



Improving Youth Child Mental
Health in North Carolina:
Learning and Action Workshops
March – May 2013

Connection Station Topic #1

How can our region start, strengthen or expand local collaboratives and other community-wide efforts?

What is a Collaborative?

A cross-organizational team of people working together in order to accomplish a shared goal that no one organization could achieve alone. An Infant Mental Health Collaborative can work to build a community of support for the social and emotional health of very young children by using the NC IOM Study recommendations as a starting point.

What is Collaboration?

The process of bringing together the appropriate people in constructive ways with good information, so that they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the community. (David Chrislip, 2002)

What makes a Collaborative work well?

An effective Collaborative surfaces important vested interests of its member organizations, while driving toward the shared goal and finding agreements and solutions that can be implemented. The following elements are at the core of effective collaborations.

1. **Building the Team.** Recruit passionate leaders offering diverse perspectives on the issue at hand. Find people with a natural affinity for connecting with other people.
2. **Logistics.** Have someone responsible for handling the organizational aspects of convening the group to make it easier for people to fully participate. This includes scheduling, agendas, materials, meeting summaries and even refreshments. This can be a rotating responsibility if funds don't exist to compensate this person.
3. **Common Purpose.** Invest time up front to interview key stakeholders in advance, surfacing and honoring vested interests, developing a charter to clarify purpose, roles and group norms, and determining a decision-making process that works for the group.

Don't take on too much at once. Early, small, short-term wins may give the group a lift and the momentum to tackle bigger projects over time.

4. **Shared Ownership.** Cultivate a sense of community so that the group's members honor the experience and strengths everyone brings to the table, develop positive relationships with one another, celebrate even small successes and deal with conflict openly and productively.
5. **Skilled Facilitation.** Groups that are digging into difficult community issues will inevitably face difficult conversations. Calling in an experienced, skilled facilitator when needed can help Collaboratives work through challenges. Facilitators can help the group to think creatively, make it safe for people to dissent, focus on the interests behind people's positions and sensitively guide people to find agreements.

Where can I get more information?

Block, P. (2008). *Community: The structure of belonging*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Cable, L.P. (2012). *Conversations that Matter: A How-to Guide for Hosting Discussions about Race, Racism, and Public Health*. The Lee Institute, Charlotte, NC; CityMatCH, Omaha, NE. PDF available at: www.leeinstitute.org.

Chrislip, D. (2002). *The collaborative leadership fieldbook*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kansas Community Leadership Initiative. (2010). *Facilitation tips and civic leadership development activities*. Kansas Community Leadership Initiative. Wichita, KS: Kansas Leadership Center. PDF available at: <http://kansasleadershipcenter.org/facilitator-resources>.

Schwarz, R., Davidson, A., Carlson, P., McKinney et al, (2005) *The skilled facilitator fieldbook: Tips, tools, and tested methods for consultants, facilitators, managers, trainers and coaches*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Strauss, D. (2002). *How to Make Collaboration Work*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Supporting Infants, Toddlers, and Families Impacted by Caregiver Mental Health Problems, Substance Abuse, and Trauma: A Community Action Guide. PDF available at: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA12-4726/SMA12-4726.pdf>

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