Early Head Start and Child Welfare have a shared vision for positive outcomes for some of our country’s most vulnerable children. This session will look at the barriers in forming these collaborations, provide examples of how programs are currently partnering and provide an opportunity to reflect on how early childhood programs and child welfare can increase collaboration.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify where your program is on the developmental continuum towards collaboration.
2. Recognize the benefits of closer collaboration between early childhood services and child welfare services.
3. Discuss potential strategies for increased collaboration between the early childhood and child welfare partners in your community.

**Relevant Standards and Regulations:**

This session will offer tools and opportunities for discussion around ongoing collaborative relationships with Child Protective Services in support of Head Start Performance Standard 45 CFR 1304.41 (a)(2)(v-vi).
COORDINATION
Involves short-term, informal relationships that exist without a clearly defined mission, structure, or planning effort. Information and other resources are shared occasionally.

COOPERATION
When organizations work together and share some resource or facility, plan joint programs, and/or share information and discuss common concerns.

COLLABORATION
Brings previously separated organizations into a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. Resources pooled or jointly secured & products shared.

Developmental Continuum of Collaboration
Overview of Child Welfare System

- Responds to allegations of child abuse & neglect and meets the needs of maltreated/at risk children
- Includes preventive, protective, foster care and adoption services
- Goals: Safety, Permanency and Wellbeing (these goals are monitored and supported through a federal review process – Child and Family Services Reviews)

Child and Family Services Reviews

Enable the Children’s Bureau to

- ensure conformity with Federal child welfare requirements (titles IV-B and IV-E)
- determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services
- assist States to enhance their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes by identifying both strengths and areas needing improvement

PIP Process

Program Improvement Plans (PIPs) are

- developed as a result of the CFSR to promote
- **systemic changes** that will improve outcomes through continuous quality improvement.

Collaboration through the CFSR

- From their inception, the CFSRs were intended as a vehicle for promoting change through collaboration
- Purpose of CFSRs is to evaluate the entire child and family service system and not solely the child welfare agency
- The CFSRs require a collaborative process that focuses on identifying shared goals and activities and establishing a purpose, framework, and plan

Key Principles of CW Collaboration

- The safety, permanency, and well-being of children is a shared community responsibility
- Child welfare agencies do not serve children and families in isolation; must partner with organizations that directly serve/impact children, youth, and families
- Family-centered and community-based practices are integral to improving outcomes for children and families
Shared Outcomes: Head Start & Child Welfare

- A child/family’s involvement in (Early) Head Start services can promote improved CW outcomes.
- Head Start/EHS and CW share a focus on child well-being and on family and community partnerships.
- Shared outcomes promote buy-in for collaboration!
  - Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
  - Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
  - Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
  - Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
  - Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.
  - Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
  - Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

Factors that Contribute to Successful EHS-CWS Partnerships

- A prior history of collaboration to build upon
- Building TRUST
- Designating a “point person” at EHS and at CWS, to handle referrals and coordinate services
- Establishing a Memoranda of Agreement between agencies
- Case collaboration (joint staffings/case planning)
- Joint home visitation (EHS and CWS worker visit home together)
- Co-location of services (EHS staff person onsite at CW agency)
- Shared trainings for EHS & CWS workers

Some Other Lessons Learned from EHS/CWS Initiative

- Involve both front-line & managerial staff in development of EHS-CWS partnership from the beginning
- Differences in organizational cultures and languages can pose barriers to collaboration & should be proactively addressed
- Families need consistent clarification that EHS staff are family partners and family supports, not monitors or enforcers of service plans
Partnership Activities with Your Local Child Welfare Agency

- Establish standardized screening & referral process for age-eligible children in the Child Welfare System
- Consider prioritizing families with open child welfare cases for enrollment
- Cross-train to educate each other about HS/EHS and CWS language, goals, objectives, policies & services
- Send joint letter with CW administrator to foster parents of 0-3 year olds alerting them of categorical eligibility, free services, and providing instructions on how to enroll in HS/EHS

Other Resources:

- See newly released Information Memorandum from OHS & ACYF Directors regarding Head Start/Early Head Start-Child Welfare partnerships
- Read The Hope of Early Head Start: Supporting Infants and Toddlers in the Child Welfare System:
  http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/resources/ECLKC_Bookstore/PDFS/TA9%5B1%5D.pdf
- Contact the: Early Head Start National Resource Center @ ZERO TO THREE
  (202) 638-1144 www.ehsnrc.org
Model from Connecticut: Improving Outcomes for Children

Stage 1: Getting Together
- Commit to Collaboration
- Involve the right people
- Decide to act

Stage 2: Building Trust
- Get to know one another
- Build cooperative relationships
- Establish shared goals

Stage 3: Developing a Plan
- Formalize interagency relationships
- Define service delivery processes
- Develop technical tools

Stage 4: Taking Action
- Implement new processes
- Collect data
- Evaluate progress - make course corrections

Stage 5: Going to Scale
- Adapt and expand prototype
- Deepen collaborative culture
- Institutionalize processes