

REACHING OUT

CURRENT ISSUES FOR CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE



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CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF REACHING OUT

By Susan Brooks, Director of Human Services,
UC Davis Continuing and Professional Education

As we celebrate *Reaching Out*'s 15th year of production, we couldn't help but fall into a little reflection.

Over these many but quickly moving years, each issue of *Reaching Out* has traditionally highlighted one central topic area. As we searched for one common thread across our many issues, we kept coming back to one that is still a large, important, and very tricky topic to this day: implementation.

Implementation has always seemed like such a simple idea on the surface. Just a matter of going out and doing what you planned to do. Right?

Not so much. And that's what makes it so tricky.

The more we learn about implementation, and the better we get at studying implementation efforts, the more we understand just how complex implementation can be, particularly when it involves large and complex organizations, and even more so when these organizations are dedicated to serving vulnerable children and families, many of whom have been seriously impacted by trauma. This is to say nearly nothing of the trauma so many of our most valuable helping professionals have experienced, or the secondary trauma associated with their important and difficult work.

Recognizing the complexity of implementation in this context, this edition of *Reaching Out* will tackle the topic of implementation from many angles. First, we will look at implementation from a neuroscientific lens, connecting the natural and stubborn persistence of organizational culture to natural individual threat-status responses to change, and then highlighting new neuroscientific

discoveries (such as neuroplasticity) that can help great leaders move the needle on culture change. We'll also consider the special challenges smaller, rural counties face with implementation, as well as a few advantages a smaller organization would be wise to capitalize on. We will try to directly answer the question of what it takes to connect implementation to positive outcomes, and we will also look at how creating a culture of continuous learning (remember neuroplasticity?) can serve to cultivate a self-perpetuating loop of CQI's Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, which recognizes implementation not as something to be checked off, but rather a healthy and learned habit for consistently refining strategies that ultimately can be used to facilitate better outcomes for the children and families we serve. Additionally, we will look at and compare the implementation of two current strength- and partnership-based approaches to working with children and families in California (the Integrated Core Practice Model and Safety Organized Practice), examining how they align and in what ways they can be utilized concurrently.

Implementation is not an easy topic, but it is certainly one of the most important ones, which is why we are pleased to share this 15th anniversary edition of *Reaching Out* with you. We look forward to the next 15 years—and hopefully many more!



GREAT LEADERS REWIRE BRAINS

By Laurie Ellington

When it comes to implementing a new strategy or practice within an organization, the organizational culture will have a massive say in whether implementation succeeds or fails. The challenge for leaders, then, is as stubborn and persistent as it is natural: Culture will not change without resistance.



“Culture is playing out with automatic habitual ways of thinking, believing, responding and behaving—most of the time outside of our awareness. Changing the culture of a team or organization involves the interruption of these deep-rooted belief systems that lie below conscious awareness.”

STUCK IN THE PAST

Organizational culture includes values and beliefs that are deeply embedded in an organization's psyche. Although culture provides a stabilizing effect in organizational life, it has a powerful influence on perpetuating the status quo. Layered throughout the organization, culture pushes back against the disruption associated with change you want to see. Shifting it requires changing long-entrenched habits.

Neuroscientific discoveries highlight that many of our conventional leadership approaches to changing these habits are actually keeping us stuck in old habitual patterns. Some of these approaches include incentives and threats, advice giving, and telling people what to do. Perhaps this has something to do with the frustration associated with trying to change organizational culture. Part of the problem lies in our efforts to try to break these habits. Unfortunately, breaking habits doesn't work too well. In fact, trying to break habits often further embeds the behaviors you want to get rid of. Fortunately, neuroscience also tells us that creating a new habit is not that difficult for the human brain to do.

CREATING NEW HABITS

As a leader, you hire people to make your job easier. You take risks and confront issues. If you want to change the culture of your team or organization, you need to put attention on creating new habits. This allows you to focus on the success of those big picture projects that take your leadership and your organization to the next level.

Most people think of habits as everyday behaviors you can see. This is true, but habits also include ways of thinking, emotional responses to people and situations, and belief systems. These are all hardwired in the brain at a neurobiological level and running on autopilot most of the time throughout the day. For you to be successful as a leader, you want to be in control of the habits that are running in the background for you. You also want to ensure that the habits running in the background of the people on your team are in line with the vision.

THE POWER OF PLASTICITY

We now know that the brain is like plastic and can change throughout the lifespan. Neuroplasticity is our brain's ability to rewire itself with experience. The brain can create as many new pathways as it desires. It can change architecturally and functionally. The possibilities are unlimited. It just takes attention and focus on what you want vs. what you don't want. Focus and attention on what you want gives you solutions faster. When you arrive at solutions faster, you are more successful. Leaders who understand how the power of focus is leveraged to change culture have moved away from the old outdated belief system that put limits on the human potential for change, learning and growth. High performing leaders have updated their thinking around how to create new ways of thinking and being in the workplace based on the latest findings in how the human brain responds to people and change. They are learning how to use neuroplasticity to create behavior change and reinforce the thinking habits that support learning organizations.

INTERRUPTING DEEP-ROOTED BELIEF SYSTEMS

To shift the culture of an entire organization, there needs to be an understanding that everyone is part of the “organizational brain” and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Contemporary findings in neuroscience inform us that we are neurobiologically connected and our brains are communicating with each other very quickly at a subconscious level. Culture is playing out with automatic habitual ways of thinking, believing, responding and behaving—most of the time outside of our awareness. Changing the culture of a team or organization involves the interruption of these deep-rooted belief systems that lie below conscious awareness. If you want to change organizational behavior, you have to help people rewire their brains. Hardwired habits have neural correlates in the brain in the form of maps or pathways. This means that new neural circuitry in the habit part of the brain has to be embedded as a part of the change process.

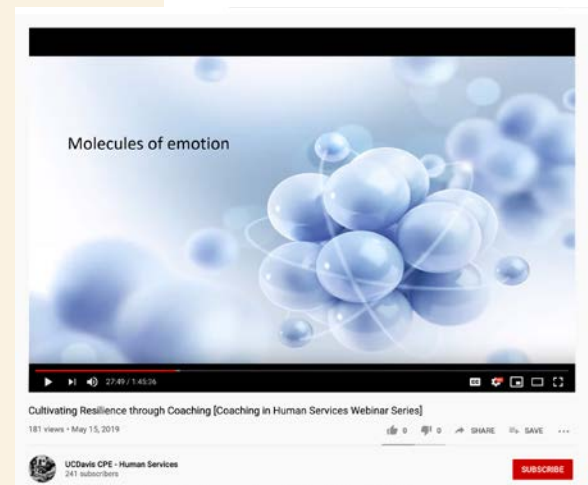
WHAT WORKS? COACHING

One way to rewire the human brain and change culture in an organization is to use a coaching approach. Leaders who apply the art of coaching to the workplace have more effective conversations that assist others in discovering solutions on their own that lead to positive change. Specifically, a brain-based coaching approach takes into consideration how the brain functions and uses knowledge from modern brain science to help people move change forward. This is very different than telling people what to do, giving advice or using incentives and threats to get people to do what you want them to do. It is solution focused and action oriented. A coaching approach can even be used in everyday conversations. The skills involved in effective coaching conversations help others develop new ways of thinking and being that move the needle on culture change within an organization rather than preserving the status quo.

WHERE TO START?

To get started, put your attention on asking more and telling less. The good news is this saves energy, as it is easier to be deeply curious than it is to deal with the pressure of needing to have all the answers.

By approaching organizational change as a cultural change, and by approaching culture change from a neuroscientific perspective, leaders will be better equipped to create new habits that will support and enhance the organization’s ability to successfully implement and adapt to new strategies and practices.



CULTIVATING RESILIENCE THROUGH COACHING

Healthy (coaching) relationships activate the growth of fibers that integrate the brain and facilitate self-regulation. Watch Laurie Ellington’s presentation at <http://bit.ly/CoachingWebinars2019> to learn more about resilience, neuroscience and coaching and to view additional presentations from the 2019 Coaching Webinar Series.

12 TIPS FOR SMALL COUNTIES AROUND IMPLEMENTATION



By Alison Book, Director, Northern Academy

Small counties face unique challenges when implementing new mandates or practices in child welfare, including limited staff, funding and other resources. Implementation science tells us that successful implementation requires attention to executive (leadership level), cross-system and day-to-day functions—and leaders in small agencies are frequently, and sometimes solely, responsible for attending to all of these. Here are some tips that can help small counties maximize their strengths to support implementation of any new practice or mandate.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

1. Identify your own “why.” The fact that a practice change is required isn’t sufficient to make it matter to staff. Identifying what makes it personally and professionally meaningful to you and your agency is important to gain buy-in. Take the time to explore with staff: What are the values they hold that make this worth the time and effort it will take to implement? How do they see it benefiting children and families?

2. For any new initiative, invest the time to map out your existing practices and how the new practice aligns. Where are pieces of the new mandate already being done? What existing practices fit with the new practice? Lead staff through a process of mapping the work so they don’t feel overwhelmed by “one more thing” but can contribute to a shared process of identifying how it fits with the work they are already doing.



3. Model, model, model. For initiatives that ask staff to change their behavior, it is critical that leaders model the practices and behaviors they wish to see in staff. This costs nothing, takes no extra time and is crucial to making the change happen.

4. Ensure you have a dedicated implementation team responsible for moving the work forward. In a small agency, this may be your entire leadership team or even your entire staff, but even tiny counties need to ensure there are specific people who hold responsibility for attending to all implementation drivers: leadership and organizational processes, workforce development, data and CQI, and partnerships.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

5. When training to any new practice, start by training supervisors and getting them on board. Supervisor buy-in is critical to moving any change forward, and supervisors themselves must be proficient in any new practice in order to model it and coach their staff.

6. Coaching is critical in ensuring transfer of training to actual practice. Small counties typically lack resources to support specific coach positions or outside coaches, so supervisors, managers and other leaders must be proficient in and actively using a coaching approach.

7. Consider “diffusion of innovations.” Even on small teams, staff are distributed across innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. With supervisors, identify which staff are innovators and early adopters, and engage them in implementation teams, planning sessions and piloting new practices. Then have them be the voice with their peers about the positive impact of trying the new practice in their work.

USING DATA FOR UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVEMENT

8. Create an agency culture of CQI at all levels. Small agencies may lack dedicated staff who can “do CQI.” Yet this provides a strong incentive to create an agency culture of CQI at all levels, which is ideal. Create a culture where everyone understands that continuous quality improvement is part of their job. For example, have supervisors pull one or two cases per month, per worker, to review for fidelity to the new practice. Share data with staff and ask them to participate in making sense of it. In a small agency, you can bring together your whole team to ask them to reflect on trends and changes they are seeing. Engage them in discussion around how you all would know the practice change you are implementing is happening and if it is making a difference for kids and families.

9. Use existing meeting opportunities to gather qualitative data from staff. What do they think is working well about implementation? What are their worries? What do they see as next steps?

BUILDING AND ENGAGING PARTNERSHIPS

10. Identify key stakeholders at the beginning and engage them even before starting to roll out the change. When beginning any process of implementation, ask yourself and staff: Who else needs to know about this? This is even more important in small counties with limited resources, as partners can help identify creative ideas for local implementation.

11. Use existing opportunities to engage community partners. What regular meetings do you have with court partners, tribes, community providers, behavioral health and others? Add a standing agenda item for what you are implementing so that it is consistently addressed over time at these meetings.

12. Use existing meeting opportunities to gather qualitative data from partners. What do they think is working well about implementation? What are their worries? What do they see as next steps?

No matter how small your team, attending to these four areas of implementation is vital. Using existing resources and building on the strengths of small agencies—their macro view, tight-knit teams and community relationships—can help ensure success.

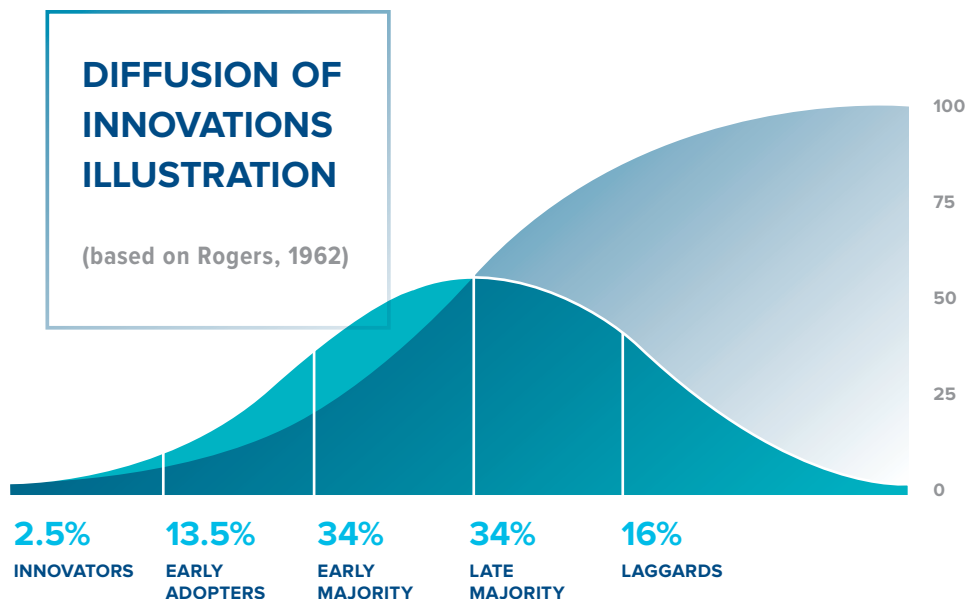
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Rogers, E. (1962). *Diffusion of innovations*. Free Press, London, NY, USA.



SMALL COUNTIES AND IMPLEMENTATION: THE BRIGHT SIDE

While the challenges small counties face are clear, there are also benefits to the broad view that results from being responsible for implementing multiple things. In larger agencies, implementation of different initiatives can occur in silos without a macro-level view of how the pieces fit. For small counties, it can be easier to see how different practices fit together when you are the one (or the few) working to implement all of them.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION TO GET TO OUTCOMES?

By Renée Boothroyd, Scientist and Senior Implementation Specialist, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Getting to outcomes is not as simple as selecting an effective practice model or strategy (“the WHAT”). The process of supporting use of any practice model or strategy (“the HOW”) is just as, if not more important, for creating supportive systems and improving outcomes.



EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Effective implementation is a process of building and ensuring the resources and abilities of both people and organizations to support change.¹⁻⁴ In order for practitioners to deliver the “WHAT” as intended, they need training and ongoing coaching to build competence and confidence. They also need guidance and active support from supervisors, who also need it from managers, who also need it from executive leadership. The environment in which change happens needs to foster the kind of conditions necessary for hosting change. So, paying attention to “HOW” means ensuring deliberate time, effort and processes for adaptive leadership and management strategies for modeling behaviors, eliminating barriers, and creating pathways for change. It is about partnering with communities and systems to identify problems and strategies to address them. And it is about using data to understand and improve the behavior of people and organizations for the benefit of children and families.

PROMISING APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENTATION

The most promising approaches to implementation address known challenges.^{3,5-9} In particular, four common features¹⁰ are key to developing local implementation capacity and effective performance to support use of the practice model for getting to improved outcomes:

A. Linked, local leadership and implementation teams (*Organizational Readiness Building*). People at multiple levels of an organization are specifically resourced and tasked to come together and attend to the day-to-day and ongoing leadership and management activities necessary for effective implementation. Teams of executive leaders, staff and other partners have functional roles and dedicated, on-the-job resources for implementation. Organizational and system practices facilitate progress and problem-solve implementation challenges.^{6,11-16}

Tools and resources focus on assessing, monitoring, and improving organizational culture, climate, functional structures, and processes to support implementing change.

B. Workforce and Professional Development. Ongoing professional development plans and practices (often referred to as training and coaching) for the practice model are in place and build on adult learning best practices. This capacity builds the confidence and skills of staff at all levels—those delivering the practice model and the supervisors, managers, and other leadership who support them. This focus on continuing support to deliver the innovation as intended is another key challenge identified in research and practice.¹⁷⁻¹⁹ Tools and resources focus on assessing diverse staff needs, supporting the coaching role of supervisors, and strengthening staff retention.

C. Engagement, Relationships and Partnership. Internal stakeholders, community, tribal members and system partners are actively involved in co-creating implementation capacity to support getting the practice model into real-world practice. Partners play active roles in listening to identify strengths/barriers, establishing culturally relevant supports and services, detecting practice changes, addressing system barriers and communication and feedback for improvement.²⁰⁻²² Tools and resources focus on defining and formalizing partnering roles and the adaptive and other leadership behaviors necessary to support them.

D. Quality, Outcome and System Monitoring for Improvement. Information and data about implementation, delivery of the practice model, and outcomes are gathered, shared, reviewed, and used by the right people at the right time in order to address problems and improve practices. Organizational and system practices support this ongoing quality improvement work.^{14,15,23,24} Tools and resources focus on identifying “What do we want to know? How will we know it?” and using data to understand and reinforce what is going well and to address challenges.

SO WHAT DOES PAYING DELIBERATE ATTENTION TO THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY MEAN TO YOU AND YOUR AGENCY?

People often get trained in something, and then come back to their same organizational environment and expected to “do it” well and as intended, even though the environment—active support from leadership; resources such as parent partners to help staff engage families; ongoing coaching to help them apply “it”

in different situations; and getting and using data to understand and improve “what it takes” for it to work—is not really supporting it. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to the process of implementation. You must make it relevant and feasible based on your own local context.

What might you take on that could help your county strengthen “what it takes” to effectively support the use of change strategies? Focus deliberately on the four features of effective implementation, and whatever you start on, it will be great!

References

All 24 references used in this article are listed in full with the published article on our Human Services blog at humanservices.ucdavis.edu/blog

“The environment in which change happens needs to foster the kind of conditions necessary for hosting change.”

WHAT

Effective
Practical
Model

HOW

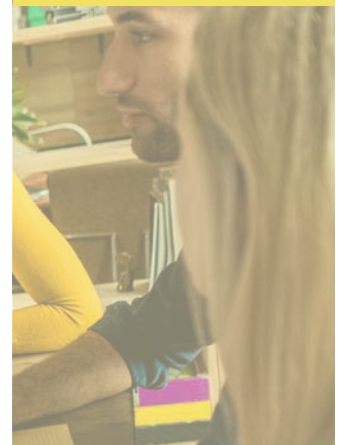
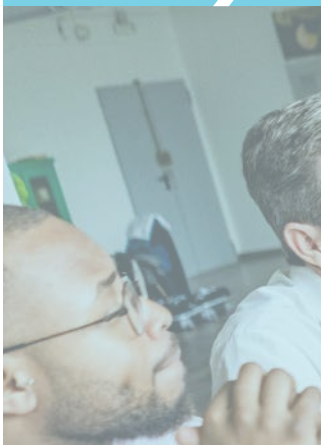
Local
Resources
and Abilities
- of people
and orgs - to
Support Use of
the “WHAT”

SUPPORT

Supportive
and
Efficient Child
and
Family Service
Systems

SAFETY

Improved
safety,
permanency
and well-
being for
children, families,
communities



CREATING A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING

In 2019, as part of the Northern Academy's CQI Thought Takeaways video series, Jami Ledoux from Casey Family Programs talked about implementing CQI by transforming the culture that informs the focus within that system. This article is adapted from her presentation, which is available at <http://bit.ly/CQIConference2019>.



BROWSE CQI TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Check out our website at <https://humanservices.ucdavis.edu/northern-academy/cqi> to browse training and support services available from the Northern Academy.

Many people think of continuous quality improvement (CQI) as something that is done to them. For the true potential of CQI to be realized, we need to change this thinking in a way that allows us to believe and represent that every single person within an organization is responsible for CQI. We must believe CQI is everything about the way we operate, regardless of whether we are working with internal or external stakeholders. In short, it must become a part of our culture.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE'VE CREATED A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING?

A. Assess your environment. It's important to assess and determine how people within your organization or system are experiencing their world. Ask yourself: Is our organization/system corrective or punitive in nature; that is, are we learning what's working and what's not working so it can be used to hold someone accountable when something goes wrong? Or are we learning what's working and what's not working so that we can make corrections and do the work better in the future?

B. Ensure your environment encourages proactivity. Ask yourself: Is our environment reactive or proactive; that is, are we reviewing data on the back end after things have already occurred to be able to determine how things worked? Or are we consistently reviewing data to be able to get upstream so we can make mid-course corrections as needed to prevent outcomes from trending in the wrong direction?

C. Become Outcome-Driven vs.

Compliance-Based. Assess whether your system is outcome-driven or compliance-based by looking at your data. What data sets are reviewed on a regular basis? There's certainly a time and an important place for reports that measure things such as the amount of worker visits and timeliness rates for completing investigations, but those things only measure compliance. They tell us nothing about the quality of the work that we're doing. It's important to also have measures that reflect outcomes. These will tell us what is most important—whether what we're doing is making a difference in the lives of children and families. Ask yourself: Does the data we're reviewing reflect our values? We all say that we value children being with families, but are we reviewing data and putting data out there that measures whether we are keeping children with families? Or are we just reviewing data, for example, that tells us once kids come into the system and whether they are exiting in a timely manner?

The field of child welfare is ever evolving. It's critically important to know whether what we're doing is working or not, and if we don't have consistent CQI processes in place, and if we don't have a culture that allows for people to learn from the work that we're doing at every level of the organization, then we're not maximizing our potential related to the data we have available that represents what's working well for children and families.

ADDITIONAL CQI THOUGHT TAKEAWAYS

Visit <http://bit.ly/CQIConference2019> to access Jami Ledoux and other presenters' thought takeaway presentations, as well as a wealth of other CQI resources, including Ledoux's full keynote presentation from the 2019 CQI Statewide Conference.

IMPLEMENTING ICPM IN AN SOP WORLD

Safety organized practice (SOP) implementation in California began in the northern region in 2008. Over the past decade, this partnership-based approach to engaging children and families and their networks of support has been adopted by many counties across the state, with counties currently at various stages of implementation.

In 2018, the California Department of Social Services rolled out the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM), which provides guidance and direction to support county child welfare, juvenile probation and behavioral health agencies and their partners in delivery of timely, effective and collaborative services to children, youth and families. ICPM incorporates the California Child Welfare Core Practice Model (CPM), Katie A. Core Practice Model, Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) and other practice approaches to provide guiding principles and standards around expected practice behaviors for child welfare, behavioral health and juvenile probation.

At a glance, SOP and the ICPM may come across as two entirely different things that require separate or overlapping approaches for successful implementation. However, upon a closer look at their guiding principles, it's encouraging to see just how beautifully SOP aligns with ICPM.

ICPM GUIDING PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

1. Family voice and choice
2. Team-based
3. Natural supports
4. Collaboration and integration
5. Community-based
6. Culturally respectful
7. Individualized
8. Strengths-based
9. Persistence
10. Outcomes-based

If the guiding principles of the ICPM look similar to SOP, that is because the ICPM and SOP share the same underlying philosophy that the key to improving outcomes for children and families is a collaborative, partnership-based approach with children and their networks of support. SOP inherently supports the guiding practice principles of ICPM, including family voice and choice, a team-based approach, natural supports, collaboration and integration, community-based services and supports, culturally respectful practice, and a persistent, individualized, strength-based, outcome-based, trauma-informed approach.

In essence, ICPM describes the “what” of child welfare work in California (practice behaviors around engagement, teaming, assessment, service planning and delivery, and transition) while SOP provides the “how” (practical, on-the-ground tools and strategies to translate these behaviors to real-world practice). The ICPM leadership behaviors of engagement, inquiry/exploration, advocacy, teaming and accountability also provide a parallel process for child welfare supervisors, managers and directors to conduct themselves in ways that mirror SOP approaches with families.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

While the ICPM and SOP align quite naturally, it's important to recognize that neither ICPM nor SOP should be considered a “one and done” event, but rather an ongoing process of developing a collaborative and partnership-based agency culture and climate that supports: the practice; training new and existing staff; coaching for continued skill development; and supporting increased depth of practice over time.

CHILD AND FAMILY TEAMS

The child and family team (CFT) is the process through which the ICPM framework is implemented with children, youth and families. SOP provides a toolkit and strategies to meet state CFT mandates. For additional information about specific CFT requirements, please see our previous issue at <http://bit.ly/ReachingOut2019>.

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT NEEDS AND STRENGTHS (CANS)

As part of Continuum of Care Reform, the California Department of Social Services selected the CANS as the formal initial and continuous child welfare assessment tool used within the CFT process to inform the case plan goals and placement decisions for the child, youth, and family. The CANS aligns with the intent of SOP to create plans for children, youth and families that are individualized and behaviorally based. Read more about CANS and CFT integration in our previous issue at <http://bit.ly/ReachingOut2019>.

IMPLEMENTING THE INTEGRATED CORE PRACTICE MODEL: A FRAMEWORK

A comprehensive guide to the ICPM, released jointly by DHCS and CDSS, provides a developmental framework as well as a vision for successful implementation. The full resource guide can be accessed at the CDSS website under “Quick Links” at <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/The-Integrated-Core-Practice-Model/about-icpm>

PILOT STUDY: IMPACT OF COACHING ON IMPLEMENTING SAFETY ORGANIZED PRACTICE

In 2012, The Northern Academy at UC Davis developed a coaching model to support the implementation of Safety Organized Practice (SOP) within their service area. Since that time, the use of coaching has spread across the region, state and country; however, limited information has been available regarding coaching's efficacy for SOP implementation, as well as the particular elements of any coaching model that are linked to any gains. This article summarizes findings from a recent exploratory study conducted by the Northern Academy that sought to address these gaps in knowledge by examining both coaching processes and self-reported learner outcomes. The pilot study included interviews with both coaches and learners around the experience of and effects of coaching, as well as quantitative information gathered from coaching session logs, learner surveys and surveys of county leaders and/or key informants around coaching effectiveness.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The vast majority (93 percent) of the effectiveness survey respondents in one of the larger counties endorsed that coaching had a positive impact on SOP implementation. Interviews in other counties large and small provide additional context and explanation for this high-level finding. For example, one coach asserted that the coaching process initially served as a prompt to learners regarding SOP goals, and then provided a sustainment function later on in implementation:

"When we first started, in those first few years when people were still trying to figure [SOP] all out... It was like a reminder just seeing me or just having me email them and say, 'Hey, I'm going to be coming. Let's make sure we've got some goals set for the day, an agenda.' And they said that just even my physical appearance, my presence was a reminder of their SOP goals... And now, I think it's about sustaining the practice and the reinforcement of, and working on those areas where they could still do some upgrades."

Several respondents summed up the role coaching played in implementing SOP in their counties.

"I think we're far enough along at this point that if coaching just disappeared tomorrow, I feel like I'd find a way to keep [SOP] going. But my worry is that it wouldn't be sustainable. What if I moved on and the next program manager didn't know about SOP? More of my concern is for longevity and sustainability."

(Program Manager)

"As a supervisor, I think [coaching] helps reinforce the [SOP] practice. So it's not just coming from a supervisor's perspective. It's also coming from coaching, and having management support from the top down also helps."

(Supervisor)

Overall, social workers shared positive experiences of how SOP was being used to improve practice in serving families. One social worker's response is quoted below:

"I feel like [coaching] would have just been pushed to the side and continue to get pushed to the side because we were too busy to try and figure out how to implement [SOP]. And with coaching, they made it just really easy; [we] can just implement this every single day... I feel like we collaborate [more] as an office [now], as a team on every decision... We always do group supervision and really try to get a whole group perspective on what the best decision is to make moving forward with a family... And I think that it helps the families too because there's no surprises. They get kind of familiar with our work and how we make decisions... it provides them with a level of consistency in our work that they're not used to. The system has kind of changed."

NEARLY ALL RESPONDENTS SAY COACHING HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON SOP IMPLEMENTATION



A complicating factor that must be addressed is whether coaching is provided as a voluntary, supportive resource or a mandated activity. There was a sharp disparity in perspectives from respondents on the utility of coaching based on this one factor. The feedback about coaching from counties that presented coaching as a resource was overwhelmingly positive; in contrast, supervisors from a county that required coaching noted several frustrations with the mandated nature of coaching.

OTHER IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS INCLUDE:

- Approximately two-thirds (63%) of the 151 respondents to a learner survey reported that coaching provided improved motivation, while half (50%) reported gaining new knowledge;
- Coaches must tailor their support to meet each learner’s unique needs and adjust to meet the changing needs of learners across the implementation process;
- Ratings of coaching satisfaction and effectiveness were lower for individuals who had been coached for more than one year and for learners who had more experience. Flexibility in the frequency, duration, location, and mode of coaching may be required to “fit” coaching within the unique child welfare context;
- The topics and strategies employed in a coaching session should balance learner needs and goals jointly defined by both the coach and the learner;

- Thoughtful attention to and timely adjustments to staffing, logistics, and strategies can support gains in motivation, knowledge, skill acquisition, empowerment, and goal-setting

NEXT STEPS

Overall, this exploratory study has provided important insights that advance what is known about how coaching is used within child welfare settings. Important next steps include expanding the sample size by addressing response rates for learner surveys and conducting additional interviews to ensure representation of different types of units, experience levels, counties, and roles. Duration, frequency, learner experience and overall engagement should be examined in future research. Finally, while interview respondents noted that coaching has been connected to positive child and family outcomes, quantitative data to support this assertion has not been identified and is not available on a broad scale at this point.

WHAT IS COACHING?

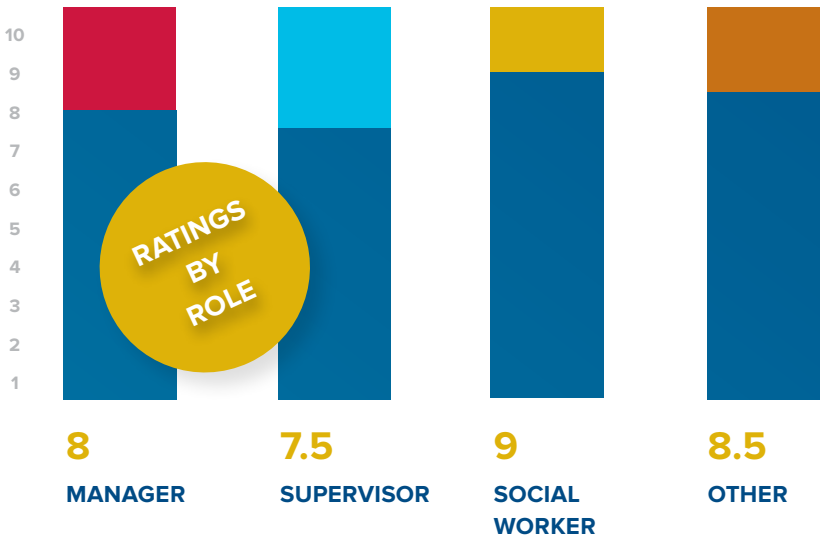
For the purposes of this study, coaching is defined as a “process by which the coach creates structured, focused interaction with learners and uses appropriate strategies, tools, and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the learner, making a positive impact on the organization.” (Northern California Training Academy, 2012).

DOES COACHING IMPROVE OUTCOMES?

Most evaluations of coaching have focused on learner satisfaction with coach attributes and coaching processes, though others have considered attitude changes and skill development. Very few have considered organizational results that are most closely aligned with improved outcomes for children and families, which Leedham (2005) identifies as the apex of a pyramid of potential gains from coaching.

OVERALL COACHING RATING

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being extremely helpful to your growth as a child welfare practitioner), what is your overall impression of your coaching experience?



References

Leedham, M. (2005). The coaching scorecard. A holistic approach to evaluating the benefits of business coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 3(2), 30-44

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS

Continuous Quality Improvement Conference for Child Welfare and Probation

Davis: March 4-5, 2020

Coaching Institute for Child Welfare Supervisors

Anderson: March 30, 2020

CFT Team Meeting Learning Collaborative

Sacramento: April 2, 2020

Anderson: April 3, 2020

Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting Facilitation Skills

Chico: April 13, 2020

Resource Family Approval Learning Circles

Davis: April 13

Coaching Institute for Leadership

Davis: April 15

National Conference on Coaching in Human Services

Davis: May 5-6, 2020

Core for Social Workers, Supervisors, and Additional Training

Please visit our website to browse additional training opportunities.

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NORTHERN ACADEMY

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ABOUT THE NORTHERN ACADEMY

The Northern Academy provides training, research, evaluation and consultation services to child welfare agencies in 28 Northern California counties and two tribes. We deliver the highest quality training, consultation and other professional development services to meet all of our counties' workforce development and organizational development needs.

ABOUT HUMAN SERVICES AT UC DAVIS CONTINUING AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

For more than 40 years, we have empowered human services professionals by providing them with the research-informed and field-tested knowledge and best practices to excel throughout their careers. We are a nationally recognized leader within the field of human services. From Safety Organized Practice to Coaching in Child Welfare to Continuous Quality Improvement, UC Davis has led the way on some of the best practices in human services. Our work is powered by the expertise and resources of UC Davis, one of the world's premier research universities. UC Davis Human Services is housed within the Division of Continuing and Professional Education, the workforce development arm of the university. As experts in adult and online learning, UC Davis Continuing and Professional Education engages working professionals and prepares them for the ever-changing needs, demands and opportunities of the modern economy.

We can't publish this newsletter without you.

We received lots of helpful and interesting feedback on our last issue. Please send your comments and any ideas for future issues to me at

sbrooks@ucdavis.edu

