Community Systems Development Terms and Definitions
September 2017

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to develop common language that could be adopted across state agencies and throughout the early childhood system, to strengthen all stakeholders' shared understanding of community systems development. These common terms and definitions will also inform the development of pre-application supports for the Early Childhood Block Grant re-competition.

Background

A group of state-level CSD program managers worked together over several months in 2016 to develop this working draft of terms and definitions. This process invited input from: Ana Maria Accove (DHS), Samantha Aigner-Treworgy (CPS), Paige Ansley (YWCA), Phyllis Bliven (ISBE), Susan Connor (University of Illinois), Eric Eidson (INCCRRA), Claudia Fabian (DHS), Chris Foster, Michelle Iocca (IHSA), Safiyah Jackson (National Louis University), Sessy Nyman (IAFC), Leah Pouw (IAFC), Elaine Rodgers (Children's Home + Aid), Elizabeth Rothkopf (Erikson Institute), Lisa Sargent-Davis (SGA), Penny Smith (ISBE), Bryan Stokes (OECD), Joanna Su (OECD), Choua Vue (IAFC), and Pam Wicking (4-C). On September 20, 2016, the draft was reviewed by the Community Systems Development Subcommittee (CSDS) of the Early Learning Council's Integration and Alignment Committee and member input was incorporated into this revision. The revised version was shared with CSDS on November 9, 2016 and there were no further changes recommended by the Subcommittee.

Next Steps

These terms will be reviewed by the All Families Served Subcommittee before going forward to the Integration and Alignment Committee and the full ELC.

The group recognizes that there are additional terms related to community systems development that could use further clarification. Additional terms may need to be defined through the Integration and Alignment Committee Work Groups on ECBG Support, and these would come back to the CSD Subcommittee for review.

Terms and Definitions

The Basics of Early Childhood Community Systems Development

Early Childhood: these services include education and support services aimed at improving the health, social-emotional, and cognitive development of young children birth through eight years old.[i]

System: a set of interacting and connected parts that has a shared purpose and functions as a whole.[ii]

Early Childhood system: this brings together early learning, health and mental health, and family support and engagement to improve outcomes for children and families.[iii] Services and programs that are part of the EC system include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Early learning experiences (including: home visiting; family, friend, and neighbor care; family child care homes; center- and school-based early education services; early intervention in natural environments; and special education services).
2. Health and mental health (such as breastfeeding support, Family Case Management/ Better Birth Outcomes, mental health counseling, prenatal health care, well-child visits and immunizations, and WIC.
3. Family support and engagement (such as food pantries, foster care, Intact Family Services, housing/shelter, substance abuse, TANF, violence prevention, and workforce development).

System-building: the ongoing process of developing the structures, behaviors, and connections that make all the components of a system operate as a whole, to promote shared results for children and families.[iv] At the local level, this is referred to as **community systems development**. State-level systems building and local community systems development are both necessary in order for child and family outcomes to improve.

Community systems development: local nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and other partners work in collaboration to focus and align their work, and develop shared processes to achieve common outcomes that also advance the work of each organization. Partners use common data to design and implement systems change in small iterative cycles that adjust as system parts interact. By working to advance a shared community agenda, organizations also improve their own systems and, as a result, may also inform larger system improvements.[v]

Partner, Plan, and Act

Action Learning: a process for problem solving that uses data to learn and adapt strategies. It helps to make efficient use of lean resources, including time, money, and partner capacity. Action learning also helps a collaboration to be innovative in creating solutions. There are many different models for action learning: **Plan-Do-Study-Act** has been used since the 1930s in social work, education, and business; **Build Measure Learn** is the model defined by the Lean Startup; and ExceleRate Illinois provides tools and resources for information resources on **continuous quality improvement for programs**.[vi]

Advocacy: taking action to speak out against or build support for an issue, idea, or social cause.[vii] While all lobbying is advocacy, not all advocacy is lobbying.[viii] In general, lobbying is <u>an attempt to influence specific legislation</u> by communicating views to legislators or asking people to contact their legislators.[ix]

Capacity-building (in a community systems context): Improving the ability of community stakeholders to come together, learn, make well-reasoned decisions about the community's present and future, and work together to carry out those decisions to achieve community systems development. Capacity-building activities include training, technical assistance, coaching, and dissemination of best practices through peer learning communities.[x]

Collaboration: this brings together individuals, community stakeholders, families, and organizations to address and solve shared challenges that cannot be resolved alone. A collaboration develops a shared vision for their community and defines a set of goals to address a community concern.[xi]

Collective impact: occurs when organizations from different sectors agree to solve a specific social problem using a common agenda, aligning their efforts, and using common measures of success.[xii] Important actors from different sectors work together on a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Successful collective impact initiatives typically have five conditions that together produce alignment and lead to powerful results: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations.[xiii] The ABLe Change Framework, the AOK Network Framework, and the Innovation Zones approach are examples of ways to attain collective impact.

Family engagement: There is a continuum of family engagement in the context of community systems and collaborations. In this continuum, families may be ignored, viewed as the recipient of services, utilized as consultants, or fully engaged as a change agent. As the highest level of engagement, as change agents, families are empowered to not only engage in discussions and decision-making, but also actively take part in implementing actions.[xiv]

Linguistically and culturally responsive: The Illinois Early Learning Council's vision is that each and every child will have early childhood experiences that promote healthy development that respects, promotes, and builds on their cultural, racial, ethnic, and other family backgrounds and experiences.[xv]

Measurable: capable of being measured[xvi]: data indicators are established to measure progress toward a specific goal. To determine if a goal is measurable, ask questions such as: How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?[xvii]

Partnership Agreement or MOU: a written agreement between two or more entities to carry out specific objectives (usually including referrals and information sharing) to achieve shared outcomes for children and families. The signed entities are expected to work together throughout the agreement period to ensure that shared child and family outcomes are achieved.

Public policy: laws, mandates, or regulations on public issues that result from a political or government process. Common forms of public policy include laws passed by legislators, budgets that support public priorities, executive orders, or administrative rules and regulations that inform the implementation of laws.[xviii]

Shared agenda: an agenda organized around a set of goals that can guide a collaboration's strategies and work toward systems change.[xix]

Ways of coordinating across programs and sectors:

A. **Shared or mutual referrals:** participating programs use a shared set of protocols and/or a shared form to refer families to each others' services.

B. **Centralized Intake:** usually refers to a system in which all screening and referrals take place through a single point of contact (such as a community-based organization or a toll-free number).[xx]

C. **Coordinated Intake**: a collaborative process that provides families with a single point of entry for programs serving young children and their families within a defined community.[xxi] The main components include:

   1. A shared form and shared procedures for intake or eligibility screening, used by all participating programs.
   2. A single point of entry: while referrals can come from different entities, one organization or entity receives all intake forms, assigns all referrals, and follows up.
   3. Regular meetings of the participating programs to review progress and to trouble-shoot and improve the referral system.

D. E**nrollment pipeline**: connects children and families with the highest needs to high quality early childhood programs, through strong collaboration among community partners. This takes place through leveraging a shared vision and the places and spaces where families already connect. An effective pipeline may include talking points, tracking systems, and small experiments to engage strong communication and referral linkages between non-EC programs and EC programs. Pipelines should be "bi-directional," meaning that non-EC partners should refer to EC partners, and EC partners should refer to non-EC partners.[xxii]

E. **Continuous early childhood services:** smooth transitions between early childhood programs (i.e., from 0-3 to 3-5 to kindergarten, etc.), and aligned, high-quality programming in all of those settings, resulting in children's readiness for school and for life. Through enrollment pipelines into continuous early childhood services, children with the highest needs are identified and enrolled in appropriate services as early as possible, and continue in high quality early education through third grade.[xxiii]

F. **Birth through third grade alignment/ continuity:** this includes the following components[xxiv]:

   1. Community Partnerships: strong education, supports and services for children and families from early childhood programs into early elementary settings.
   2. Comprehensive Services: assistance for families in obtaining health, mental health and dental services, nutrition services and education, and linkages to other community services.
   3. Family Engagement and Parent Leadership: partnerships between schools and engaged families in children's formal education, such as through school-parent communication

about school programs and students' progress, involving parents in school decision-making, and other school-community collaborations.

4. <u>Supported Transitions</u>: increased access to early childhood programs and smooth transitions between programs that support a child's sustained gains into the early grades.

5. <u>Joint Professional Development</u>: developing highly effective teaching staff whose professional development is grounded in child development and effective instructional practices and aligned from birth through third grade (i.e. the PD is consistent across grade levels to support children's success through the early grades)

6. <u>Aligned Curriculum and Instruction</u>: a coherent system with shared expectations for student growth and a focus on both academic and social-emotional skills, supporting a wide range of development, and reflective of children's diverse families and cultures.

7. <u>Aligned Assessments</u>: shared, consistent, and meaningful assessment practices, with appropriate data-sharing across the full early childhood continuum. In Illinois, early childhood assessments should be consistent with the domains from KIDS (the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey).

8. <u>Data-driven improvement</u>: using meaningful child-based assessments and program data to drive instruction, identify achievement gaps, allocate resources, and determine areas for professional development.

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[i] Adapted from UNESCO definition of early childhood and U.S. Department of Education definition of early learning.

[ii] ABLe Change Framework, Michigan State University.

[iii] Adapted from the BUILD Initiative's Early Childhood Systems Working Group "ovals" framework, May 2011.

[iv] State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care/ Head Start, State Legislation and Early Childhood Systems Building, March 2016, and the BUILD Initiative Early Childhood Systems Working Group's Systems Building Tool, December 2013.

[v] Adapted from Illinois Innovation Zones scope of work, 2015.

[vi] Illinois Action for Children, as shown on Partner Plan Act website.

[vii] Illinois Action for Children, as shown on Partner Plan Act website.

[viii] Bolder Advocacy, 2015.

[ix] Independent Sector, Advocacy Rules and Tips.

[x] Adapted from Aspen Institute, Tools for Practice: Measuring Community Capacity Building Workbook, Version 3/96.

[xi] Adapted from ELC SIAC Guiding Principles for Community Systems Development, November 2013, and Illinois Innovation Zones scope of work.

[xii] FSG Collective Impact Forum.

[xiii] Collective Impact, Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011.

[xiv] ABLe Change Framework, Michigan State University.

[xv] Illinois Award of Excellence for Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice, ExceleRate Illinois.

[xvi] Dictionary.com

[xvii] Adapted from the commonly used definition of SMART goals.

[xviii] Illinois Action for Children, as shown on Partner Plan Act website.

[xix] Adapted from AOK Networks framework, IDHS, and ABLe Change Framework, Michigan State University.

[xx] Centralized Intake Best Practice Guide, Iowa Early Childhood Quality Services and Programs Component Group, 2010.

[xxi] Illinois MIECHV Program.

[xxii] Adapted from Innovation Zone materials, Illinois Action For Children.

[xxiii] Adapted from Innovation Zone materials, Illinois Action For Children.

[xxiv] Illinois Preschool Expansion Communities: Birth Through 3rd (B-3) Grade Continuity Program FAQ, OECD, ISBE, and Illinois State University's Center for the Study of Education Policy.