

WHAT STRUCTURES DO WE NEED TO GET CHILD SERVING AGENCIES TO WORK TOGETHER MORE EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY?

FIRST AXIOM - Parents At The Table: No group, whether at the executive, agency state, regional or local level should never meet to discuss child policy without a parent of a child being served by one of our agencies is on the room.

SECOND AXIOM - Common Principles: Children's policy should adhere principles consistent with what has been come to be known in our state as System of Care *principles. The principles are:

- being strength based,
- using evidence based practices whenever possible,
- family involvement,
- taking multi-disciplinary approaches,
- being culturally competent,

THIRD AXIOM – Today Is Not About Money and Power: We are not talking about new money for anyone's program, or taking money or authority away from one agency to give it to another agency. When we do talk about money, we are talking about transparency, establishing ways to look at the costs of serving children who move through our systems, using funds in consultation with other agencies, leveraging funding, etc.

*A number of agencies in North Carolina besides mental health, including courts, juvenile justice, DSS, parts of education, etc., have already bought into these concepts and this term. Diverse parent groups know it as a commitment that they will have a place at the table and want agencies to use it. These principles are recognized as being best practice across all fields serving children and are emerging as the standard for adults as well. There is increasing evidence, in North Carolina and across the US, that where these principles are used, on a population basis, there are better outcomes. There is a good chance federal rules in both mental health and child welfare will require the use of these principles.

OTHER POINTS

1. There is already a great deal of collaboration going on. The legislature should try to build on these efforts rather than think it has to hand down new edicts in order to get people to do what is right. We did not recognize the good things we are already doing as clearly as we should have last time.

2. While we do not need permission to do what is right for kids, the legislature can make it easier rather than harder.

At the county and regional level there are incredible collaborative efforts going on that improve lives and make better use of resources. Nobody in Raleigh made them do these things. Our job should be to help and support those efforts.

3. We need a system to learn about, and where possible, remove those barriers.
(This is one of the things we have tried to do at the collaborative. While we could get answers for some groups, we probably need more formal structures to support and expand these kinds of efforts.)

4. Each of our agencies has important initiatives that have the potential to improve the lives of children through collaboration and using existing resources more effectively. We need a way to make sure these efforts are in sync. (This is something we have done pretty well at the collaborative)

What we need at the executive level. At the highest levels of state government officials should see themselves as supporting local regional and state efforts to collaborate in order to make the best use of existing resources. The MOA's developed and signed as part of the CTSP process are a model of what this could look like.

We need a body that can look at funding issues as kids move between programs.

We need a body that can get information about how funds that serve children are being spent

We need a group that can give timely answers to questions raised by local groups.

We need a group that can actively encourage, reward and otherwise norm collaborative activity.

We need a group that can hear and learn from difficult cases raised by local groups

What we need at the state/agency level. We need neutral forums where appropriate staff from numerous child serving agencies staff , family representative, professional groups and advocates can work on ways to improve services for children.

What we need regionally. Regional staff from child serving agencies should be encouraged to meet together at least once a year and develop ways to coordinate activities where they see fit. In different regions this will look differently.

What we need locally. Local groups should have the power to organize themselves to better meet the needs of their communities. While there is no one size fits all, local agencies should be held accountable for participation in collaborative activities. All state and federal funds administered at the local level should be allocated as part of an open collaborative process. Many already are. Whether it be JCPC, Safe School, CTSP, GCC, etc. funds, at a minimum, all relevant child serving agencies should be aware of an and input into this process. Ideally all agencies should have to sign off on these decisions before any funds can be expended. The local MOA's developed and signed as part of the CTSP process are a model of what this could look like.

Three more points about collaboration

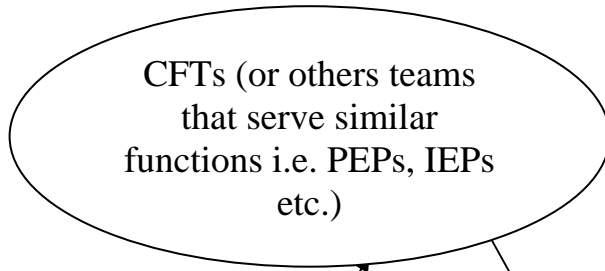
1. While it would be nice to have official executive and/or legislative support, people generally try to do the right thing for children. Executive and legislative groups can make it harder for people to work together or they can make it easier to work together, but they can neither make people start working together or stop people from working together.

2. When thinking about encouraging collaboration, the legislature should think about how it could/should support collaborative efforts, rather than just handing down an edit and expecting behavior to change.

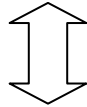
3. We already probably have too many laws on the books telling people to work together. Their existence will never have any impact unless we develop ways to monitor their outcomes and tie behavior to real consequences. Inertia is as powerful a force in government as it is in nature.

WHAT SHOULD OUR WORLD LOOK LIKE

A



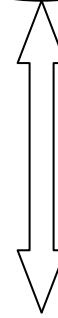
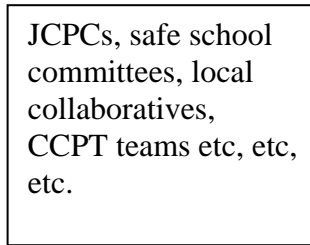
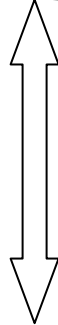
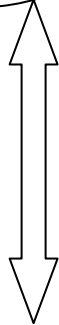
No child should be placed out of school, home or county without a strength based, multi-disciplinary meeting without the opportunity for parent participation. Children and their families should receive integrated services and supports that are outcomes-accountable through one unified Child and Family Team that is individualized for each child/family.



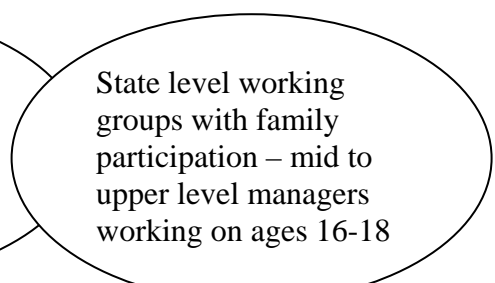
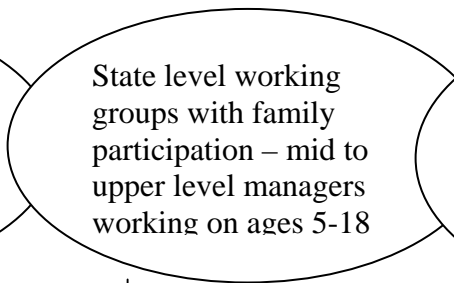
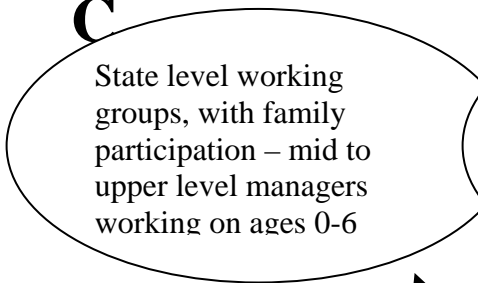
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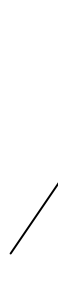
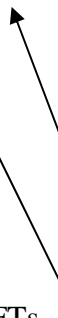
Local groups are empowered to work together, coordinate local funding etc. in order for CFTs to achieve outcomes for children and their families



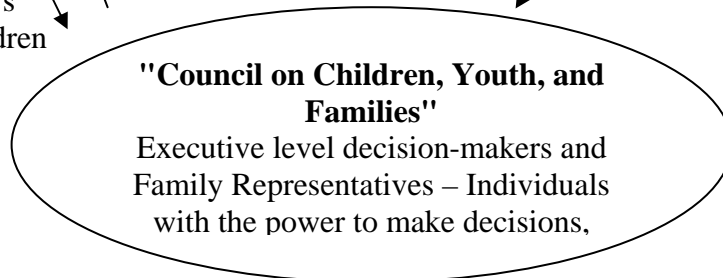
C



C. Much like existing efforts, this group develops new ways for agencies to work together to coordinate children's services in order for to help their CFTs to achieve outcomes for children and their families.



D



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"Council on Children, Youth, and Families" This would coordinate collaboration among mental health, social services, education, and juvenile justice/services. This would replace the current State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and might replace other existing entities. Its function would be to develop a statewide plan for collaboration and set up a monitoring process for implementation of the plan. The plan would have common outcome measures, which would gauge the socio-emotional health of our children and youth and their families with a holistic view of the child/youth as the focus. Questions:

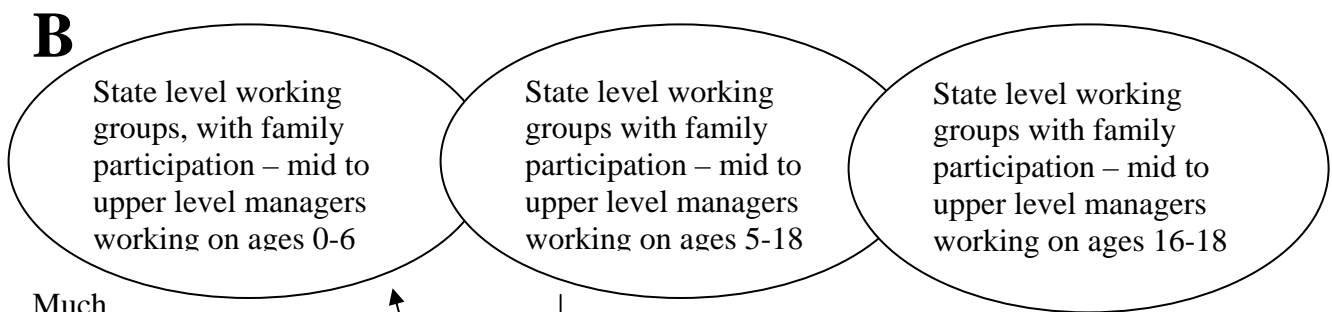
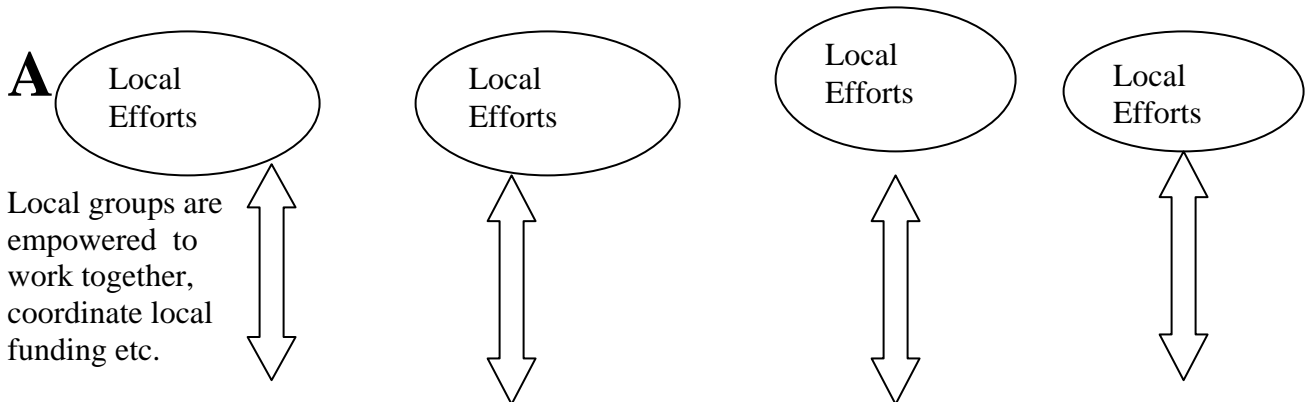
Does the Council need staffing so it is not an add on to already existing functions?

Does the Council need funds for monitoring projects?

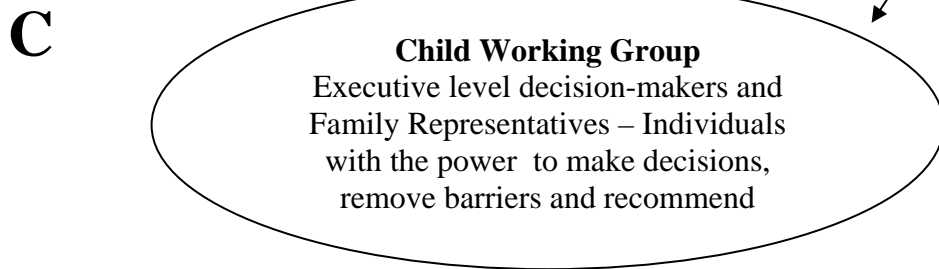
Should the Council include advocacy/ombudsman functions that may already be performed in parts of state government?

We need to be concerned with function as well as structure. This group would not only encourage collaboration. Its ongoing function/task would be to remove barriers and obstacles identified by local groups and address issues raised by mid level cross agency working groups. A second function would be to look at funding and measurement issues as children move between programs. It would benefit from hearing about complex difficult cases where children move between multiple agencies that are stumping raised by local groups. The function would not be to find fault, but to use the case analysis to look for ways to make our systems work better.

What does this look like?



Much like existing efforts, this level develops new ways for agencies to work together to coordinate children's services.



This group will formally encourage collaboration. It will also work to remove barriers and obstacles identified by local groups and address issues raised by mid level cross agency working groups. This group will look at funding issues as kids move between programs and hear difficult cases raised by local groups in order to look for ways to make our systems work better.

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