

Some Important Features of Community Network [coalition] Performance in Family Preservation and Support Activities and Programs

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1. Outcomes and Accountability

All networks are working within an outcomes-based model of prevention planning, implementation, and evaluation. Their ability to become outcomes-based is supported extensively by technical assistance provided by the Family Policy Council staff, state agency staff, and privately-funded contractors; in the main, federal funds are not applied to technical assistance. Outcomes specification is the dominant feature of network contracts with the state, with their contractors, and with their work plans for the expenditure of all direct service and infrastructure funds. Indeed, all of their expenditures are tied to outcomes and outcomes evaluation. In defining outcomes, networks have identified target changes in the most dangerous of behaviors (e.g., child abuse, substance abuse) and in the risk and protective factors which are seen to influence these behaviors. It is to these outcomes that networks will hold themselves accountable, to their communities, service populations, and the state.

2. Family Support Prevention Philosophy

In general, networks have adopted a prevention approach based on supporting the youngest of children and the youngest of families. They see the risks posed to these populations as multigenerational and exhibited in missing knowledge, skills, values, supports, community connections, and services connections. In response to these risks, many networks have adopted a developmental approach (to health factors; resiliency factors; protective and risk factors; individual, family, and local strengths, competencies, talents, assets, and relationships; community; and human services) to family support; that is, they have identified and intend to provide increased levels of family support to deflect these children and families from needing to enter or remain on human service agency caseloads. These include such efforts as earliest pre-natal and/or post-natal contact with new parents for parenting education and support, including substance abuse prevention, connecting children and youth at-risk to responsible older teens and adults, and so on.

3. Mobilizing and Leading Community Supports for Families

In focusing on assets, many networks are looking beyond existing local human services and funding levels to the untapped human resources at the community level. In designing their prevention strategies, they are using community asset mapping techniques, at the community, service system, and neighborhood levels, to identify and engage these resources and bring them to bear on at-risk children and families. They are becoming rapidly sophisticated in how to mobilize the volunteer wealth of the community and incorporate it into more comprehensive, community-wide, and focused family, child, and youth supports.