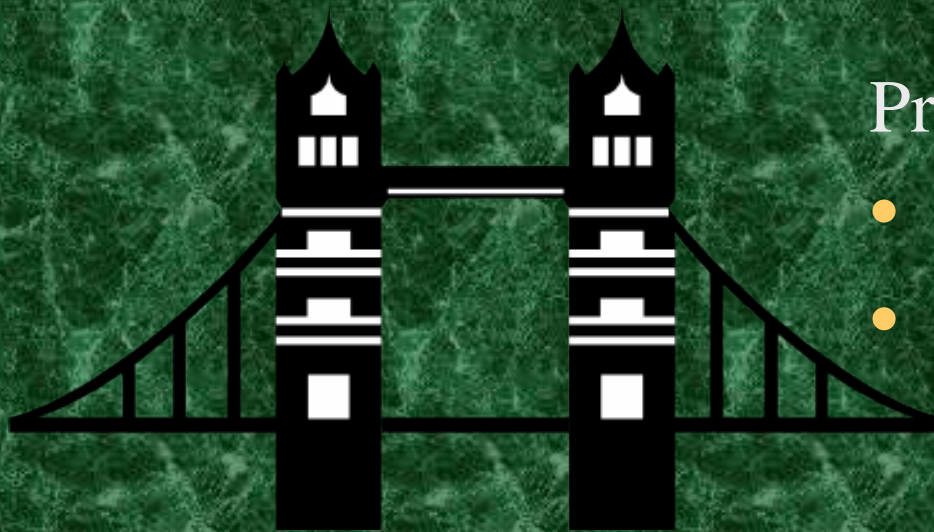


# Crossing the Bridge to Family/Professional Partnership/Relationships Training



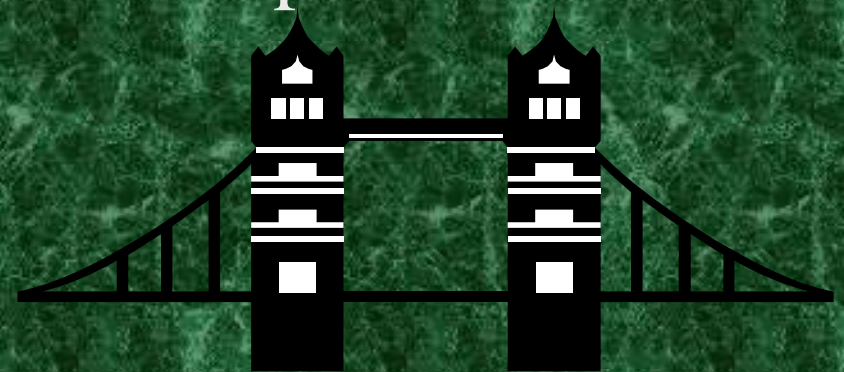
Presenters Today:

- Jeanette Barnes
- Sherry Axson

July 2005

# CROSSING THE BRIDGE

- First let us say that we are here with the spirit of learning and teaching each other.
- The Bridge has been built.
- Today We are here as Friends and Colleagues to Cross the Bridge for Change, Hope, Partnership/Relationships!

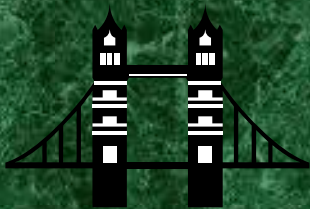


# Seek First to Understand

“Seek first to understand involves a very deep shift in paradigm. We typically seek first to be understood. Most people do not listen with the intent to reply. They are either speaking or preparing to speak.”

By: Unknown.

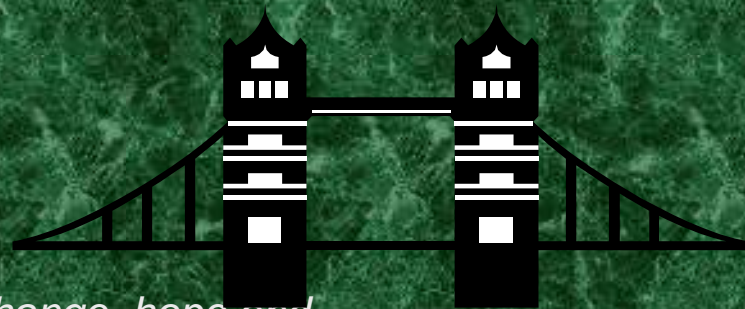
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*Crossing the bridge for Change, Hope and  
Partnership/Relationships!*

# Overview

- We will discuss family/professional partnership/relationships
- Risks and perceived fears around family/professional partnership/relationships
- Sustaining family/professional partnerships
- The Benefits of the Partnership
- The existing Developed family/professional partnerships



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*Crossing the bridge for change, hope and  
Partnership/Relationships!*

# CREATING THE PARTNERSHIPS

- “Understanding that many child serving agencies got their start rescuing children from bad situations. That history of child rescuing has historically included rescuing children from their families, and in particular their parents. To move away from that image to an image of partnership represents a major cultural shift in many organizations.” *By: Patricia Miles*

# What's Everybody so Afraid of?: The Perceived Risks of Family Involvement

- The most critical key to developing strategies for professionals and families to work together effectively lies in understanding why both partners feel it is dangerous, risky and intensely difficult work.
- Any partner's ability to be creative enough, or persistent enough to overcome political, financial, and structural barriers obstructing the process needs some sense of safety.

# Why is this work of “joining together” perceived as dangerous and hard?

The common themes found in the following quotes point to a sense of mutuality, to mutual vulnerabilities...

# Families and Providers/Professionals respond with statements such as:

F=Families

P=Providers/Professionals

F: “I’m afraid of losing custody of my child if I make too much trouble.

P: I’m afraid I’ll have to answer to my boss for a decision I didn’t make.

F: I’m afraid my child’s providers will be angry with me for speaking out and reject us.

P: I’m afraid of losing my professional identity –  
status – ownership of the expertise.

F: I am angry about being exploited – showcased every time the program goes after another grant. After they get the money, we never hear from them. And, I'm afraid that won't change.

P: I'm afraid no one will want the treatment I'm so proud to offer.

F: I'm afraid family voices won't make a difference. We've been asked to speak for a cause without enough information, but we're told what to say.

P: If families take over, we'll all lose our jobs, our financial security.

F: I'm afraid of feeling like a failure when I speak out for other parents, but I cannot make things better for them.

P: If partnering with families doesn't work, I'll be seen as incompetent – and a traitor to my profession for trying.

F: I'm afraid of being blamed for my child's problems.

P: Things are changing so fast, I'm afraid I can't keep up. When families want so much so quickly, I'm afraid of not being able to deliver and being helpless and incompetent.

F: I am afraid to tell others I don't have an education for fear they won't respect me.

P: I'm afraid a family will hurt their child and I'll be blamed for trying to collaborate with them.

F: I'm afraid to let other's know about my own disabilities for fear of being judged or misunderstood.

P: I feel families only see us as our roles – not as fellow human beings.

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# 6 Mutual Themes Emerge

- Fear of losing power and control.
- Fear of having responsibility without authority.
- Fear of loss of personal and professional identity and value.
- Fear of being seen as incompetent.
- Fear of Isolation – of being excluded.
- Fear of a child getting hurt.

# #1 Fear of Losing Power and Control

- Almost everyone fears losing the power and control they believe they possess – or should possess.
- Professionals who are accustomed to being in control of their practice, program or agency are understandably concerned about losing that control and of being without the power base from which they do their work.
- Families who have been generally marginalized and powerless fear any further loss of control.

# Thoughts To Ponder while We Are Crossing the Bridge

- A potentially serious mistake in responding to the power issue would be to replicate the existing imbalance of power in the system.
- By giving families all of the power over professionals – to simply replace one power group with another – would not be a move toward mutual participation in the evolution of improved systems of care.
- Any group's power over any other group simply does not constitute an environment for partnership/relationships for mutual participation in the system's creation.

## #2 Fear of having responsibility without authority

- As responsibility is shared and shifted with new alliances and collaborations, there is fear that a participant will make decisions without having authority to do so.
- It is imperative that the boundaries of the decision-making process be clearly outlined and accepted by *all members* of the group/team.

# #3 Fear of loss of personal and professional identity and value

- As Roles and responsibilities shift, members share a general concern about their own value in the process.
- The *common theme* shared by all participants is the general fear of not being valued as human beings.
- All members consider being valued by another human being just as important as being considered capable of effectively handling their position or responsibility.

# #4 Fear of being seen as incompetent.

- An express concern by professionals is if they are not successful in treating the situation, they will be viewed as incompetent.
- However the lack of success may be due to the fact that their resources are over burdened and under supported (the phrase, interestingly enough, generally used to refer to the conditions of families' lives).

- Certainly families who have children with serious emotional disturbances, children who are involved in the juvenile justice system, or children who need special assistance of any kind are concerned about the “blame the family” mentality.
- Families fear that professionals generally enter into the situation prejudiced by the assumption that as a parent (usually a families most coveted status) they are less than competent

# #5 Fear of isolation – of being excluded

- Families of children with mental health needs already know the painful experience of isolation.
- Professionals cited a fear of being rejected by their professional peer group for participating in family involvement based programs.

## #6 Fear of a child getting hurt

- Professionals ask what if a child is hurt by parents who have destructive behavior or harmful behavior?
- Families ask what if my child is hurt by lack of appropriate services and supports, or worse yet, by professional practices born out of institutionalized racism?

## Thoughts to Ponder while we are Crossing the Bridge

- “But some families hurt their children” is the oldest excuse in the world for not engaging in family involvement, partnership/relationships.
- Yes, there are families who hurt their children.
- More often than not families who have been stressed without support beyond their resilience, who love their children and who are loved by their children.
- More often than not these are the very families children will stay in contact with for their entire lives, outlasting by decades any contact with any professional.
- There are clergy and therapists, teachers and scout leaders who hurt children.

# Consider that family involvement and Partnership/Relationships can be the best possible pathway!

- Toward helping families who hurt their children,
- Toward stopping professionals who hurt children,
- Toward finding resolutions for poverty,
- Towards ending racism and discrimination,
- Towards keeping child in their community rather than in institutions.

These themes point to a significant mutuality in the vulnerabilities people feel as they enter into this new way of doing business.....

- Everyone wants to feel valued, respected, competent, in control of their own “sphere” of responsibility.
- No one wants to feel powerless or manipulated.
- It does not appear that any of the partners wish for anything less than positive outcomes for children and their families.
- As Communities implement and evaluate services and supports for children and youth, they must respect the humanness of *all members* of the system.

Practice honesty with each other  
and all involved with the care of a  
child & expect the same from  
others.

- Differentiate between confronting and addressing a situation
- Assessing own communication style
- Creating conditions for honest and open conversations at meetings

# Differentiate between confronting and addressing a situation

- The difference between confronting and addressing a concern often is in the outcome one is looking for.
- When confronting a concern the goal of the person doing the confronting is often for the other person to identify what they have done wrong.
- When addressing a concern the person speaking is looking for a way to come up with a solution so it's no longer a concern.

# Assessing our own communication style

- Effective partners recognize their own challenges and are ready to “own them” openly.
- This includes assessing one’s own judgment and attitudes as well as skill and patterns in certain situations.
- Partners must be aware of when they are challenged by certain situations within partnership/relationships and communicate what they are doing about those situations.

# Creating conditions for honest and open conversations

*“Can you help me understand?”*

# SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIP/RELATIONSHIPS

- Basic Training where families and professionals come together.
- Realizing that integrating family perspective is helpful on the practice, program, and system levels.
- Families as a resource for professionals.
- Families working with professionals in partnerships as system advocates.
- Families as evaluators in partnership with professionals.

# LOOKING BACK – LOOKING FORWARD

“ Parent involvement is not some kind of fad that will pass, it is the core of systems change. It is the only thing that can make true reform in human services possible.

-Orrego, 1996

# BENEFITS of Family/Professional Partnerships from Professionals

- Allows for shared responsibility
- Pools System dollars together in the Wrap Around model
- Brings creative and non traditional connections, resources and supports to [their] efforts
- Peer Supports help to build a bond of trust between parents and professionals

# Benefits of Family/Professional Partnerships

- It is often easier for <sup>(continued)</sup>Peers to say “the hard things”, and families often hear more clearly a message that comes from personal experience
- Peer Supports are a valuable resource - they bring their own wisdom, from similar experiences, and the ability to “think out of the box”
- Peer Supports working with parents have fewer, or at least more “elastic”, boundaries than those to which professionals must adhere

# Benefits of Family/Professional Partnerships

(continued)

- Family and Professional Partnerships are key to breaking the stigma and moving beyond blame
- Because of their own personal experiences, families bring a wealth of assets to the process when it comes to building, finding and sustaining Natural Supports

# CHANGING OUR WORLD

- *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever does.*
- *- Margaret Mead.*

# Family/Professional Partnership Connections

- King County Regional Support Network
- Family Organizations/Youth Organizations
- Community Mental Health Agencies
- King County Inter Agency Staffing Teams
- King County System of Care Partnership
- Community Connectors: Mental Health Division – DSHS
- National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

# Family Organization Involvement

- Parent Partner: Contracts with Community Mental Health Agencies/Inter Agency Staffing Teams to provide Peer Support to Parents/Caregivers.
- Provide Training Institutes: Wraparound, Family/Professional Partnerships, Facilitation, Parent Partner, Parents Empowered
- Connected to SAFEWA - Statewide Action for Family Empowerment of Washington
- Community Connectors: Mental Health Division
- National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

# COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AGENCIES

- Parent Coordinators
- Resource Support Groups: The groups are independent of each other; individualized and tailored for each community
- Connecting Parent/Caregiver voice In Child Serving Systems
- Connecting Parents/Caregivers/Youth to other Family Organizations in and out of the Networks of Support

# COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AGENCIES

- Partner with other Advocacy Organizations that focus on Children's Mental health issues.
- Present to the community information about the Family Networks of Support.
- Provide a referral base of Parents/Caregivers to reach within departments - Mental Health, Chemical Dependency, etc.
- Provide connection to Schools: School based therapists, social workers, etc.
- Provide connection to Juvenile Justice involved families.

# What ties us Together

- *"Many children are not intrinsically connected to a hopeful future. Any time we connect them with hope, we empower them; when we fail to do so, we disable them. It is our job and our privilege to interrupt hopelessness."*  
*-Margery Ginsberg*