

### ***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.

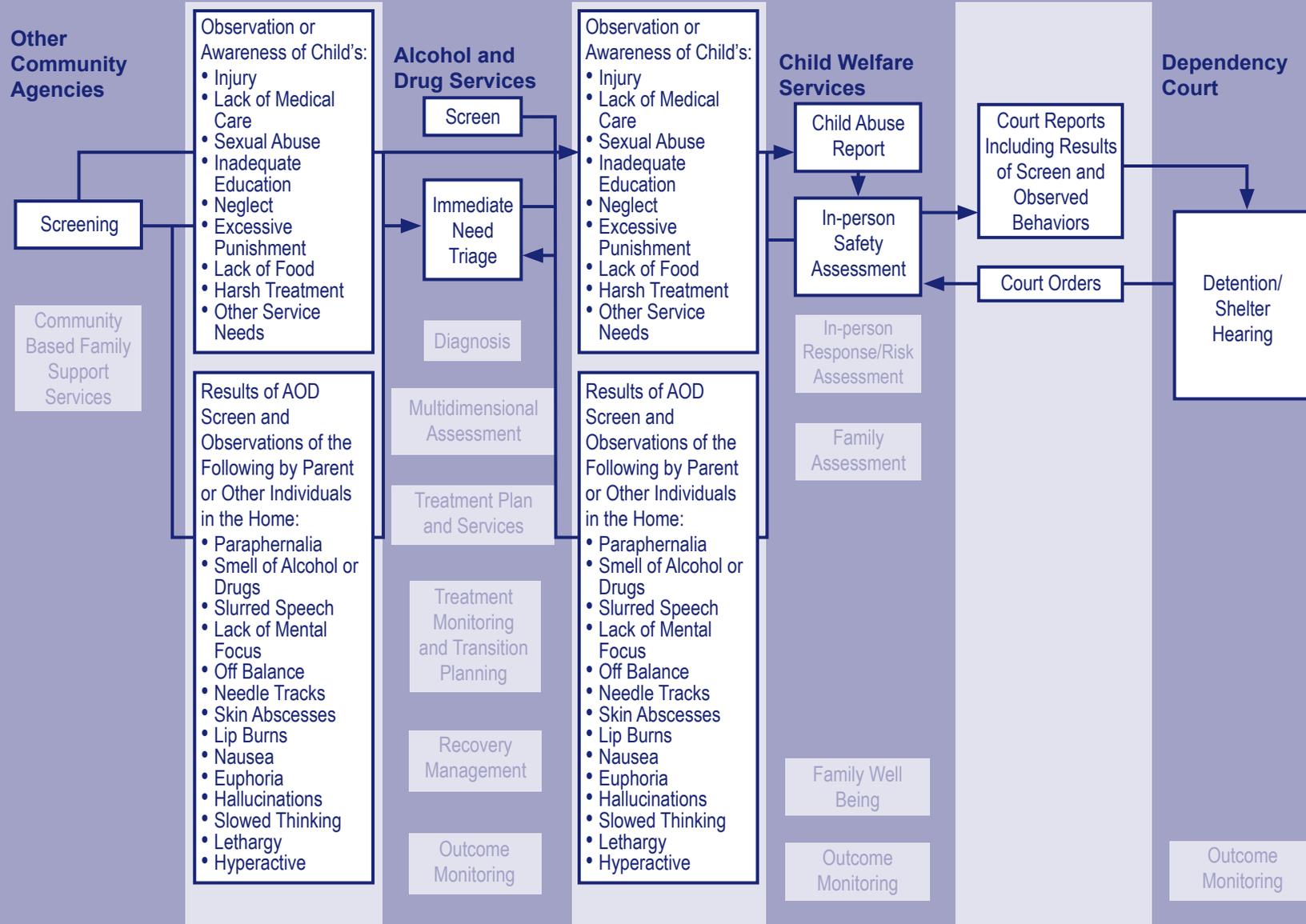
The goal of communication should derive from serving the whole family and should reduce administrative burden on workers. Each of the communication bridges should be clearly defined, and the content of the information to be exchanged across bridges must be specified.



# Pathways of Communication Template for Determining Presence and Immediacy of an Issue

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

### Family and Extended Family Members



# 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

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

- 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

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

- 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

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

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

Court Orders

Detention/  
Shelter  
Hearing

Jurisdiction  
Disposition  
Hearings

- Review Hearings
- Family Treatment Court Hearings
- Case Closures

Outcome  
Monitoring

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