

Spotlight On: Collaboration in Child Welfare – transcript

Presenters: LaChundra Lindsey, Child Welfare Program Specialist, Children’s Bureau, Washington, DC; Catherine Nolan, Director, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children’s Bureau, Washington, DC; Junius Scott, Children’s Bureau Regional Program Manager, Region 2, New York; Joe Bock, Acting Associate Commissioner, Children’s Bureau, Washington, DC; Charisse Johnson, Program Specialist, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children’s Bureau, Washington DC; Krista Thomas, Children’s Bureau Program Specialist, Region 5, Chicago

LaChundra Lindsey: [00:00:12:11] The Bureau learns so much from the States and Tribes that we work with. We learn a lot from our grantees, from Federal reviews, and also from our data collections systems, and all of this knowledge helps to inform our policies. It helps us to make decisions about discretionary grants that we fund and also it helps us to determine what types of training and technical assistance that we deliver to the States and Tribes.

Catherine Nolan: [00:00:36:23] When I think about collaboration and the work that OCAN does within the Children's Bureau and with our partners, our Federal and non-Federal partners, the phrase that I often use is that child abuse and neglect is a multidisciplinary problem. No one person or one agency or one grant can solve the problem of child abuse and neglect. And, again, we've learned this from our research over the years. We know that there are many factors that impact families. We know that there are many disciplines that need to be involved and at our level, at the Federal level, I think not only are we mandated by our legislation to, you know, have this collaboration but we hope that it's a way to model for the State and local communities that same spirit of collaboration.

Junius Scott: [00:01:23:17] I'm inspired by visiting in the field and listening to casework staff, to supervisors, and more importantly to families--to parents, to kids, to youth--who talk about where they were and where they are now as a result of their involvement in child welfare systems. And those outcomes are good outcomes in many, many instances.

Joe Bock: [00:01:59:27] No one can do it alone. There is no one agency, one answer for children and families. They live in a very complicated, challenging world that touches many different systems and aspects, and unless you have the important components that are impacting their lives involved and improving their lives, we'll never have a complete package. We'll never have the kind of approach that's necessary to move kids and families in the direction they want to go.

Charisse Johnson: [00:02:37:06] On a day-to-day basis, we're always thinking about ways to collaborate and work with other agencies to work with States and communities. Because I think the Children's Bureau is really clear that it takes a multisystem approach, you have to have different systems coming together to really impact the needs of children and their families.

Krista Thomas: [00:02:56:15] We're working with mental health, with education, with community providers, prevention providers, substance abuse, and everybody's got to work together. Everybody's got to be playing in that sandbox well in order for us to be seeing the outcomes that we're looking for. And those partnerships happening at all levels of government. Meaningful systems change, systems reform, improved outcomes can't be done

in a bubble. They can't be imposed upon anybody. It's something that needs to be done in partnership or it's not going to happen at all, and that spans not only our work together with our States but then our States' work with their Tribal partners, with their court partners, with their community partners, their advocacy groups, because we can't "thou shalt" our way to the outcomes that we're trying to see for kids and families. We're going to have to work together and hold hands and figure out the best way to make that happen and where accommodations need to be made, where more TA needs to be provided, where more resources are needed, for where more flexibility is needed, where more cultural tailoring/adaptation is needed to make sure that the work that we're doing is meeting the needs of the communities that we're working in.

Joe Bock: [00:04:03:07] We have a vision of a system in which educators, mental health providers, the courts, physicians, social workers sit down at a table, assess what's happening in the family and include the family and sit down with them and have a discussion on what's happening in their lives, where are their strengths, where are their needs, how can we support them so that they can achieve their goals and function in a way that they want to and lead the lives that they want to live. That's our vision, is to have a coordinated system in which everyone who has a part is at the table and comes up with a collective understanding of how we're going to support children and their families.

[end audio]