

Indicators of Family Involvement

Recommended by a Workgroup of Parents and Evaluators

9/30/2011

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health "Workgroup to Assess the Impact of Family Involvement" was supported, in part, by the national evaluation of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Children's Mental Health Initiative.



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HISTORY OF THIS WORKGROUP

In Jane Wagner's 1985 screenplay *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*, bag lady Trudy explains to her space chums that the audience of a theatrical performance they are watching is really "the art". Similarly, one might say that much of the knowledge being grown in local system of care communities is "the expertise". In 2007, under subcontract to the national evaluation team the National Federation recognized a number of local system of care evaluations were aimed at assessing family-to-family peer support. The National Federation also recognized the critical need to produce evidence of the value of this kind of family support, which began with the children's mental health family movement at about the same time Trudy the bag lady made her proclamation that the audience was indeed the real art.

The resulting project, the **Parent Partner Assessment Workgroup (PPAW)**, brought a small number of teams from these various sites together for a 3-year project. The goal of the workgroup was to exponentially advance their individual projects while also collaborating on any emergent project that would provide benefit to the larger contingency of system of care communities. National Federation staff provided an adapted form of servant leadership to this workgroup by first ensuring individual teams had support in working toward their own goals; then seeking to learn from the synthesis of their work; and finally taking a leadership role in guiding the larger group toward national level goals.

The fiscal investment in PPAW was limited to direct expenses for personnel, telecommunications, web access, and travel for PPAW's annual meetings. Benefits beyond those to the participant communities included nearly one dozen presentations at national CMHI meetings; collaboration with key researchers focusing on similar parent support issues; and raising the focus on parent support to a level that, 3 years later, a National Parent Support Provider Initiative to enhance the children's mental health workforce was underway.

A second workgroup, **Assessing the Impact of Family Involvement** based on the PPAW model was initiated in the summer of 2010. Teams were selected during their second year of funding, which seemed the optimal time to find communities have well-developed working family/evaluator relationships and have begun to identify the foci of their local evaluation efforts.

The Teams and Group Members:

- North Carolina's Alamance Alliance: Libby Jones, Renee Cordero, and Christina Christopoulos, PhD
- Oklahoma's Statewide System of Care: Emma (Gerri) Mullendore and Geneva J. Stretch, M.Ed., MHR
- Texas' Hand in Hand, Planting Seeds for Healthy Families: Jamie Souders, Barbara Perry, and Camille Patterson, PhD
- National Federation Staff: Elaine Slaton, Marie Niarhos, and Corey Brown
- Invited Consultant: Kathleen Ferreira, PhD

During the initial meetings, the workgroup decided to focus on how to identify authentic family involvement at the system level. The dilemma this created for the group was that commonly used indicators of family involvement were simply identifying the presence of family members at meetings or on committees. There were no indicators to say that something was actually happening because of the family members' participation. The phrase, "I know it when I see it" was repeated over and over.

Malcolm Gladwell's (2005) book "Blink: The power of thinking without thinking" supports what the workgroup was saying: there is validity in knowing something when you see it. In his book, Gladwell tells a story from 1983 about the Paul Getty museum in California which was approached by an art dealer who had a Greek Kouros for sale for just under \$10,000,000. There are only about 200 kouros surviving in the world, so it was a big deal. To authenticate the statue the museum called in a geologist who, using numerous scientific approaches stated that the statue was very old. So, they decided to buy the statue and it went on display in 1986. However, while the deal was going on four different art experts said the following:

1. One of them found himself staring at the sculpture's finger nails; they somehow seemed wrong to him.

2. The curator of the Getty told one of the world's foremost experts in Greek sculpture the following: "Well, it isn't ours yet, but it will be in a couple of weeks." Her response was "I'm sorry to hear that."
3. A former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, when faced with the kouros said the following: "it was fresh", not something appropriate for a two-thousand-year old statue. Then he said: "If you have paid for this, try to get your money back. If you haven't, don't"
4. Finally they turned to the Greek experts and one of them said that he saw the statue and immediately felt cold, like there was a glass between him and the statue. The second one said he felt an immediate repulsion when he saw the statue.

It turned out these experts were right: and, they simply knew it when they saw it. They had enough experience that their immediate gut reaction was valid.

Based on Gladwell's work, we invited people considered to be experts in family involvement; people who had visited the highest number of children's mental health system of care communities and who were known to understand family involvement.

Invited Participants:

- Pat Baker
- Scott Bryant-Comstock
- Lisa Conlan
- Freda Brashears

During a two-day meeting, we asked these experts to tell us stories about when they "saw" family involvement. While actively listening, workgroup members noted anything they thought might be an indicator of family involvement on index cards. One potential indicator was written per card. In the end, we had over 800 index cards.

The next steps were to sort the cards. We did this first individually, next as a group, thirdly as teams, and finally at national conferences with multiple stakeholder input.

The first sort of these cards to identify themes and eliminate duplicates was done with workgroup members working individually around a ping pong table. The second sort was done by taking the first sort, one pile at a time, reading them aloud to the group while the group collectively made decisions about their inclusion or placement. Next, Federation staff put the list of indicators into an excel spreadsheet for distribution to the teams.

Over the next several months, each team worked alone with the worksheet and then provided feedback to the larger workgroup. In the end, we settled on 6 categories of indicators with samples for each. The categories were:

- Policies & procedures
- Voice & communication
- Leadership
- Training
- Information & knowledge, and
- Cultural & linguistic competence

Indicators should be reasonable, clear, specific, and measurable.

Twice the categories and examples were presented at national conferences and recommendations were collected to help edit the draft indicators. A final meeting in August 2011 allowed the workgroup members to further edit their list. The decision was made to publish the list as a set of recommended indicators in hopes that it would be used and refined in the field as communities and families continue to learn what family involvement *really* means.

This document is intended to be a working document. In other words, it will be updated as we learn more. Some items are intentionally left blank to encourage dialogue within local teams.

HOW TO USE

This document should be considered as a developing list of indicators for family involvement. It is not intended to completely assess family involvement, but simply to help communities and family leaders identify things your community/system is

- Already doing;
- Might easily be able to do soon;
- Should work toward; or
- Could monitor.

Family leaders and communities might also find that by reviewing this list of potential indicators, they might be able to more easily articulate local examples of authentic family involvement.

May the journey begin!

WHAT IS AN INDICATOR?

An indicator is exactly what it sounds like: something that indicates. Turn signals on a car were once referred to as indicators. Similarly, gas gauges, test scores, and pointers are indicators. In evaluation terms, an indicator is that which best approximates what is being measured. As Michael Quinn Patton explains, “A score on a reading test is an indicator of reading ability but should not be confused with a particular person’s true ability.”ⁱ

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT INDICATORS IN POLICIES & PROCEDURES

INDICATORS IN POLICIES & PROCEDURES	DATA SOURCE	EXAMPLE
All system of care governance bodies include family leaders in equal ratio or with weighted votes.	Membership lists and/or minutes of governance meetings	Minutes from governance meetings for the past fiscal year indicate family representatives participated as voting members in equal numbers to other stakeholder/agency representatives.
All system of care stakeholder organizations provide support (\$ or in-kind) for family run organization	Financial statements (inclusive of in-kind category) of the family-run organization or of every stakeholder/agency involved the system of care	The family-run organization’s annual financial report indicates income from education, child welfare, and juvenile justice. It further reports rental space contribution (valued at \$X) from the mental health authority and newsletter distribution (valued at \$X) from the Better Business Bureau.
Compensation for hired family members based on the same pay scale as other agency staff with credit for experience	Written pay scale in HR	Written policy or rubric documenting value of given experience that can be used in place of academic degree
Policy in place that requires family leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As co-chairs on all committees 	Written policy supported by evidence in minutes and attendance lists	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In budget planning • In planning, creating and presenting all trainings • In planning, conducting, and interpreting all research and evaluation 		
Family leaders and family organizations have formal process for “hearing” all families and fairly representing their needs and preferences.	Written policy	Minutes, documentation of consensus

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT INDICATORS IN LEADERSHIP

INDICATORS IN LEADERSHIP	DATA SOURCE	EXAMPLE
System level leadership champions family involvement	Observable behavior of people in leadership positions	=The Project Director includes family leadership in outreach efforts to new system partners who may not already adhere to SOC principles or appreciate family involvement. =The Project Director and other system administrators depend upon the family-run organization (instead of service agencies) to nominate family members for board or committee positions. =The Project Director and other system administrators attend family organization meetings as guests, to hear speakers and to learn.
All system of care stakeholders notice and respond to the absence of families in any meeting	Minutes and reports from meetings	The minutes from the last governance meeting indicates that business decisions were postponed until the lead family contact could be present to vote.
System provides ongoing leadership development and communication skills training for families and other agency staff	Training reports, agenda, and participants’ list	The system of care provided 3 leadership workshops in the last fiscal year that included family and other agency staff

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT INDICATORS IN TRAINING

INDICATORS IN Training	DATA SOURCE	EXAMPLE
Family leaders are included in planning, creating and presenting all	Minutes of planning/development meetings; names and roles of	Wraparound or trauma-informed care training with family leader on

trainings provided by the system of care	trainers on the training agenda	planning, development, and presentation teams
Community stakeholders, agency representatives and family members participate in training events together	Participant list	
Training and/or coaching available for evaluators ... and visa versa	Learning objectives of available trainings	“System evaluators will learn strategies for engaging families in making decisions about evaluation design”
Training and/or coaching available for administrators and other professionals and visa versa	Learning objectives of available trainings	

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT INDICATORS IN INFORMATION & KNOWLEDGE

INDICATORS IN <i>Information & Knowledge</i>	DATA SOURCE	EXAMPLE
Information routinely flows between family leadership, family run organization and families in need of and receiving services	Family organization newsletter and its related distribution list	
Family leadership and family organization routinely receives information about systems’ evaluation results		

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN CULTURAL & LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

INDICATORS IN <i>Cultural & Linguistic Competence</i>	DATA SOURCE	EXAMPLE
Family organization’s staff reflects diversity of the community being served	Current demographic data from Census Bureau and staff’s self identified diversity	
Family organization and system of care partner agencies conduct outreach to all families in the community being served		

¹ Patton, Michael Quinn. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*. California: Sage Publications. 1997. Page 159.