

Chapter 5: Necessary Conditions: Capacity Building and Staffing

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Chapter 5:

Necessary Conditions: Capacity Building and Staffing

This chapter continues the discussion of the proposed necessary conditions for high quality implementation of collaborative team-based Individualized Service/Support Planning (ISP). The conditions covered in this chapter are those found in the third row of figure 1, and are related the need for building capacity in the specialized skills and knowledge that are required to carry out the ISP practice model.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the team-level need for specialized skills and knowledge. The chapter goes on to discuss the conditions that must be in place at the organizational level to support team members as they acquire these assets, and to retain them afterward. Finally, the chapter discusses the conditions that must be in place in the policy and funding context (system level) in order to support the development of the special skills needed for key roles on ISP teams.

Capacity building/staffing: Team level

- i. Team members capably perform their roles on the team.

This conceptual framework stresses the importance of specialized skills and knowledge that will be required for ISP teams to function effectively. In particular, competent facilitation is seen as essential for creating and maintaining a high-quality team-based ISP process. Teams will also require various other types of skills and knowledge to carry out their work. For example, if teams are to create plans that are truly individualized and community based, they need skill and knowledge to develop individualized resources, particularly those based in the community. While the necessary knowledge (of what services and supports are available, how to access them, and so on) may be distributed across team members, a team may benefit from having at least one team member who specializes in community resources, and who has many connections and sources of information within the community. Beyond this, the team may well require that a member or members have skills in developing new community resources, or in tailoring existing resources to help ensure that children and families can have successful experiences when accessing them. Other skills and knowledge required for effective ISP teamwork will include, for example, those related to empowering the family in the planning process, building on strengths, and locating effective providers.

These sorts of skills and knowledge may be spread across different team members in different ways on different teams. For example, on one team, a parent advocate may facilitate the team and also work with the family around defining strengths. On another team, the parent advocate may be exclusively concerned with drawing out and supporting the family perspective during team meetings. On many teams, the facilitator is also the care coordinator; however, some teams use a model of planning that relies on a facilitator who specializes in that role, and fills no other role on teams. Some

agencies have designated resource developers, while in other agencies, case managers are expected to fulfill this function.

While teams can work to attract team members who have desired skills and knowledge, the lead organization will bear much of the responsibility for ensuring that these assets are present on teams. The primary mechanism for this will be through support for an adequately comprehensive practice model, which will provide guidance about the various responsibilities of team members with specialized roles. Lead and partner organizations must also provide working conditions that allow them to hire, train, and retain team members with needed skills and knowledge.

Capacity building/staffing: Organizational level

- i. Lead and partner agencies provide working conditions that enable high quality work and reduce burnout.

The work climate created by the organization is known to be associated with positive service outcomes and service quality.^{4,17} In particular, much research has been conducted about the relationship between job turnover, job satisfaction and burnout. The ability to keep workers who have attained the skills needed to perform effectively on ISP teams is directly related to the program's ability to achieve good outcomes. In our interviews, we heard much concern about the rapid turn over among ISP facilitators and others with special roles on the team. There is at least some evidence that burnout and subsequent turnover may be related to the intensity of the interaction with families and the number of crises the family experiences.^{9,18} Corrigan and colleagues² report that mental health workers who are emotionally exhausted (one component of burnout) are also likely to report a lack of cooperation and collaboration on their teams. The positive experiences of working on effective teams is a buffer against the difficulties and challenges that inevitably arise, as is supportive supervision.¹⁶ The lead agency that hires, trains, and supervises team facilitators plays a strong role in demonstrating that it values the special skills that team facilitators need. Providing effective supervision and support (Chapter 3) are important in increasing the skillfulness of facilitators and communicating this value. Rautkis¹⁶ suggests that supportive supervision may be most effective when it is coupled with strategies at the organizational level that address other sources of job stress, such as high workload.

Research on the relationship between heavy work loads and burnout is mixed in its conclusions. Some authors have reported a direct connection between caseload size and burnout¹⁰ while others have failed to find a correlation.^{7,8} In describing more recent work, Rautkis concludes that “work stress had a mediating or intervening effect while support and accomplishment had a moderating or buffering impact on the relationship between work load and burnout” (p. 40). With regard to effective ISP, “teamloads” need to be kept to a level that does not overtax the facilitators. The exact number of teams that a facilitator might handle depends on a number of factors, most importantly the extent to which the facilitator carries out other roles beyond facilitation—e.g. record keeping, case management, meeting and team support, etc. In many cases, facilitators do all of these tasks, and the consensus of our interviewees is that in these instances facilitators should be handling a maximum of ten teams at a

time. Whether or not this is a fixed ceiling is an issue open to further exploration. What is helpful is for the lead agency to articulate a reasonable expectation regarding the number of teams a facilitator will lead at one time and then make decisions that adhere to that benchmark.

Adequate pay and opportunities for career development are also important to facilitator tenure and can be influenced by the organization.¹⁵ In many lead agencies, facilitators are BA-level, often newly degreed, and they receive a salary that many described as “less than a living wage.” Furthermore, there is no clear career path for facilitators, so building a career may mean moving to different positions with different skill sets, or leaving work with public sector clients for private practice or other private systems. Not surprisingly, job tenure for facilitators in most sites was reported to be relatively brief (averaging under two years). Sites with longer facilitator tenure seem to be quite successful in providing intangible benefits to workers—experiences of success and a culture of support and optimism were benefits most often cited. In other sites, the organization has managed to build a value and respect for the role of facilitation in a way that increases the intangible benefits associated with the job. In other instances, particularly one case in which ISP was facilitated by a person whose sole job with teams was facilitation, the pay for the facilitators was substantially higher than average for other staff.

All collaborating agencies must also find ways to reward and promote family members who serve regularly on multiple teams in the role of family advocate or parent partner.¹⁵ Several studies^{3,5,11} have reported that status differential among team members is a barrier to effective team functioning. Frequently, family members who occupy special team positions either volunteer or are paid on an hourly basis and do not receive benefits or experience promotional opportunities or a reasonable salary level.¹³ Treating family members who occupy these roles equally with other team members with regard to training, supervision, compensation and promotion is a tangible way of demonstrating that the organization values their skills.

People from partner agencies also need support from their agencies if they are to do high quality work on ISP teams while avoiding burnout. The supportive partner agency will fully recognize the time commitment that is required for attendance at team meetings and for carrying out team-assigned tasks (Chapter 4). Additionally, supportive partner agencies recognize that staff who participate on ISP teams will acquire skills and knowledge as they gain competence in the collaborative ISP process, and that these represent assets that should be valued and rewarded.

Capacity building/staffing: Policy and funding context (system level)

- i. Policy and funding context supports development of the special skills needed for key roles on ISP teams.

The skills needed by people in key roles on ISP teams (facilitator, parent advocate, resource developer, care coordinator) are in many ways different from the skills and training needed for the development and delivery of services in a more traditional service system.^{12,15} State and local stakeholders have important roles to play with

regard to staff development and training concerns.¹⁵ In a study of human resource issues in the southern region of the country, Pires¹⁴ found that 69% of those surveyed considered workforce issues to be of equal importance to issues of adequate funding in children's mental health. Leaders from the policy and funding context have an important role to play in addressing the development of the special skills needed by staff on ISP teams. This can include providing leadership to efforts to coordinate training across a state or region as well as using policy venues and contractual language to encourage the development of ISP skills.

There are a number of documented examples of states who have employed creative methods for coordinating skill development opportunities, usually focusing on developing skills needed for implementation of a system of care philosophy. Illback and colleagues⁶ describe a process in Kentucky in which a state level interagency council worked to "assess the scope and focus of current provider training, develop strategies for integrating and coordinating initiatives, and formulate a plan to demonstrate coordination and integration of training in pilot regions" (p. 148). In the early childhood arena, Cantrell¹ describes a method of cross training that includes bringing together administrators from various service components to educate each other about their activities.

Other ways that leaders in the policy and funding context can be supportive of skill development needed by ISP team members involve using their ability to make policy and control resources through contract language. The lead organization may have the responsibility to train and supervise people in these key roles; however, it is the policies and rules set at the system level that makes it feasible for this to happen. Leaders within the policy and funding context have the ability to develop contracts and administrative rules that reflect an understanding of the need to retain and continually upgrade the skills of people in specialized team roles. Further, policies and contracts can set the standard for compensation, promotion and workload levels. Without some conceptual support from the system level, it is very difficult for administrators in the lead agency to maintain a commitment to people in key roles on the ISP team, given competing demands and financial pressures.

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