**Task 3: Develop a Communication Protocol**

Systems interact with each other constantly and through a variety of mechanisms. Nonetheless, communication breakdowns, misunderstandings, and gaps are common experiences for agency staff and families alike. Effective communication is the ingredient common to values, principles, trust, and action. As noted throughout this guidebook, the key to quality services is not the tools that are used, but how information from tools and other sources is shared. The clearest test of interagency consensus is whether it works to communicate the status of both parents and their children because both are affected by abuse, neglect, and substance use disorders. Steering Committee and Subcommittee members need to identify key points in all systems where effective communication can and must take place, and they need to develop clear administrative policies and protocols for the proper exchange of confidential information.

The Pathways of Communication Templates on the following pages are designed to help staff move beyond preliminary discussions about communication and toward developing a communication protocol. They are intended to be suggestions, and each community will need to adapt the specific information to its own systems and procedures.

The page immediately following this page is the Overview template. It proposes a model for communication across the systems as a whole. The subsequent three pages provide breakout versions of the Overview template, depicting critical junctures of decisionmaking and detailed information that are examples of information that may be needed to be communicated across systems. They are Pathways of Communication Templates for Determining Presence and Immediacy of an Issue, for Determining the Nature and Extent of the Issue, and for Treatment and Case Plans, Monitoring Change, Transitions, and Outcomes.

The activities that occur within system are listed in the darker colored columns. The bridges between the systems are represented by the three lighter colored columns.

The Subcommittee or Steering Committee should consider each of these communication points and should adapt them to meet State or local needs. The templates provide a mechanism for staff to understand what activities each system is responsible for undertaking. Once these activities are understood, staff can determine who needs to know what, and when. Staff can then create policies and protocols to share information with family members and among staff.

The goal of communication should derive from serving the whole family and should reduce administrative burden on workers. Each of the communication bridges should be clearly defined, and the content of the information to be exchanged across bridges must be specified.
Pathways of Communication Template
Identification Through Community or Family Awareness of Signs, Symptoms and Behaviors
Family and Extended Family Members

Other Community Agencies
- Screening
- Community Based Family Support Services

Alcohol and Drug Services
- Screen
- Immediate Need Triage
- Diagnosis
- Multidimensional Assessment
- Treatment Plan and Services
- Treatment Monitoring and Transition Planning
- Recovery Management
- Outcome Monitoring

Child Welfare Services
- Child Abuse Report
- In-person Safety Assessment
- In-person Response/Risk Assessment
- Family Assessment
- Case Plan Development and Services
- Case Plan Monitoring, Permanency Determination
- Family Well Being
- Outcome Monitoring

Dependency Court
- Detention/Shelter Hearing
- Jurisdiction Disposition Hearings
- • Review Hearings
  • Family Treatment Court Hearings
  • Case Closures
- Outcome Monitoring
Pathways of Communication Template for Determining Presence and Immediacy of an Issue

Identification Through Community or Family Awareness of Signs, Symptoms and Behaviors

Family and Extended Family Members

Other Community Agencies

Screening

Community Based Family Support Services

Observation or Awareness of Child's:
- Injury
- Lack of Medical Care
- Sexual Abuse
- Inadequate Education
- Neglect
- Excessive Punishment
- Lack of Food
- Harsh Treatment
- Other Service Needs

Alcohol and Drug Services

Screen

Immediate Need Triage

Diagnosis

Multidimensional Assessment

Treatment Plan and Services

Treatment Monitoring and Transition Planning

Recovery Management

Outcome Monitoring

Results of AOD Screen and Observations of the Following by Parent or Other Individuals in the Home:
- Paraphernalia
- Smell of Alcohol or Drugs
- Slurred Speech
- Lack of Mental Focus
- Off Balance
- Needle Tracks
- Skin Abscesses
- Lip Burns
- Nausea
- Euphoria
- Hallucinations
- Slowed Thinking
- Lethargy
- Hyperactive

Child Welfare Services

Child Abuse Report

In-person Safety Assessment

In-person Response/Risk Assessment

Family Assessment

Family Well Being

Outcome Monitoring

Results of AOD Screen and Observations of the Following by Parent or Other Individuals in the Home:
- Paraphernalia
- Smell of Alcohol or Drugs
- Slurred Speech
- Lack of Mental Focus
- Off Balance
- Needle Tracks
- Skin Abscesses
- Lip Burns
- Nausea
- Euphoria
- Hallucinations
- Slowed Thinking
- Lethargy
- Hyperactive

Court Reports Including Results of Screen and Observed Behaviors

Court Orders

Dependency Court

Detention/Shelter Hearing

Screening

Court Reports Including Results of Screen and Observed Behaviors

Court Orders

Detention/Shelter Hearing
Pathways of Communication Template for Determining Presence and Immediacy of an Issue

Identification Through Community or Family Awareness of Signs, Symptoms and Behaviors

Family and Extended Family Members

Other Community Agencies

Community Based Family Support Services

Screening

Referral for Community Support Services

Alcohol and Drug Services

Screen

Immediate Need Triage

Diagnosis

Multidimensional Assessment

Treatment Plan and Services

Treatment Monitoring and Transition Planning

Recovery Management

Outcome Monitoring

Child Welfare Services

Child Abuse Report

In-person Safety Assessment

Family Assessment

Case Plan Development and Services

Case Plan Monitoring, Permanency Determination

Outcome Monitoring

In-person Response/Risk Assessment

Dependency Court

Detention/Shelter Hearing

Jurisdiction Disposition Hearings

Court Reports Including Diagnosis and Treatment Recommendation and Level of Care Determination

Court Orders

• Review Hearings
• Family Treatment Court Hearings
• Case Closures

Diagnosis

• Diagnostic Information
• Differentiation of Substance Use, Abuse, Dependence
• Patterns of Substance Use and History
• Frequency of Use
• Impact of Drug Toxicity
• How Does Alcohol/Drug Use Effect Parent (e.g. blackouts)
• Level of Impairment in Ability to Parent
• Extended Family, Family Strengths, Connections to Community and Resources
• Employment/Education Status
• Parent’s Trauma History
• Assessment of Motivation and Engagement Level
• Child Risk Factors Evident During Use
• Parent’s Perception of Relationship Between Substance Abuse/Dependency and their Ability to Parent
• Other Family Events (e.g. marriage, death, move, etc.)
• Does Inter-State Compact Apply?

Treatment Recommendation:

Length of Treatment

• Level of Care
• Child Visitation Issues

Additional Service Needs

Screening

Multidimensional Assessment

• Nature and Precipitating Incidents
• Results of Operations and Screens
• Court Orders
• Criminal and Civil Court History
• Prior Child Abuse/Neglect Cases
• Use by Others in the Home
• Past or Present History of Violence
• Was Parent a CWS Dependent
• History of Mental Illness
• is ICWA Applicable
• CWS Drug Testing Requirements
• Court Orders
• Parent’ Perception of Issue
• Extended Family, Family Strengths, Connections to Community and Resources
• Assessment of How Children are Doing
• Results of Alternative Dispute Resolution

Outcome Monitoring

Multidimensional Assessment

• Treatment Plan
• Activities and Objectives
• Required Drug Testing
• Number Required and Type of Sessions

Family Assessment

• Case Plan
• Monitoring, Permanency Determination

Outcome Monitoring