



100 years of serving our nation's children and families

Taking Risks with Risk: Balancing Child Safety with Family Engagement

Centennial Topical Webinar Series

February 21, 2013



Our Goals Today

- Basic definitions
- Describe the NH Practice Context
- Engage voices from the field
- Introduce the Better Together Methodology
- Stimulate dialogue and conversation

Some basic definitions

- Safety
- Risk

Safety

- Our responsibility to safety
 - The essence of Child Protective Services (CPS) is child safety intervention
 - That is the heart of our Mission
- A framework for safety – Basic definitions
 - **Safe** is a condition in which the threat of serious harm is not present or imminent or the protective capacities of the family are sufficient to protect the child
 - **Unsafe** is a condition in which the threat of serious harm is present or imminent and the protective capacities of the families are not sufficient to protect the child

Safety Assessment

“Safety assessment involves analyzing individual and family conditions, behavior, perceptions, attitudes, motives, emotions and situation to determine whether threats to safety exist.”

(Child Safety and Substantiation of Child Maltreatment, August, 2008)

Child Maltreatment

“Maltreatment is an act, failure to act, or pattern of behavior on the part of the caregiver that results in death or physical, medical, sexual, or emotional harm or presents imminent threat of harm to a child.”

(A Framework for Safety in Child Welfare – National Association of Child Welfare Administrators)

Risk

- **Risk:** The chance that a child will be abused or neglected in the future
- **Risk assessment:** Looking at the chance a child might be abused or neglected in the future
- **Safety assessment:** Deciding if a child is in danger of being hurt right now

Let's keep in mind that there is a distinction between safety and risk!

NH Practice Context

- Rebuilding Practice Foundations
 - 2010 – Practice Model Design
 - Strategic Goals: Increase family engagement and practice consistency
- Family Engagement Strategies
 - NH Integrated Assessment
 - Solution-based casework
 - Family Team Meetings
 - Parent Partner program

Solution-based Casework (SBC)

- Building partnerships with families
- Focused on pragmatic, everyday life events
- Targets measureable prevention skills

Solution-based Casework (SBC)

- SBC requires staff to be skilled in partnering with families
- But what does partnership with families look like?
- Veteran parents can teach us how to partner with families

How do we get parents to the table?

Strategies for improving birth parent engagement (e.g. early outreach and frequent contact), including reducing institutional mistrust through a supportive atmosphere where goals are clear and established and removing logistical barriers (e.g. transportation and child care), can be utilized to increase birth parent participation in the child welfare system.

NH adopted the Better Together methodology to get parents to the table.

Parent and Field Voices

- Parents speak up and share stories
 - Child Protection
 - Juvenile Justice
- Field staff share their experiences
 - Assessment CPSW
 - Field Supervisor

Parent Stories

- Child Protection
 - First time involved
 - Second time involved
 - Becoming a parent leader
 - Behaviors of staff that promote engagement

Are we going “soft on safety” as we shift our culture and practice to promote family voice and family choice?

Parent Stories

- Juvenile Justice
 - Involvement with DCYF...
 - When a child/youth is removed from the home for abuse, neglect and/or juvenile justice, families feel:
 - Alone
 - Scared
 - Judged
 - Helpless
 - What do families need?

Parent Stories

- Juvenile Justice
 - Work together – families need us to work in partnership WITH them, not against them
 - Communication is key
 - Engage and empower families
 - Safety is a priority
 - Involve families with decision making
 - Utilize peer to peer support
 - Reunification is the goal!

Are we going “soft on safety” as we shift our culture and practice to promote family voice and family choice?

Field Voices

- Child Protective Service Worker
 - The role of an Assessment CPSW
 - Integrating parent voice in assessing for safety and risk
 - How do you do it effectively?
 - Tips, tools, and strategies?
 - What are the challenges?
 - What about fathers?

Are we going “soft on safety” as we shift our culture and practice to promote family voice and family choice?

Field Voices

- Field Supervisor
 - The supervisor's role – safety decision makers
 - Utilizing supervision to help staff integrate parent voice in assessing for safety and risk
 - How do you do it effectively?
 - Tips, tools and strategies?
 - What are the challenges?
 - What about fathers?

Are we going “soft on safety” as we shift our culture and practice to promote family voice and family choice?

NH Parent Partner Strategy – Core Elements



RECRUITMENT
Engagement and
Mobilization



TRAINING
Capacity
Development



ROLES
Involvement
Continuum



Parent Partner Program

- Who are we?
 - Parent Leaders and staff
 - We are a **partnership** between parents, staff and allies, and we promote parent voice, the value of collaborative work, and the importance of shared decision making.

Foundations & Strategic Direction

- Biggest value we bring to the table: **parent voice!**
- We see strong, genuine support for listening to and incorporating parent perspectives in practice. This is across the State.

“Parent involvement has been the catalyst for the fastest, most useful, most sustainable change in practice I’ve ever seen... And the biggest bang for the buck.”

Parent Partner Program

- Our Vision

The vision of this program is that fathers and mothers are included and valued as partners in our day to day work with families in New Hampshire. That parent leaders are visibly present serving as a resource to other parents and to staff supporting the mission of the Division.

Parent Partner Program

- Our Mission

In partnership – we plan, design, create, manage and sustain programs and strategies to bring the voices of fathers and mothers to create positive changes in child welfare practices and policies to improve the lives of children and youth, increase reunifications, support and strengthen New Hampshire's families.

Parent Partner Program

- Our Beliefs

The Parent Partner program shares the beliefs and principles of the Division for Children, Youth and Families.

The following are also Core Values of this program:

Partnerships for safety

Parent leadership

Engaging fathers

Program Goals

- Build agency capacity to partner with families
- Build parent capacity to partner with the division
- Systematically integrate parent voice in all the work DCYF does with families in NH
- Improve child welfare and juvenile justice outcomes for children, youth and their families

Better Together
with Birth Parents

Father
Engagement
Action Team

Program
Pillars

Reunification
Mentoring
Program

Parent Partners

Better Together Workshops

- Philosophy
 - Better Together fosters equal and mutually respectful partnerships between birth parents, child welfare agency staff and community allies
 - Birth fathers and mothers must be involved if the Division for Children, Youth and Families is to successfully improve the lives of children and also increase reunification outcomes
 - Together in partnership, parents and staff will better achieve the goals of keeping children in safe, loving and permanent homes

Better Together Workshops

- How does it work?
 - Eight parents with closed cases and eight staff spend two days learning to partner
 - Curriculum-based workshop – Casey owned curriculum
 - Facilitated by a parent leader and a staff modeling the value of partnering
 - Interactive activities that promote respect and partnership
 - Address power dynamics, gender issues, and what gets in the way of authentic partnering
 - Helps participants understand the power of values and perceptions, trust issues
 - Creates opportunities for parents to share what they need and can offer
 - Participants practice active listening skills
 - Participants collaborate to develop partnership tools and strategies
 - Race and culture
 - The power of parent voice and leadership is honored and celebrated

Better Together Workshops

- The Numbers – Workshops and people involved:
 - 16 Regional BT workshops since the beginning (6 in 2011, 9 in 2012, 1 in 2013)
 - **Over 260 parents and professional staff have attended**
 - Goal: Improve reunifications by promoting quality relationships between parents, professional staff, and allies from the very beginning – partnering early in the process
- Immediate Impact
 - BT is viewed as an important initial stage of parent partnership
 - *“My casework changed that day. It was that profound. I learned what I could do differently.”* CPSW
 - *“I will never approach a removal the same way.”* Seasoned supervisor.
- Lasting Impact
 - Strong, visible pool of parent leaders all over the State – integrating parent voice in committee work, panels, and practice improvement efforts
 - Parent Engagement Action Teams in each local office – testing partnership tools and strategies
- Unique to 2012
 - Integrated Better Together workshops into Core Training for new CPSWs
 - Piloted Better Together with line staff at a Residential Treatment Facility – Easter Seals
 - We offered the BT workshop at the SYSC for the first time

Better Together – what are we learning?

- Children's safety is a shared goal
- Most parents want to and can provide a safe and nurturing home for their children

Better Together Workshops

- Partnerships for safety – what are we learning?
 - Active engagement of birth parents, children, youth, and their kin with the Division and service providers is fundamental to:
 - Assessing safety and risk
 - Making sound decisions
 - Maintaining ongoing focus on permanency and well-being
 - Developing and implementing appropriate safety interventions
 - The most desirable place for children to grow up is in their own safe, nurturing and caring families

Better Together Workshops

- Parents and staff truly experience what partnership looks like at these Better Together workshops
- Staff hear directly from parents what it is like to be involved with the Division
- Parents and staff build together partnership tools and strategies

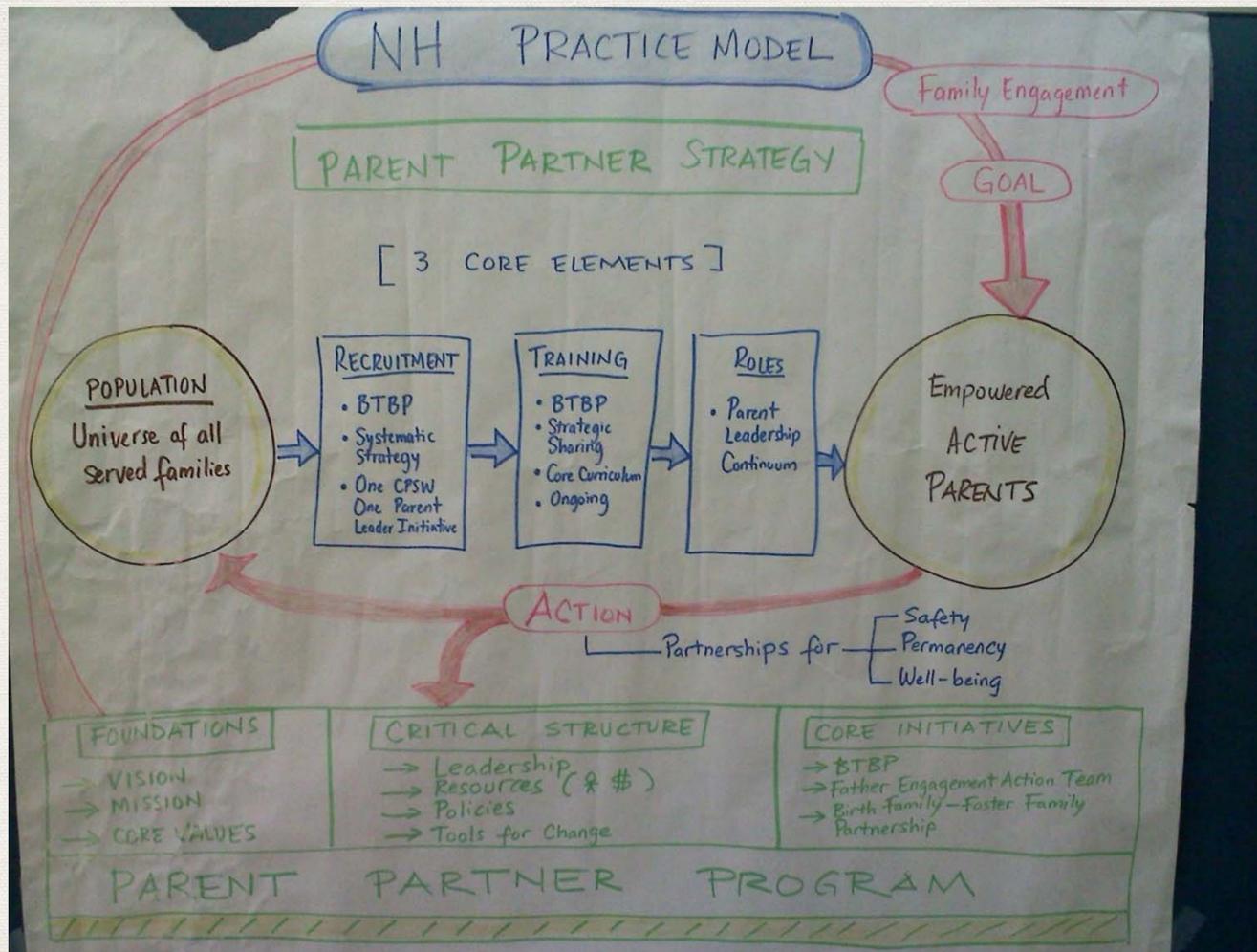
Better Together – Practice Improvement

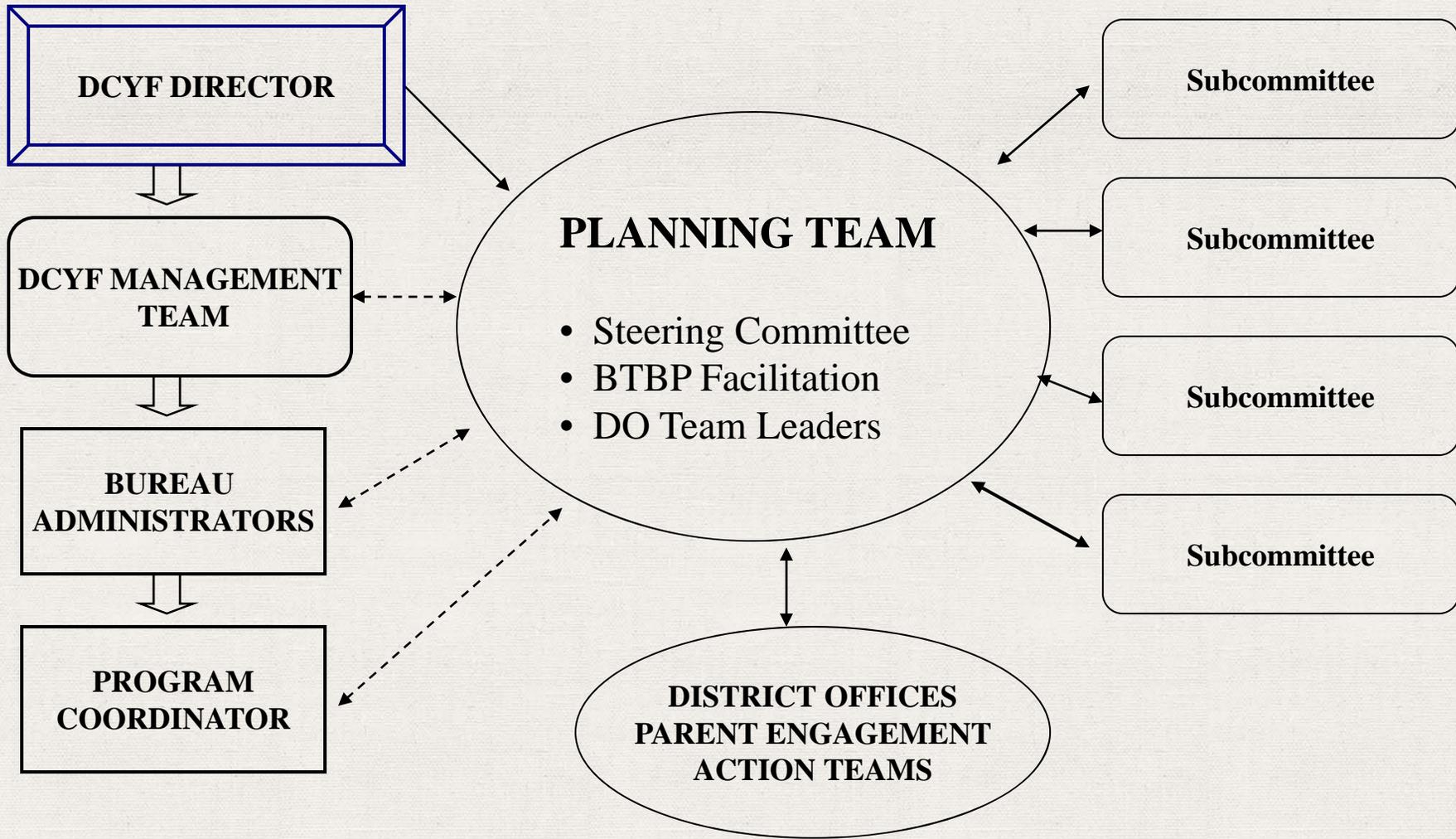
- Parent Engagement Action teams then test those partnership tools and strategies by utilizing the *Plan Do Study Act* (PDSA) methodology for small test of change
- Parent voice and parent leadership finding a natural place in our practice
- Better Together as an “innovation lab” for practice improvement – parent leaders as “practice advisors” for the agency CQI system

What comes next?

- “Parent involvement has been the catalyst for the fastest, most useful, most sustainable change in practice I’ve ever seen... And the biggest bang for the buck.”
- Inclusion of parent voice and perspective in practice discussions
- Parent partners and parent voice finding a “natural place” in our practice

Essential elements: Need a Vision and A Plan





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For information regarding bringing Better Together to your jurisdiction, please contact Casey Family Programs' Community and Constituency Engagement team at asktau@casey.org



For more information

(including a copy of today's slides and a webinar recording)

<http://cb100.acf.hhs.gov/webinars>

To join our LinkedIn Discussion group, search “Children’s Bureau Centennial Webinars Discussion Group from your LinkedIn account or email elizabeth.mertinko@icfi.com

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