Georgia
Center of Excellence
in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health

SYSTEMS MAPPING AND UNIVERSITY PARTNERS HELP GEORGIA COLLABORATIVE'S STRATEGIC FOCUS

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INTRODUCTION

Interagency collaboration is a core element in the system of care concept and philosophy. While many states and communities have worked to build this infrastructure across child-serving systems, it is only more recently that local university partnerships—beyond national-level technical assistance centers—have been recognized as a supportive external resource for interagency groups. This poster describes how the Georgia Interagency Directors Team's (IDT) partnership with the Georgia Center of Excellence in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health (COE) assisted the IDT's efforts to "manage, design, facilitate, and implement an integrated approach to a child and adolescent system of care which shares funding [and] resources and informs policy and practice."[1] The partnership yielded a systems map ushering in a more preventive focus and a revised strategic plan with manageable objectives.

BACKGROUND: SUPPORTING COLLABORATIVES

There is much research explaining what constitutes effective collaboration.[2] The Wilder Research Center's work encompasses most of these elements: environment, membership characteristics, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources.[3] Research also shows that a separate entity, such as the COE, is integral to the growth and sustainability of an interagency collaboration.[4] Such an entity supports the collaborative through "ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad of logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative."[4]

The IDT's membership includes nonprofits, government agency representation from child-serving agencies, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a Federal Consultant, and the COE at Georgia State University in an administrative and research/evaluation capacity. In this context, the COE serves as the "resources" element. The COE supports the IDT through research of best practices, facilitation, data management, and administrative support, with the goal of helping the collaborative make fully informed decisions. They also evaluate the IDT's efforts and progress toward their strategic goals.





BENEFITS OF THE PARTNERSHIP: USING SYSTEMS MAPPING FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

In 2012, the IDT group created a strategic plan, tackling six strategy areas with multiple sub-strategies:

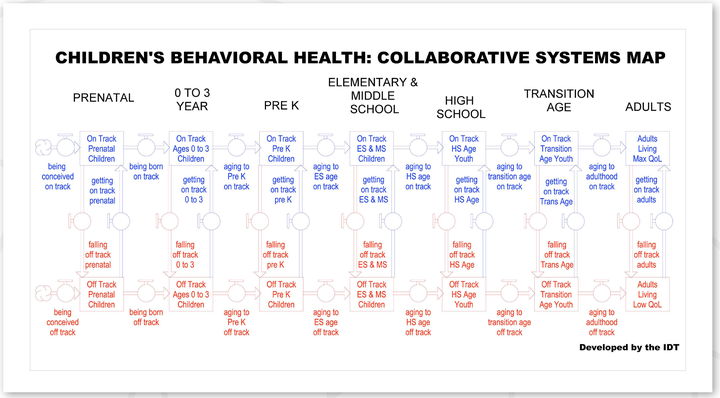
1. Policy, administrative, and regulatory changes
2. Development and expansion of services and supports
3. Financing
4. Workforce development
5. Support and advocacy
6. Evaluation

The group expressed a desire to rethink its collaborative capacity and future direction, and the COE brought in a system dynamics expert to help them frame the important issues, analyze the root causes, and consider solutions.

This process facilitated two changes. The first was a shift in focus to prevention. The systems expert helped the IDT create a map of children's progress from birth to adulthood, either staying "on track" behaviorally or falling "off track." The map and resulting discussion made clear that the children served cannot be divided into siloes and are not only the concern of agencies funding their care, but "belong" to all the partners as "Georgia's kids." The discussion also helped members realize their agency resources were currently directed toward the middle and high school years—and the potential cost savings of a more prevention-focused approach for younger children.

The second change involved bringing the group together to revisit its original strategic plan. With an eye toward prevention, the group concentrated on more manageable—and fewer—strategic areas: namely #1 and #4 from the previous six strategic areas. Their new goals included:

- #4: Identification of best practices of ADHD treatment and a survey of current practices in Georgia. Results from the survey will inform implementation approaches for training Georgia's workforce.
- #1 and #4: Identification of the best methods for integrating these trainings into the policies and practices of IDT child-serving agency partners.
- #1: The writing of a policy statement on the recent Georgia juvenile justice code rewrite, responding to state-level policy.



IMPLICATIONS FOR SYSTEM-WIDE COLLABORATIVES

University partners ensure interagency collaboratives have the information they need and assist group members with staying on track or considering new options. These partners provide access to resources possibly unavailable to government entities and also operate outside the day-to-day challenges associated with policy development and implementation. Future research should consider how university partnerships help interagency alliances sustain collaborations.

REFERENCES

[1]Georgia Interagency Directors' Team. (2013). IDT action plan. Atlanta, GA.

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[3]Mattessich, P. W., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. R. (2008). Collaboration: What makes it work (2nd ed.). Nashville, TN: Fieldstone Alliance.

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