

SAMPLE COMMUNITY TRAINING GRANT

INTRODUCTION

When children's parents are unable or unwilling to appropriately and adequately care for them, their safety, permanence, and well-being become the community's responsibility. No single individual or agency can meet this extraordinarily complex challenge alone. The levels of creativity, continuous improvement, flexibility, informed judgment, adaptive change, and leadership required to protect our community's children do not reside within any single person or organization. All individuals and organizations, within the county, must cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate in their efforts to increase the safety, stability, and well-being of their children.

The county's Children's Safety Net which includes the county public children services agency; juvenile court; mental health; health care system; day care services; recreational and sports programs; drug and alcohol treatment agencies; schools; elected officials; the faith community; other community leaders; and members of the general public must forge a *collective vision* of what it wants for children, families, and the community. It must acknowledge the *role* of each of these entities in increasing the safety and permanence of children. Finally, it must develop strategies for moving from where the county currently is in these efforts to where it *wants* to be as defined in the *collective vision*.

Oftentimes, society expects a "quick fix" to problems. Increasing the safety of children will not be accomplished quickly because of the number of individuals must change their behavior for this increase to occur. First and foremost, we hold fast to the notion that parents are responsible for rearing their children. Most do a very good job at this. Some do not and their actions or inactions place their children in harm's way. For child safety to increase, those parents must adapt their behavior. We, as a community, must develop strategies to provide parents opportunities and support them to change their behavior to provide safe care for their children.

Most parents use services, provided by the Children's Safety Net, during the period when they are rearing their children. Health care, day care, education, recreational and sports opportunities are just a few of the services of the Children's Safety Net that are used by parents as they rear their children to adulthood. These community services support parents' efforts to keep their children safe and grow into productive adults. For the most part, our community services are adequate in supporting parents in their child rearing efforts.

There are, however, instances where parents have either refused or been unable to provide safe care for their children even with the assistance of the supportive services of the Children's Safety Net. At this point, the public children services agency, law enforcement, drug treatment resources, and the juvenile court must coordinate efforts to intervene on behalf of the community to protect children from abuse or neglect. For example, data indicates that 8 of 10 families with children in foster care have a substance abuse problem; one of six have acute or chronic mental illness; one in six have a physical health problem; one in six have an unruly or delinquent youth in the home. While the county public children services agency has the lead responsibility for child protection, it must have ready access to substance abuse treatment resources; counseling services; health care services; juvenile court and probation services; and families of the community who will volunteer to provide temporary or permanent homes for children who cannot safely remain with their birth parents. In this instance, the leadership of the public children services agency must be able to effectively manage externally to develop the operational capacity to have these services available for children and families. If these services are not available, the safety of children decreases; their ability to live in a stable, permanent home (birth or adoptive) decreases; and their well-being is compromised.

Members of the Children's Safety Net have traditionally perceived that their job is to only manage for productivity within their individual agencies. If we accept the premise that no one individual or agency can achieve an increase in child safety by oneself or by itself, this traditional perception is flawed and will fail. For child safety to be increased, leaders must not only manage internally for productivity, but also externally for productivity. This requires the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for the leaders of our community's Children's Safety Net.

To effectively manage internally and externally, leaders must, like private business, be able to create value, with the individual and collective members of the Children's Safety Net, for increasing child safety. These individual and collective members, internal staff and external members, form the authorizing environment for the leader. S/he must effectively communicate with and demonstrate accountability to the members of the authorizing environment. Focus group research has consistently reiterated that the general public and elected officials highly value the safety of children and will do what is necessary to support that safety. The problem is that the members of the Children's Safety Net, individually and collectively, often do not communicate well with the public. In the absence of this communication, the public will form its own opinions as to the effectiveness and accountability of the Children's Safety Net, right or wrong. If communication and the demonstration of accountability are effective, value is created and legitimacy and support from the authorizing environment flows more readily. This increased granting of legitimacy and support will, over time, build the community's operational capacity to increase child safety.

THE PROPOSAL

The public children services agency (and the members of the Children's Safety Net) will be trained to create value for increasing the safety, permanence, and well-being of children using the knowledge and skills set forth in the publication, "Leadership in Child Protection" and its accompanying trainer's guide. "Leadership in Child Protection" develops the concepts of the Children's Safety Net; sets forth the characteristics of what the new leadership involves; discusses the process for developing a community supported strategic plan to increase child safety; suggests strategies for developing a sustained communications plan to continuously inform of the activities of the Children's Safety Net and be accountable to the elected officials, media, and general public; and offers a model for the participants to continuously evaluate and improve service delivery and responsiveness to the children and families they serve and the community that provides the tax support for them to do their work.

At the community leadership level, participants will learn strategies and techniques for strategic planning, strategic communication, public value creation, authorization development, and operational capacity building. This dimension of leadership is presented within the context of the community's Children's Safety Net and a research-based understanding of the public's perceptions of and expectations for child protection. Included is a family based, neighborhood centered practice model that incorporates and applies the key community leadership concepts and skills.

At the agency leadership level, participants will learn strategies and approaches for moving their agencies toward being more mission driven, externally oriented, and opportunity seeking. Included are successful approaches to staff development, internal and external public relations, working with the media and interacting with reporters, agency self-evaluation, and continuous quality improvement.

At the personal leadership level, leaders will learn critical concepts, techniques, and skills required to initiate and sustain the levels of adaptive change required to achieve the transformational shift from business-as-usual to an agency and community committed to doing the right things right, the first time, on time, every time, one child at a time. Within the context of adaptive leadership and personal excellence, successful approaches to team building, empowerment oriented management, proactive personal style development, and interpersonal effectiveness are presented for one's consideration and day-to-day use in the real world of child protection.

Just as protecting our community's children is not exclusively the work of one individual or one agency, the information, concepts, strategies, skills, and techniques presented in this book are not the exclusive domain of child protection professionals, either public or private. Rather they are essential tools for every participant in the Children's Safety Net that each community develops and maintains to assure safety, permanence, and long-term success for its most vulnerable children and families. No longer is it acceptable to know better than we do. Instead, we must commit to excellence at the individual, agency, and community levels to achieve the quality outcomes our children deserve and must have, no exceptions, no excuses. This book, through practical examples and real-world illustrations, will help us to incorporate the tools we need to pursue our journey toward leadership excellence.

Results and Benefits Expected from Engaging in This Training and Implementing Its Concepts in Our County

1. Safer Children: a developing infrastructure that supports the effective, integrated delivery of service at the local level and has the growing support of the children's safety net of the county and state.

2. Stronger Leaders: increasing the knowledge and skills of child welfare leaders to help them to lead their agencies in an ever increasing collaborative, competitive, and scrutinized environment. This increased competence comes from participation in the previously described training that focuses on:

- a. Identifying the value their organization creates and strategically Communicating that value to key stakeholders, the public, and the media on a sustained basis.
- b. Understanding the need to be externally oriented, mission focused, and opportunity seeking as well as internally managing the activities of the organization for productivity.
- c. Measuring strategic performance through the objective collection and analysis of data and communicating that information to the external world.
- d. Understanding that the increased safety cannot be achieved by the child protection agency alone, but requires collaboration with the community and developing the necessary strategies to build the infrastructure to increase that collaboration.

3. A Practical Plan for Managing Change: creation of a detailed, shared strategic plan that has broad community support and identifies the critical issues needing to be addressed on a priority basis unique to that state. These plans, dependent on the issues determined as strategic, have the ability to identify the policy decisions needing to be addressed to effectively integrate the reengineering efforts associated with welfare reform, child care, health care, child welfare, and other critical services. This integration is vital to reduce the potential for policy decisions in one area to have a negative impact on the implementation of policy in another area. This plan will have a two year life because in today's world, two years is the longest, practical time frame in which to develop a plan for managing change. At the end of each two year plan, another two year plan which builds upon the accomplishments of the previous plan and identifies new opportunities will be developed.

4. A More Understanding Community: a sustained communications strategy that relates the contents of the plan, its accomplishments, and barriers to accomplishment to the external world. This results in a growing understanding of the adaptive nature of this work; increased support for necessary collaboration; and an increased perception of accountability of the public agency. The child protection agency, that has often operated in a shroud of confidential secrecy, has opened its doors to the community and asked that community for help.

5. A More Skilled, Accountable System: depending on the initiatives identified by the county, it will develop outcome measures, performance indicators, and a system of self-evaluation that leads to continuous quality improvement; strategies for collaborating to improve service delivery to children and families of the community; a plan for strategically communicating to the public.

BUDGET

____ Copies of Leadership in Child Protection for each training participant @ \$24.95 per copy

____ Copies of the Trainer's Guide for Leadership in Child Protection @ \$65.00 each

Payment to Trainer(s): \$xxx.xx per day for xx number of days

Meals @ \$xx. per day for training participants

Total Budget