and Assumptions

- Foster parents have all resources they need while kinship families receive little to none.
- Kinship families want all the support without going through accountability and red tape that unrelated foster and adoptive parents do.
- Blood is thicker than water.
- Youth have to go along with adult priorities.
- They’re in it for the money.
- Relatives can swoop in at any time and grab the kids, even though they weren’t there when needed.
- Once the adoption is final, the parents should take care of their kids.

### Strategic planning

- Short term and long term goals
- Activities must support mission and priorities
- Seek community partners for leadership in “sidebar” interests
- Look for partnerships where others can take the lead

### Advocates for Families First

1. State implementation items
2. What can advocates do to inform local implementation?
3. What resources can Advocates for Families First offer?
Provision Included | State Responsibility | Local Advocacy
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Supporting Family | States implement "prudent parent standard" | Provide testimony before task force

APPL improvements | Demonstrate improved permanency outcomes | Support state adoption of improvements and permanency methodologies
| Support state initiatives and advocacy teams | Promote and support youth regarding permanency options

Task Implementation | Support youth / age 18 in care planning | Provide in-person guidance to implement task
| Support youth / age 18 in case planning | Provide an additional demonstration on how to support task implementation

Reinvestment Program | Expand on October 2014 (based on NRSF) | Monitor the implementation of the reinvestment plan
| Educate caregivers about the importance of naming a successor | Educate caregivers about the importance of naming a successor
| Familiarize self with ACYF-01-14-06 | Monitor the implementation of the reinvestment plan

Resources Available

- Assistance with data collection
- Assistance with understanding funding streams and promoting spending plans
- Assistance in developing:
  - Legislative language
  - Program proposals
  - Action plans

Questions?

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