

Module Eight: Building Community Partnerships

Handout 1: Discussion

Why This Matters for Subsidy Staff

When they are facing adversity, families are better supported when subsidy staff connect them with comprehensive services, and when subsidy have engaged community partners. Connections to community partners also can ease stress for subsidy staff who may otherwise feel discouraged by not being able to capitalize on families' strengths and address their needs beyond child care. By building community partnerships, staff can feel more confident in their ability to work with and support families.

Goal

- Subsidy staff and other community agency staff know about the respective resources each agency provides for families and are able to connect families with the resources that interest them.

Learning Objectives

- Subsidy staff know why partnerships with other community agencies are important and how these partnerships can support child and family well-being and strengthen staff's efficacy.
- Subsidy staff understand the four levels of partnership (based on the Developmental Continuum of Collaboration) and can use this information to make intentional plans and decisions to build or enhance partnerships.

Key Competency

- Subsidy staff make intentional plans and decisions to build or enhance partnerships with community agencies so that families can be connected with the resources and services that interest them.

Discussion

Families contact your agency seeking financial support for their children's child care. They may also share their hopes, dreams, interests, or goals during their time with you. During these conversations they also may share the challenges they are facing outside of their need for child care subsidy. In response, you can offer information and support to connect families with other community agencies and comprehensive services of interest to families.

How much you know current community resources depends on intentional efforts to maintain current information and the relationships that your subsidy agency and you build and maintain with other agencies.

Your subsidy agency, you, and other members of the subsidy staff can partner with other community agencies and their staff who offer services to families. Strong community partnerships can help you:

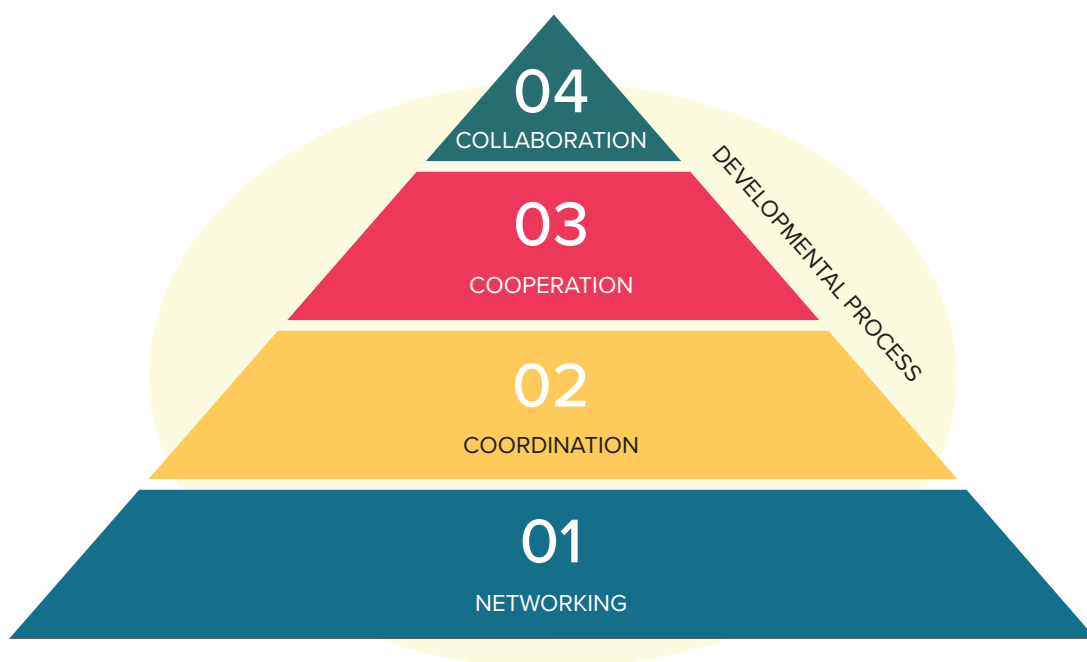
- Increase families' access to services
- Reduce confusion for families and staff (subsidy staff and staff in other agencies)
- Support the overall well-being of families and children

These partnerships build connections that help subsidy staff become and stay knowledgeable about current resources to offer families. And staff may be better positioned to provide a “warm handoff” (by directly connecting a parent by phone to staff at another agency, providing support during the connection, and following up after the connection with the parent and the staff at the other agency, when possible).

Through these kinds of connections and partnerships, families, agencies, staff, and communities benefit from less duplication of effort. As well, child care and comprehensive services systems and professionals become more efficient and may benefit from the experience of working together to support families.

Your agency may be involved in many partnerships at varying levels with other community agencies. The Developmental Continuum of Collaboration graphic (below) shows four levels of partnerships: networking, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. Understanding these levels and working with agency leaders to map your agency's partnerships based on these levels can be useful in identifying existing partnerships and opportunities to strengthen them.

The Developmental Continuum of Collaboration



Source: QUILT (Quality in Linking Together) Project, through a partnership with the Community Development Institute, the Education Development Center, and the National Child Care Information Center

The first level of partnership is **networking**. This occurs when representatives from agencies meet each other and perhaps exchange business cards, emails, or print materials about their respective organizations. An example of a benefit from this level of collaboration would be having a flyer about the WIC clinic on the bulletin board in your waiting room.

The second level of partnership is **coordination**. At this level, you might offer a warm handoff by saying to families, “We don’t offer that service. This agency does, and I’ll connect you.” This partnership takes a little more effort than networking because staff have to make contact with the partner (and have the contact information to share with parents) and stay current with staff changes in other community agencies.

Cooperation is the third level of partnership. At this level, two or more programs conduct joint activities in order to meet their individual goals. You might think of this as, “I’m doing my thing and you are doing yours, but we can do it at the same time. Our different efforts will support each others’ goals.” This level gives both agencies more exposure and may help both agencies be more efficient in reaching families. An example might be when a child care resource and referral agency provides space for a subsidy staff to meet with families in a familiar environment.

The fourth level, **collaboration**, is the most resource-intensive level. Collaboration requires programs to work together toward common goals that no single agency could achieve by acting alone. Collaborating partners commit resources, information, and activities to supporting a goal. An example of collaboration might involve creating a single point of entry for families to apply for multiple programs and services at one time, or a shared database for coordinating services for individual families.

It may be helpful to regularly review your partners and discuss opportunities for strengthening partnerships or developing new ones. One tool that staff can use to map partners and levels of partnerships is an Eco Map. Learn more about creating an Eco Map in **Module Eight: Handout 2**.

By making intentional plans and decisions to build or enhance partnerships with community agencies, subsidy staff can better connect families with the resources and services that interest them, and staff can feel more confident in their abilities to work with and provide support to families.

Leaders can support staff by:

- Ensuring that information about resources and opportunities in the community are compiled and available to support families’ and staff safety, health, mental health, financial stability, economic mobility, and educational growth
- Enacting policies and procedures that include intentional plans for building and maintaining community partnerships (e.g., policies that provide time for staff to build partnerships with community agencies and time for staff to participate in multi-agency team planning meetings to coordinate support for families and their children)
- Ensuring that policies, guidelines, and expectations are in place to protect the confidentiality and privacy of families
- Working with families and staff to identify partnerships that are working well and potential gaps that could be filled with stronger or new partnerships

Thoughts From the Field

“When I meet with families, my biggest concern is that they might not be eligible for subsidy funds, or that the funds will be inadequate. I try to build a relationship with each family so that I can hope to understand all the challenges they may be facing. Maybe then I can offer them resources and support for those challenges, even if I have to say ‘no’ to their request for CCDF funds.

I need to be sure I am up to date with my community partners so I can provide correct information. Better yet, if I have a working relationship with some of my colleagues, I can call and introduce a family to a colleague so they can start connecting right away. My hope is the family feels listened to and supported as they leave my office.”—*Subsidy staff*

Use this space to note ideas or questions.

Plan to save copies of these handouts. You will have an opportunity to use them to create a summary reflection after completing all of the modules in this series.

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Handout 2: Activity

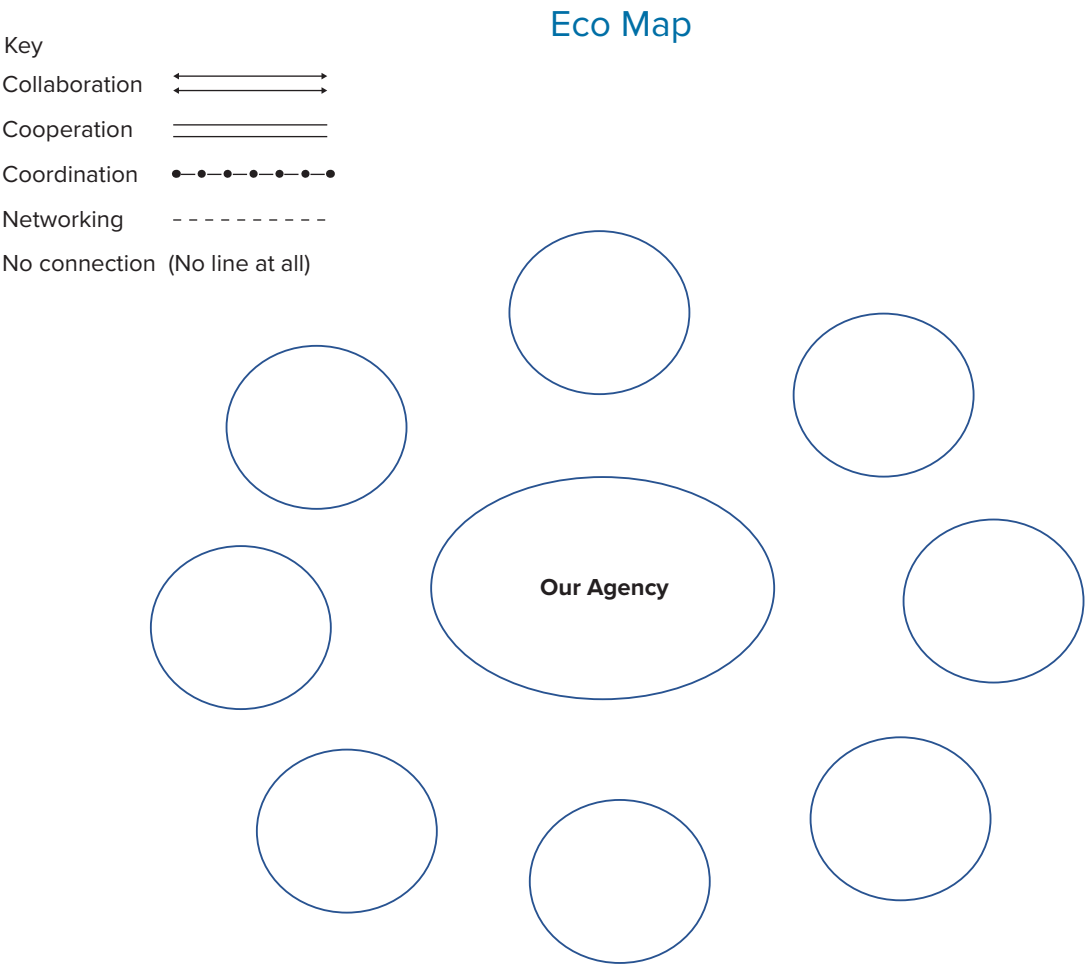
Part 1: Identifying Community Partners and Relationships Through Eco Mapping

An Eco Map is a tool that agencies and staff can use to map partners, potential partners, and levels of collaboration between your agencies.

Begin by thinking about other agencies (partners and potential partners) that work with families in your community.

Write the names of these agencies in the circles surrounding “our agency.” Add as many circles as you need in order to include all the agencies that come to mind.

Next, use different kinds of lines (see examples below) to connect your agency to the other community agencies and to show the level of collaboration.



Note: Eco Maps were originally developed to show linkages between a family and a larger social system (Hartman, 1995). The Eco Map in this activity has been adapted to show linkages between your agency and community partners.

Part 2: Creating Strategies to Strengthen Partnerships

Consider the community agencies and levels of partnership identified on the Eco Map for your agency. Remember: Eco Maps are a snapshot in time.

With which community agencies do you have strong partnerships?

What can you or your agency do to strengthen these partnerships?

With which community agencies do you not have strong partnerships?

What can you or your agency do to build partnerships with these agencies?

Use this space to note ideas or questions.

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Reference: Hartman, A. (1995). Diagrammatic assessment of family relationships. *Families in Society*, 76, 111-122.

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Handout 3: Reflective Practice Exercise

Learning a new approach, skill, or activity is a process. Reflective practice is a way of thinking about your actions—what you do and how and why you do it. The purpose of this kind of examination is to continuously learn by enhancing your skills and practices. Answer the questions below to guide your reflections on building community partnerships.

Reflective Practice

| Question | Your Reflections |
|---|------------------|
| What did I hope to learn? | |
| What did I learn? | |
| What action will I take because of my learning? | |

Use this space to note ideas or questions.

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For more information about this resource, please contact us:
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