

Community Involvement in Behavioral Health Agencies

Agenda



- I. Welcome and Introductions**
- II. What is Community?**
- III. Definition of Community Involvement**
- IV. Strategies for Community Involvement**
- V. Key Takeaways**

Learning Objectives

- ▶ **Participants will have a better understanding of the benefits and challenges of involving the community in your agency**
- ▶ **The audience will learn strategies for effective community involvement**
- ▶ **Listeners will learn how to implement strategies for community involvement by following the framework: Learn, Listen, Inform, and Involve**

Who We Are

- ▶ **Geraldine “Jerry” Burton**, Parent Partner/Trainer and Co-Lead CTAC Family Support
- ▶ **Janet Watson**, Research Scientist Coordinator/Parent Advocate and Community Collaborative Board Vice Chair
- ▶ **Aida Ortiz**, Parent Advocate/Research Scientist Coordinator/Community Collaborative Board Member
- ▶ **Ervin Torres**, Research Science Coordinator/Parent Advocate and Community Collaborative Board Member





Reflect

Take a moment and think about how you define community

What is Community?

- ▶ **Traditional definition of “community” in social work and public health literature definition**
 - “a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations” (MacQueen et al., 2001)
- ▶ **Broad descriptive categories (ex. race, class, sexual orientation, gender, profession, etc.)**
- ▶ **A collection of community-based agencies and organizations in a geographic location**
- ▶ **Individuals who receive social and behavioral health services**

Community Involvement



What is Community Involvement?

Community involvement is the process of partnering with community members, organizations, and agencies to identify community needs and priorities, attend to concerns, develop a process of shared decision making, and collaborate in initiatives for effective change.



Examples of Community Involvement

- ▶ **Making your agency visible by participating in local activities**
 - i.e. Attending community board meetings, local school board meetings
- ▶ **Develop policies and practices**
 - i.e. Incorporating peer services, hiring community members, etc.
- ▶ **Create a community collaborative board or community taskforce**
- ▶ **Partner with local organizations to develop a collective strategy for community based change**

What are the benefits of involving the community in your agency?

- ▶ **Provide better and more effective services that directly meet the needs and priorities of the people being served**
- ▶ **Allows the community to better understand what the agency provides**
 - Reduces stigma
 - Builds visibility, trust, and safety
- ▶ **Collaborate with like-minded individuals who are both driven and passionate**
- ▶ **Develop a process towards sustainable change**

What are challenges in involving the community?

- ▶ Having full community representation
- ▶ Building trust; Not trusting the community's perspective and expertise
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Personal insecurities
- ▶ Competing priorities and schedules
- ▶ Travel and transportation
- ▶ Community and neighborhood stress
- ▶ Time and space availability
- ▶ Uncertainty on how to best include community members in the agency

What are some ways to attend to these challenges?

- ▶ **Establish guidelines for participation in agency and community activities**
 - Develop a shared contract
 - Ensure confidentiality and safety
- ▶ **Balance participation from the community and agency**
- ▶ **Accommodate schedules when feasible (i.e. school, holidays, work, etc.)**
- ▶ **Ensure diverse representation of participating staff members**
- ▶ **Minimize language barriers when possible by involving staff that speak the same language as participants**
- ▶ **Compensate for travel when possible**

Strategies for Effective Community Involvement

Strategies for Community Involvement

- ▶ **Learn**
- ▶ **Listen**
- ▶ **Inform**
- ▶ **Involve**

“*Learn* about our culture and how the community works before you approach us. For example, be aware that the Bronx has high rates of HIV.”

(Franco, McKay, Miranda & et al, 2008)

LEARN

Learn

- ▶ **Take time to understand the history and current state of the community**
 - Assume that you have a lot to learn
 - Keep an open mind
- ▶ **Develop a plan**
 - Design surveys, collect feedback from the people you serve, read local newspapers, etc.
 - Host team meetings to discuss how best to incorporate client and community feedback into your practice and policy
- ▶ **Observe**
 - Visit the surrounding area where your agency is located

“It is very important that we *listen* to each other. If we are going to serve the community, we need to recognize and learn that we each have different talents, and we can only move forward if we respect each other.”

(Franco, McKay, Miranda & et al, 2008)

LISTEN

Listen

- ▶ **Establish connections**

- By listening, the community and agency begin to better understand and show interest in the needs of the community

- ▶ **In order for the partnership to be successful, every voice must be heard**

- Network with multiple people and sources to be more representative of the community

- ▶ **Develop a shared language and common goals**

- Begin the process of shared decision making
- Don't be judgemental or make assumptions

“She has lived in the community for more than 21 years. She became involved after her son brought home a letter describing the program. She feels more empowered as a Board member and enjoys doing something for the community.”

(Franco, McKay, Miranda & et al, 2008)

INFORM

Inform

- ▶ **Build awareness of common issues or challenges in the community**
 - Share information in creative ways (i.e. mapping out services, art, flyers, posters, etc.)
 - Make written information easy to understand
 - Get the word out in a non-stigmatizing manner
- ▶ **Introduce new strategies and approaches for collaboration**
 - Share community strengths
 - Build trust and empower the community to partner with the agency
- ▶ **Define a clear partnership so people and organizations know how to help**

“We want your help for our children and families, but WE MUST BE ***INVOLVED!***”

(Franco, McKay, Miranda & et al, 2008)

INVOLVE

Involve

- ▶ **Develop a system of open communication between the community and the agency**
 - Maintain a positive strengths-based attitude to help engage others and build stronger relationships
 - Develop a shared sense of ownership in the purpose of the collaboration
 - Follow-up and keep them engaged!
- ▶ **Include all stakeholders in every step of the planning and implementation process of the program or initiative**
 - Ask questions, share concerns, make shared decisions
 - Hold regularly scheduled meetings and collaborate to develop a schedule of activities



If a program or initiative is developed, include all stakeholders in the evaluation process and fidelity checks

Ways to Involve the Community

Ways to Involve the Community

- ▶ **Hiring from the community**
 - **Learn:** Employment rates, common professions, skills and experiences
 - **Listen:** Hear from the community what is missing and needed in the community that the agency can provide (ex. peer services, longer hours, Bilingual receptionist, etc.)
 - **Inform:** Share the job posting through multiple channels of communication (flyers, the newspaper, posting at the local grocery store, etc.)
 - **Involve:** Begin to interview candidates for the position

Ways to Involve the Community

- ▶ **Develop a community advisory board**
 - **Learn:** History and community context (ex. prevalence of HIV in the Bronx)
 - **Listen:** Join PTA, community board and school board meetings; speak to local leadership (Principal, PTA President, Parents)
 - **Inform:** Educate the community on the purpose of the program and how it can reduce existing social, environmental, and community challenges
 - **Involve:** Keep parents and all stakeholders engaged in the program and form a community advisory board to discuss planning, implementation, and sustainability of the program

Ways to Involve the Community

- ▶ **Having community member representation on the Board of Directors**
 - **Learn:** Who the local advocates and leaders are and the work they are doing
 - **Listen:** Invite community members to meetings to share experiences and concerns
 - **Inform:** Share service gaps (ex. need for creative programs, interventions, age appropriate strategies)
 - **Involve:** Always try to have at least one community member at the table to share their thoughts, be included in the planning process, and ensure community voices are heard

Key Takeaways

- ▶ **Build trust first and then collaborate**
- ▶ **Be open and honest**
- ▶ **Develop an understanding of “community” participation”**
- ▶ **Remain flexible**
- ▶ **Be willing to create and sustain partnerships**
- ▶ **Build capacity for informed decision making**
- ▶ **Recognize that participation takes time**
- ▶ **Most important Learn, Listen, Inform, and Involve**

Additional Resources

- ▶ Community Toolbox

<http://ctb.eduhttp://www.communityhealth.ku.edu/>

- ▶ Engaging your Community: A Toolkit for Partnership, www.jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/download_pub.cfm?id=14333&lid=3

- ▶ McKay, M. M., & Paikoff, R. L. (Eds.). (2012). *Community collaborative partnerships: The foundation for HIV prevention research efforts*. Routledge.
- ▶ Franco, L. M., McKay, M., Miranda, A., Chambers, N., Paulino, A., & Lawrence, R. (2007). Voices from the community: Key ingredients for community collaboration. *Social Work in Mental Health*, 5(3-4), 313-331.

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Thank you for joining us!

