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ABSTRACT

This document provides information on tasks, tips, and tools derived from a federally funded project that provided training and technical assistance to local early intervention interagency teams. The project's purpose was to facilitate the establishment of local collaborative teams to work on challenges associated with putting in place a long-term vision for systems change to achieve inclusive, quality, comprehensive early care and education services to young children birth through 5 (or up to age 8) and their families. The tasks, tips, and tools presented in this paper address: (1) deciding why to collaborate; (2) recruiting collaborative team participants; (3) conducting the organizational meeting; (4) creating an effective structure for the team's operation; (5) creating a shared community vision grounded in the community's current context; (6) developing action plans to achieve the vision; (7) methods for implementing collaborative decisions, plans, policies, and procedures; and (8) tracking and evaluating collaborative efforts. Tasks and tips compose the first half of the document. The second half provides various tools that are referenced in the tasks and tips sections. Tools include formats for organizing and running effective meetings and instructions for team activities such as assessing the community context, visioning, and action planning. (CR)

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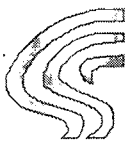

The Collaborative Planning Project

# Tasks, Tips and Tools for Promoting Collaborative Community Teams

## Collaborative Planning Project for Planning Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems

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January 2001

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## BACKGROUND

The Collaborative Planning Project (CPP) for Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems was a federally funded outreach project based at the Center for Collaborative Educational Leadership, University of Colorado-Denver. Funded through the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, the project provided training and technical assistance (TA) to local interagency teams to do collaborative planning at the community systems level. The project's purpose was to facilitate the establishment of local collaborative teams to work on one or more mutually agreed upon challenges associated with putting in place a long term vision for systems change to achieve inclusive, quality, comprehensive early care and education services to young children birth through 5 (or up to age 8) and their families. The project provided a facilitator to work with local community teams for approximately 6 sessions, after which, it was hoped that the team would be self-sustaining, having: (a) organized as a team; (b) accomplished at least one concrete task; and (c) put in place a team structure and a written plan for further collaborations. Through its work with these local community teams, project staff developed the tasks, tips and tools presented in this paper.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the following state and local collaborative teams. Input and learnings from their collaborative efforts provided valuable direction for the development of this document.

### State Level Collaborative Teams

- Rhode Island Early Childhood Interagency Task Force
- West Virginia Early Childhood Transition Steering Committee

### Local Community Collaborative Planning Project (CPP) Teams

- Denver, CO CPP Team
- Acadia Parish, LA CPP Team
- Central Falls, RI CPP Team
- South Kingstown, RI CPP Team
- St. Vrain, CO CPP Team
- Las Vegas, NV CPP Team
- Cranston, RI CPP Team
- Westerly, RI CPP Team

## ACCESSING THIS DOCUMENT VIA THE INTERNET

You can access this document via the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System website at www.nectas.unc.edu. Click on the Keys to Inclusion page, then on Collaborative Activities, then on National Projects and then on the section on the Collaborative Planning Project. The document is in Adobe PDF format. In order to open the file, you first must have the Adobe Reader software. This is available to download free of charge at Adobe's website (http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html). After opening the file, you can print and re-create sections on your own word processing program to adapt document materials to meet your own needs.

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# TASKS, TIPS AND TOOLS FOR PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY TEAMS

## Document Overview

When representatives of multiple agencies collaborate as community teams, they can produce many positive results for children and their families. Collaboration areas can include: (1) family involvement; (2) child outreach/child find screening, referrals, and evaluations; (3) service eligibility; (4) individual program planning, e.g., Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) for children with disabilities ages birth to 3 years and their families and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years; (5) primary and related services; (6) service delivery in settings which typical for the age of the child and which serve children with and without disabilities; (7) resource sharing which may include, but not be limited to, facilities, materials and equipment, collaborative services, and screening; (8) transition; (9) confidentiality; (10) records transfer; (11) joint staff training; and (12) sharing child count data.

But, what are the tasks needed for starting and sustaining such teams? What are tips for doing this effectively? What are practical tools teams can use for working and planning together? This paper presents such tasks, tips and tools related to the following issues that collaborative teams should address:

1. Deciding Why to Collaborate
2. Recruiting Collaborative Team Participants
3. Conducting the Organizational Meeting
4. Creating an Effective Structure for the Team's Operation
5. Creating a Shared Community Vision Grounded in the Community's Current Context
6. Developing Action Plans to Achieve the Vision
7. Methods for Implementing Collaborative Decisions, Plans, Policies and Procedures
8. Tracking and Evaluating Collaborative Efforts

Tasks and tips compose the first half of this document. The second half provides a various tools that are referenced in the tasks and tips section. Tools include formats for organizing and running effective meetings (e.g., invitation letter for the organizational meeting, sample agenda, minutes shell, ground rules) and instructions for team activities such as assessing the community context, visioning, and action planning.

# TASKS AND TIPS

## Deciding Why To Collaborate

### Tasks

1. Collaboration is more than meeting together. It is working together toward one or more common goals. Therefore, consider first why you need to collaborate. What is motivating you to do so?

2. Consider external factors. For example, will federal and state legal requirements and/or grants or other resources influence your collaborative efforts?

3. Consider internal factors.
   - What "internal" agency needs will be met by potential participants in collaborative efforts?
   - Why would people find it beneficial to spend already limited time working together?
   - What is "in it for you" and for the agencies with which you would like to collaborate?

### Tips

Start with activities for which agencies need each other in order to accomplish in a truly effective way:

- Transition
- Child Find/Outreach
- Developing a Community-Wide Service Directory
- Community-Wide Screening
- Public Awareness re: Benefit of Early Childhood Services

## Recruiting Collaborative Team Participants

### Tasks

1. After deciding on a tentative team focus, the team "organizer(s)" can then decide which agencies need to be involved on the collaborative team. Choose agencies that have a legitimate and direct interest in the topics of proposed collaboration focus. Those with a more "indirect" interest in the team's focus will likely lose interest and not attend regularly.

2. Decide which agency staff to include on the team. It is important to have the "right players at the table" with job roles relevant to the team's particular focus. Staff with some administrative authority or access to it (e.g., a designee) is advised in order to expedite collaborative team decision-making.

### Tips

- Start with those genuinely interested even if the team is small. As the team has successes, others will likely want to join.

- Research shows that task oriented teams function best with 5 to 9 members, 12 maximum. You can get input from those who are not team members in other ways, e.g., interviews, surveys, or ad hoc involvement.

3. Many teams find it beneficial to include not only staff but also family representatives. Family members provide the team with "consumer" perspectives. They may also offer the team many assets that agency staff do not have, e.g., special skills because of their personal or professional background and/or contacts with community leaders. In some instances, family members can represent the team's "cause" more effectively than staff.

4. Personal contact such as a 1:1 meeting or a phone call to invite team participation increases the likelihood of involvement. The team organizer can use these contacts to ascertain the needs of the participants, that is, the various issues that are both motivators and concerns related to collaboration.

5. Once the personal contacts have been made, a follow-up letter should be sent to participants to confirm the organizational meeting (see Tools section). It is helpful to ask each agency to bring information about itself, e.g., a brochure or via completion of an Agency Profile (see Tools section) to provide basic agency information.

***See the Tools section of this document which contains:***

- *Sample Letter Asking Potential Team Members to Attend the Organizational Meeting - It is recommended that this letter be sent out as a follow-up to some type of personal contact.*

- *Agency Profile which potential team members can complete for use at the team's organizational meeting in order to help the team "get acquainted" and learn more about the various resources in the community.*

**Conducting The Organizational Meeting**

**Tasks**

1. The focus of the initial meeting is to help the team get organized. Design the agenda to help them become acquainted with each other and their task (see Tools section).

2. Review Agency Profiles at the organizational meeting to help them get acquainted with each other. Even though agencies may have worked together in various ways in the past, they benefit from sharing information about each other.

3. At the first or second meeting, have the team do an assessment of the community's current context. A helpful process for doing this is through an analysis of community Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats - SWOTs (see SWOT Activity in the Tools section). If the team's focus has not been determined in advance, this community assessment can help lead the team to decide its focus (see Activity to Determine a Team's Initial Focus in the Tools section). If the focus has already been determined, the SWOT activity can help to further define that focus. NOTE: Some

teams enjoy becoming "SWOT" teams to attack community issues. Other teams prefer replacing the word "weaknesses" with "concerns", making community assessment a "SCOT" process.

4. The team should confirm the initial focus of its collaboration as soon as possible. Sometimes, this will be determined prior to the organizational meeting. This may be an outgrowth of the organizer's personal contacts. In other instances, direction may emerge from the team's discussion of community needs. Deciding on this initial focus is key. It helps make collaboration "more concrete". That is, people are able to then name the topic(s) on which they will be spending their time and that will increase the likelihood that attending team meetings will be more meaningful to members.

5. There are an infinite number of areas around which collaboration can occur. Each agency will likely have its own issues on which it would like the team to focus. Moreover, there may be various funding and time constraints impacting the ability of people to be involved in collaborative activities. With these factors in mind, it is recommended that the team start with a focus that is doable within a reasonable amount of time by "thinking big AND starting small".

**Tips**

Criteria for teams in deciding their focus are factors such as:

- most agreement
- individual and community needs
- doable within limited timeframe
- most urgent due to legal, funding or local considerations
- requiring least time and funds to implement
- least disruptive to current practice - thereby more easily accepted, creating greater openness to subsequent changes
- high and positive visibility for team and participating agencies

6. The organizational meeting should conclude with the team developing ground rules for its operation. It is often helpful to provide a sample of basic ground rules that the team can adapt to meet its needs rather than starting from scratch (see Tools section). Common ground rules address issues such as:

   - *Team Membership* - Having a decision on the team's basic focus helps the team decide on team membership, that is, whom they need on a regular and ad hoc basis to address this focus. If they are unsure about whom to involve OR if they would like to get input from others who will likely not be regular team members, then, they can use some process such as that suggested by the Input Form in the Tools section.

   - *Team Roles* - Deciding who will serve as convener, facilitator, recorder, timekeeper and in other roles as determined by the team.

   - *Decision Making Process* - Determining how decisions will be made and what will be done if the team cannot agree.

- *Task Focus* - Making a commitment to having effective meetings including having a regular time and location for meetings.
- *Attendance* - Deciding what to do if people miss meetings.
- *Interactions* - Deciding how to handle interpersonal dynamics in meetings.
- *Communicating with Others in Our Agency and Community* - Discussing involvement of key stakeholders and respective agency chains of command.
- *Orientation of New Members* - Deciding how to involve new members so that they feel welcomed on the team and so that they can be effective contributors.

***See the Tools section of this document which contains:***

- *Collaborative Team Organizational Session Agenda. This agenda is for an extended time frame to allow the team to discuss critical organizational issues. If needed, it could be split into 2 meetings. After the initial meeting, it is suggested that team meetings be approximately 3 hours in length. Future agendas can be developed using this Organizational Session Agenda as a model. Over time specific agenda items will likely address issues such as such as: information gathering and sharing, visioning, priority setting, planning, problem solving, development of procedures and products, tracking and evaluating collaborative efforts.*
- *Activity Assessing Your Community's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*
- *Activity to Determine a Team's Initial Focus - This can be used to decide on a focus(es), e.g., Transition or Inclusive Services. If a basic focus has already been determined, this activity can be used to further clarify or specify the particular issues within that basic focus that the team wishes to address.*
- *Sample Ground Rules - Use these rules as a starting point for discussion and adapt as appropriate to the situation.*
- *Collaborative Planning Team Input Form - Use or adapt this form to get input from those in the community that are not regular team members but whose input and support are important to the team's efforts.*

## CREATING AN EFFECTIVE STRUCTURE FOR THE TEAM'S OPERATION

### Tasks

At its first meeting, the team will negotiate ground rules as described above. Among these rules are giving attention to team authority, the collaborative decision making process, logistics and leadership.

1. Clarify the team's authority and collaborative decision making process. The team needs to decide on the degree to which it has authority to make decisions. Depending on the nature of the team this may include having:

   - agency representatives authorized to participate in and make decisions affecting their agencies (that is, the team is free to decide); OR
   - a collaborative decision making process responsive to the decision making processes of member agencies' chains of command as well as to collaborative needs (that is, team members must get the approval of their respective "bosses" prior to the team's making a final decision); OR
   - some combination thereof. There may be some topics on which the team will have the authority to decide and others that will require the approval of member agencies' chains of command.

1. Provide opportunities for participants to get to know each other as individuals. Building people-to-people relationships has a major positive impact on collaborative relationships and should be built into team activities, e.g. coffee prior to meeting, lunching together before or after a meeting, joint projects, etc.

2. Establish a regular meeting date, time and location. Monthly meetings of approximately 3 hours are recommended. Rotating the meeting location promotes cross program visitation and team ownership. On the other hand, members may find it more convenient to consistently meet at one location. It helps people to both plan ahead and to remember meeting dates if the time and date are consistent (e.g. 3rd Tuesday, 4th Wednesday, etc.).

**Tips**

- People skills are key to effective collaboration.
- People like to be treated with respect and to be able to trust and be trusted.
- People like recognition and good news. Give each other positive feedback.
- People want to be understood. Seek to understand their programs and issues.
- People will be <u>less</u> likely to change a position if they are forced to defend it.

3. Have a leadership structure and role clarification (e.g. convener, facilitator, recorder, etc.) as described in the Ground Rules in the Tools section. Team members should all know and be able to carry out their respective meeting roles. Also, make provisions for leadership election and rotation schedule. Choose leaders who are perceived to be fair by all participants, who will lead this as a community team and not as a vehicle for promoting his or her own agency agenda.

It is also important for the leader and members to have good skills at facilitating meetings, problem solving, conflict resolution, etc. In some instances, it may be helpful to have an outside facilitator, particularly during the team's early stages, e.g. to help with team organization and priority setting, for problem solving activities, for assisting the team in evaluating it's efforts, and for similar activities.

1. Pay attention to basic standards for effective meetings. Each meeting should have clear and purposeful agendas with mutually agreed to outcomes clarifying what the team wants to know, have or be able to do by the time the meeting is over. At the end of each meeting, outcomes should be established for the next meeting. The meeting should adhere to meeting starting and ending times, adjusting agenda time as needed but making every effort to conclude discussion of each agenda item within the time set on the agenda.

2. Meetings should have minutes summarizing discussion and decisions (see Minutes Shell in the Tools Section). Minutes should include specific next steps for follow-through by team members prior to the next meeting. These should be circulated promptly, within 1 to 2 weeks of the meeting so that team members have "next steps" reminders and absent members can have quick feedback on meeting outcomes.

**Tips**

- People will initially focus on their own agendas. That is normal; don't condemn them. Rather, seek to find common ground among individual agendas. In so doing, people will buy into collaborative activities that meet one of their own needs - as well as a community need. That increases the likelihood that the collaborative team will be relevant to them and worth their time. It helps to foster true commitment.

- Convert "me" mentality to a "we" mentality. Typical losers of "us" and "them" mentalities are the children and families we are all here to serve.

***See the Tools section of this document which contains:***

- *Collaborative Planning Team Minutes Shell - This form can be adapted so that the recorder can print notes on the form and, thus, minutes can be copied from this form without transcription. Or, the format can be put on a disk, allowing the recorder to take notes on a laptop during a meeting, or as a follow-up to the meeting. The latter is preferred as it makes it easier for the recorder to be an active meeting participant.*

## CREATING A SHARED COMMUNITY VISION GROUNDED IN THE COMMUNITY'S CURRENT CONTEXT

Developing a shared vision that focuses on "community" interests is a critical early step in establishing an effective structure to support collaboration (see Tools section). A shared vision is one which is responsive to participating agencies but transcends individual concerns, focusing on common goals to which all agencies are united in their commitment.

A vision describes where the team wants to be at some future point. It builds on what is currently in place, but does not necessarily extend it. Rather, the vision articulates what the team would like the their future reality to look like. It is specific and reasonable. It is the statement that "pulls" the team forward, giving it direction in setting priorities.

### Tasks

1. The team can start by (1) first defining its current context (SWOTs) and then its vision or (2) vice versa. Strategy one is preferred, because it is more concrete and, thus, more meaningful to participants.

2. The team can then assess gaps between the current context and the vision. Gaps are challenges the team will need to address - so that their vision will ultimately become a reality. Challenges may be apparent as a result of assessing the community's current context (SWOTs) and visioning. If there is no consensus on challenges, the team will need to conduct an activity for this purpose (see Tools section for Activity to Identify Challenges the Team will Address via Action Planning). In order to "think big and start small", the team should review the challenges and set priorities for which tasks to tackle first. Priority challenges then evolve into objectives for the team's action planning.

**Tips**

Target the scope of your vision depending on the developmental stage and interests of the team (e.g., is it a newly forming team, a high performing team with a long history, a team where you have trouble getting everyone to the table). Research shows it is preferable to "think big and start small". It may be more meaningful for participants in the early stage of team development to limit visions to a specific, commonly agreed upon need, e.g., transition or community-wide screening, rather than a vision for a comprehensive service system.

***See the Tools section of this document which contains:***

- *Visioning Activity*
- *Activity to Identify Challenges the Team will Address via Action Planning*

## DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

### Tasks

1. In order for the vision to be realized, the team must develop a clear and specific plan to address the identified challenge(s).

2. Recommended components for action plans include:
   - objectives that are measurable statements of what you want to accomplish in order to overcome the challenge(s) and move the team toward its vision;
   - strategy(ies)/action steps to achieve each objective;
   - person(s) responsible for each strategy/action step;
   - resources needed for each strategy/action step;
     and
   - timeline for each strategy/action step.

1. Some teams will have a single priority and, thus, will need only a single action plan; however, if the team has multiple priorities that it wants to address at the same time, multiple action plans will be needed. In this case, the team may find it helpful to establish "action plan teams" or committees to develop an action plan for each of the priority challenges. Action plan members can be confined to collaborative team members or this can be an opportunity to involve other stakeholders who are not regular collaborative team members. This is a particularly good way to involve people/agencies who may have expertise related to the challenges the team is addressing when such people are not regular team members. Involve people who have a stake in the outcomes of the action plan topic, such as people:

   - whose support you need such as agency heads or representatives on agencies who are not regular team members; or
   - who will be involved in implementing the changes necessitated by the plan such as staff; or
   - who will be impacted by the plan such as families.

1. Once developed, the team's actions plans should be reviewed at each meeting in order to guide the team's activities and keep it on track.

### Tips

- Action plans are a task analysis of each thing you must do to carry out your strategy and achieve your objective. For example, a challenge might relate to increasing staff knowledge and skills. The objective might be to establish a training program on a certain topic. Strategies/action steps are then your specific "to do list" of things you intend to do to set up, implement and evaluate the training program.

- Plans should be specific enough to guide the team's work and keep it accountable and, yet, the team should also be flexible, adjusting the plan as needed based on new information which may result from plan implementation and evaluation.

***See the Tools section of this document which contains:***

- *Action Planning Form and Form Completion Instructions*
- *Action Planning Activity*
- *Activity for Round Robin Editing of Multiple Action Plans*

## METHODS FOR IMPLEMENTING COLLABORATIVE DECISIONS, PLANS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Tasks

It is important to use methods to document and communicate team decisions in writing. This helps reinforce a common understanding of and commitment to issues on which there has been agreement. It also facilitates implementation, activity tracking and evaluation. In addition to written action plans as described above, other options for documenting and communicating team decisions include the following tasks.

1. A collaborative agreement is one option. It is required by federal or state regulations. To be more than just "another piece of paper to be in compliance", this agreement should not be an end in itself but rather a document that reflects collaborative planning and problem solving. Moreover, it should be a fluid document which evolves from year to year as changes occur among the collaborative agencies and in the various areas in which they are collaborating. The Tools section provides a Generic Format for an Interagency Collaboration Agreement which communities can adapt as needed.

2. Consideration should also be given to incorporating areas of agreement within individual agency contexts and documents. This helps to increase individual agency buy-in, particularly beyond the administrative level. The team should consider reflecting areas of collaborative agreement in the participating agencies policies and procedures, calendars, staff job descriptions, etc.

**Tips**

Create a team file with various folders or a notebook for:
- Meeting agendas and minutes
- Team mailing list and member information (profiles, brochures, fact sheets)
- Ground rules, Interagency agreement/policies, procedures and forms
- Team plans
- Team products
- Resources for access by team

In team ground rules, identify who will maintain the "master" file/ notebook and how this will be used to orient new members.

3. The use of commonly adopted forms is another method that assists in implementing areas of common agreement. It also facilitates communication among agencies and provides continuity for families as they move from one service agency to another.

4. Minutes, memos, letters, newsletters and related communication devices can be used to transmit information on collaborative activities and areas of agreement to a variety of audiences including participating agencies' leadership, staff, families, governing agencies, and the community at-large.

5. Materials which describe the team are beneficial for sharing with families and other service providers. Such materials may include a brochure describing the various agencies and how they work together or a commonly adopted vision or mission describing the team's purpose.

Team accomplishments will result in needed changes. Such changes may take the form of new transition procedures, new forms, strategies to promote program continuity among agencies, new or expanded services, increased family involvement and so forth. It is not enough for the collaborative team members to understand and buy-in to these new things. Carrying out these team decisions and plans also requires that the people who will be involved in implementation have the skills, motivation and resources needed to do so. Tasks that can help achieve this are:

1. Building buy-in by getting staff and family input in the change through involvement on action planning teams or via surveys, interviews, focus groups, or asking for review and comment on documents.

2. Conducting joint training among agency staff and/or families.

3. Conducting cross program visitation for staff and/or families so that they can become familiar with the various services in the community. If time is not readily available, such visits can be carried out by having speakers from other agencies, reviewing brochures of other agencies, or, if available, taking a "video tour".

**Tips**

- Collaborative team members should "walk the talk" of collaboration within their own agencies. If people begin to complain about implementing a new collaborative strategy or demonstrate an "us and them" mentality, team members should not join in such talk. Rather, they should positively support the change, working with the collaborative team to resolve problems if needed.

- Joint staff training and study groups are effective ways to build staff-to-staff relationships and commitment to collaboration, because staff learn not only about the training topic but also about each other.

4. Looking at options to provide release time for staff to work together in "study groups" within and across agencies in implementing collaborative changes.

5. Providing feedback to and recognition of staff who are involved in implementing changes brought about by the collaboration.

6. Locating resources to provide staff with the resources needed to implement the change. Many government agencies, foundations and businesses look favorably on funding collaborative efforts.

***See the Tools section of this document which contains:***

- *Generic Format for an Interagency Collaboration Agreement*

## TRACKING AND EVALUATING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Ongoing mechanisms need to be in place to track and report on the implementation of collaborative activities. This will help the team be aware of implementation status and provide an opportunity for addressing inevitable problems in a timely manner. Such mechanisms should help determine if planned activities are:

1. being implemented as planned;

2. proving to be workable; and

3. having the desired impact on the community challenge(s) being addressed.

The team should also evaluate itself. That is, a collaborative team is not a static entity. It will evolve over time as there are changes in individual and agency membership, changes in funding and regulatory structures, changes in the community, or new needs emerging among children and families. The team will also change as it develops a history of working together. That is, success in addressing initial challenges may create team momentum. Relationships and team learnings from early collaborations may serve as a foundation for addressing more complex and comprehensive challenges.

Thus, in addition to ongoing activity tracking and evaluation, it is recommended that the team formally evaluate its overall operation at least annually related to the team's accomplishments and challenges, operational structure and team member relationships and involvement. The tasks delineated below can assist the team in this effort.

**Tasks**

1. Review the team's priorities.

   - Have they been met?
   - How well?
   - Is working on these priorities benefiting both the collaborative team/community and the participating agencies?
   - What priorities remain or are emerging?
   - Do previously set priorities continue to be relevant to all members of the team?
   - What changes in internal (agency) and external (community, state, federal) environments are likely to impact priorities of this team?

1. Assess membership involvement.

   - Are all members actively involved? Why or why not?
   - What can be done to get active involvement of all members?
   - Do activities or membership need to change so that active involvement of all members will be more likely?
   - As new individuals or agency members are added to the team, what is done to help them adapt to the team and to help the team adapt to them (e.g., orientation or refocusing priorities to address new members' interests)?

**Tips**

- The team, if formed properly, was initially pulled together in order to have the "right people" together to address a particular focus or priority. As priorities of the team change, it is important to discuss if the people need to change too. Perhaps, some members will no longer find the team relevant as it addresses these new priorities. Perhaps new members will need to be added. Revamping membership should in no way be considered as a negative but rather as a practical strategy to ensuring effective teamwork.

- As the team "reforms" around new priorities and/or membership, use the tasks, tips and tools in this document in charting your new direction.

1. Evaluate the outcomes and impact of team activities.

   - Did we do what we said we would do?
   - Are these helping to achieve the goals set for each of the priorities?
   - Are they effective?
   - Are they beneficial enough to warrant the time and other resources allocated to them?
   - Can we replace any current activities to make with other activities that now may be more worthwhile?
   - Do members consider these activities a good of their time considering their individual agency responsibilities?

1. Consider the team's continued existence.

   - Does the team need to continue to exist?
   - Whom does it benefit?
   - Given the time and effort involved, is there a return on investment?

   If the benefit derived from the team's continued existence is questionable, celebrate accomplishments and bring the team to an end. If the team is determined to be effective, identify next steps for team continuation. This should include reaffirmation or revision of the team's focus and consideration of who needs to be involved as you proceed in your efforts to promote collaboration to benefit children and families in your community.

## TOOLS for Collaborative Teams

This section provides tools to help teams carry out the tasks and tips contained in this document. Document users should feel free to adapt these tools to meeting their own needs. Tools include the following.

- Sample Letter Asking Potential Team Members to Attend the Organizational Meeting
- Agency Profile
- Collaborative Team Organizational Session Agenda
- Assessing Your Community's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs)
- Activity to Determine a Team's Initial Focus
- Sample Ground Rules
- Collaborative Planning Team Input Form
- Collaborative Planning Team Minutes Shell
- Visioning Activity
- Activity to Identify Challenges the Team will Address via Action Planning
- Action Planning Form and Form Completion Instructions
- Action Planning Activity
- Activity for Round Robin Editing of Multiple Action Plans
- Generic Format for an Interagency Collaboration Agreement

**Sample Letter**
**Asking Potential Team Members to Attend the Organizational Meeting**

**TO:**

**FROM:**

**DATE:**

**RE:** Organizational Meeting for Community Collaborative Team

I appreciate your interest in forming a community collaborative team and willingness to attend our organizational meeting. Our purpose will be to look at ways in which we can work together, ways that will benefit children and families, our individual agencies and our community-at-large. Our organizational meeting will be:

**Date/Time**: _____

**Location**: _____

To help us prepare for this meeting, I am enclosing:

1. An agenda for our meeting

2. An agency profile form. Please complete this and bring ___ copies to share at our meeting. This will help us get acquainted with the services we each provide. Please feel free to bring any brochures or other materials that seem appropriate.

3. A tentative list of collaborative team members

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting. If you have any questions, please call me at _____.

## Agency Profile

**Profile Purpose**: To learn what services we have in our community to help us (1) get to know each other and (2) have information to use in our planning.

**Instructions**: Provide information on services relevant to the education and care of children ages birth-8, including children with and without disabilities. Keep responses brief - a basic, reader-friendly description of what you do. If you have multiple resources/programs, copy as many of these forms as you need to complete this activity.

**Agency**:

| | |
|---|---|
| Resource/Program Name | |
| Population Eligible (age, income, special needs, etc.) | |
| Services | |
| # of Children Enrolled | |
| Service Hours | |
| Service Location(s) | |
| Funding Source(s) | |
| How Families Access Services | |
| Parent Fees, If Any | |
| Potential Collaboration Topics | |
| Contact Person | |
| Other Comments | |

## Collaborative Team Organizational Session Agenda

**Date/Time:** **Location:**

**What to Bring:**
1. This agenda
2. Completed agency profile, brochures and other related information (enough to share)

**Meeting Purposes:** The team will have
1. A common understanding of the agencies represented at this meeting
2. An identification of their communities' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
3. Confirmation of the team's focus
4. Confirmation of team ground rules, including meeting schedule and membership
5. A plan for next steps.

**Agenda**

| | |
|---|---|
| 8:30 | Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review - Team organizer(s) |
| 8:45 | Learning about each other: Reviewing agency profile with Q & A |
| 10:00 | Break |
| 10:15 | Assessing Community Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOTS) |
| 10:45 | Confirming the Team's Focus based on Agency Profiles Info and our SWOTS<br>*Based on what we have just discussed, what particular topic(s) or focus should this team pursue that would benefit children and families, the agencies represented here and the community at large.* |
| 11:15 | Establishing our Ground Rules: Reviewing and editing the sample and confirming our team mailing list |
| Noon | Next Steps: Follow-up after this meeting and plans for next meeting |
| 12:15 | Evaluating our Time Together: Team discussion about what made the meeting effective and things we could do to improve it |
| 12:30 | Adjourn |

**Assessing Your Community's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats***
**"Making You a SWOT Team to Attack Community Issues"**

1. Appoint a facilitator, recorder and timekeeper.

2. The **recorder** sets up a story board** with the following columns:

| Strengths | Weaknesses | Opportunities | Threats |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

3. Ask **each team member** to identify what he or she sees as their community's major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They should write these on note cards with a magic marker - one idea per card. When they are through, they should post their cards under the appropriate columns on the flip chart.

4. Starting with Strengths, the **facilitator** leads the team in "merging" common ideas under this column on the story board. As these groupings are developed, a name or title for each grouping is identified which summarizes the grouping. For example, there may be multiple "groupings" of strengths, each with its own name or title.

5. The **facilitator** continues to help the team with the merging activity until all columns are completed.

6. This activity should take approximately 30-45 minutes. The **timekeeper** helps the team track its time.

* Some teams enjoy becoming "SWOT" teams to attack community issues. Other teams prefer replacing the word "weaknesses" with "concerns", making the community assessment a "SCOT" process.

** This activity calls for a **story board.** This is created with flip chart paper taped to the wall, usually 2 or more overlapping pages. These pages are then sprayed with 3M Spray Mount Artist's Adhesive. This is a temporary adhesive which feels like the "sticky part" of a post-it. Because it is a temporary adhesive, you can stick note cards or similar materials to the story board and then move these materials around on the story board.

In the case of this activity, the facilitator leads the team in grouping or merging cards under the 4 columns set up on the story board. Upon completion of the activity, the recorder can take a piece of scotch tape and run it from the top to the bottom of the column of cards. This will allow for removal of a whole column of cards so that these can be transported more easily and used later by the person transcribing the minutes.

## Activity to Determine a Team's Initial Focus

**Focus Question**: Based on what we have learned through our discussion of our Agency Profiles and our SWOTS, what particular topic(s) or focus should this team pursue as its initial focus to benefit children and families, the agencies represented here and the community at large.

1. Appoint a facilitator, recorder and timekeeper.

2. The **recorder** sets up a story board* of 2 flip chart pages taped side-by-side to the wall, making one large chart with a heading of "Our Team Focus". The focus question is written on flip chart paper and posted.

3. **Each team member** each identifies 1-3 answers to the focus questions, recording 1 answer per post-it with a magic marker.

4. **Each team member** posts all post-its on chart.

5. **Facilitator** presents the focus question to the team and leads them in merging similar ideas into groups.

6. The **recorder** notes the name/title of each grouping near that grouping. These names/titles become the characteristics describing the focus we want to take.

7. The **facilitator** leads the team in deciding which of the grouping(s) to pursue as its initial focus or direction. It is recommended that the team start with one primary focus and make note of the other ideas generated for future reference. Then, when the initial focus is achieved, they can reconsider the other ideas generated, building on the success of initial accomplishments.

8. **Timekeeper** helps the team track time (30 minutes).

* This activity calls for post-its. It can also be done using a story board as described in the activity for Assessing Your Community's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. If a story board is used, as the facilitator leads the merging of cards into groups that are set up as vertical columns. At the top of each column, leave a blank card on which the name/main theme of the cards in the column can be written by the recorder.

## Sample Ground Rules for the Team to Adapt As Appropriate

**TEAM NAME:**

**Roles**

1. **Agencies Represented on Team/Individual Participants =** Participate fully. Communicate with the constituencies you represent. To keep the team manageable, the number of participants should be 5 to 9...12 at the very most.
   *What Agency* *Who*

2. **Convener =** Handle logistics of meetings. NOTE: This role may be shared if the team believes that it is helpful to rotate meeting locations.
   *Who:*

3. **Facilitator =** Lead team meetings in a way that is perceived to be fair, helping the team stay focused, and supporting the building of relationships needed for effective work. NOTE: This role may be shared. It may also be the same person as the Convener.
   *Who:*

4. **Recorder =** Take minutes and disseminate to team. Maintain team's "master" file or notebook.
   *Who:*

5. **Timekeeper =** Keeps track of time allotments on agenda and reminds team of time remaining for each agenda item so that the team can complete items in a timely manner OR adjust agenda as needed.
   *Who:*

6. **Other Community Members =** Not necessarily on team as regular members but involved on an "as needed basis" via survey, interviews, special projects, etc. as needed to accomplish particular tasks.
   *What Agency* *Who*

## Sample Ground Rules (continued)

**Decision Making Process**

1. We will use consensus. Consensus as used here means modified consensus, adhering to the test of "can we live with it and publicly support it"? If not, what needs to be changed so that we can?

2. If we cannot achieve consensus on an item, we will (choose one or more)
   ____ not include it in our plan. "When in doubt, leave it out."
   ____ take a vote (by member or by agency?)
   ____ refer this to the respective agency heads of the agencies we represent for decisions, providing for them the various perspectives on this team
   ____ decide on an individual basis how best to proceed
   ____ other (specify)

3. Other rules at the team's discretion -

**Task Focus**

1. We will start and end on time.

2. Stay outcome focused - using a "Parking Lot"/flip chart on which to record/"park" good ideas not directly related to stated meeting outcomes...ideas that might get us off task.

3. Meeting Logistics
   - Regular meeting dates and times -
   - Meeting location -

1. Maximize our time together and between meetings.

2. Other rules at the team's discretion -

**Attendance**

1. Attend team meetings regularly.

2. Missed meeting - contact another member for follow-up

3. Other rules at the team's discretion -

## Sample Ground Rules (continued)

**Interactions**

1. Be realistic; respect others' right to say no.
2. Share ideas and air time.
3. All ideas have value...even ones with which we disagree.
4. Honor confidentiality.
5. Other rules at the team's discretion -

**Communicating with Others in Our Agency and Community**

1. With respective agency decision makers re: team recommendations -
2. With agency decision makers to ensure they are "in the loop", supportive/not blocking -
3. With line staff for input as we develop, implement and evaluate our efforts to make sure that any procedures or activities affecting them will be relevant -
4. With families for input as we develop, implement and evaluate our efforts to make sure that any procedures or activities affecting them will be relevant -
5. With "others" in the community with an indirect interest in our efforts -

**Orientation of New Members**

1. Identify a team member to orient each new member and to be that person's "buddy" during the first year on the team.
2. Provide a notebook or file of team orientation materials.
3. Other rules at the team's discretion -

**Other Ground Rules Topics at the Team's Discretion**

## Collaborative Planning Team Input Form

**Name of Person Interviewed:**

**Agency:**

**Address:**

**Phone:** **Fax:**

**E-mail:**

**Team Member Completing This Form:**

**Instructions to Collaborative Team Member Conducting a Phone Call or Meeting to Obtain this Input:** Please review the team's focus with the person you are interviewing and have them answer these questions. Record neatly in a dark color so that clear copies can be made to share with team members.

1. **What is your reaction to the focus this team is taking?**

2. **Which elements of this focus relate to things that you or your organization are doing? What are things we need to know about so that we can coordinate our activities with you?**

3. **How might the team involve you with what we are doing in addition to #2 above?**

___ Include you as a regular member of our team.
___ Access your input on a consultative basis (e.g., have you attend a meeting when we discuss particular topics, call you for relevant input, send you relevant materials for review and comment).
___ Include you on our mailing list as an "ex-officio" member to get our meeting minutes.
___ Other

4. **What other questions or comments do you have?**

**Collaborative Planning Team Minutes**
**Date:**

**In attendance:**

**Next Meeting Plans:**
**Date and Time:**
**Location:**
**Purposes:**

**Issue I.** Summary of Discussion & Decisions on the Topic of:

**Issue II.** Summary of Discussion & Decisions on the Topic of:

**Issue III.** Summary of Discussion & Decisions on the Topic of:

**Issue IV:** Plan for Next Steps including communicating, as needed, with other stakeholders including people within the agencies represented on the team.

## Visioning Activity

**Focus Question**: Related to our chosen area(s) of team focus, what is the "desired" reality you want our team to create in our community? What concrete and doable procedures and/or services do you want to see in place? How are children and families benefiting?

1. Appoint a facilitator, recorder and timekeeper.

2. The **recorder** sets up a story board* of 2 flip chart pages taped side-by-side to the wall, making one large chart with a heading of "Our Vision". The focus question is written on flip chart paper and posted.

3. **Each team member** each identifies 3-5 answers to the focus questions, recording 1 answer per post-it with a magic marker.

4. **Each team member** posts all post-its on chart.

5. **Facilitator** presents the focus question to the team and leads them in merging similar ideas into groups.

6. The **recorder** notes the name/title of each grouping near that grouping. These names/titles become the characteristics describing the vision we want to create.

7. **Timekeeper** helps team track time (25 minutes).

* This activity calls for post-its. It can also be done using a story board as described in the activity for Assessing Your Community's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. If a story board is used, as the facilitator leads the merging of cards into groups that are set up as vertical columns. At the top of each column, leave a blank card on which the name/main theme of the cards in the column can be written by the recorder.

## Activity to Identify Challenges the Team will Address via Action Planning

**Note:** Challenges may be apparent as a result of assessing the community's current context (SWOTs) and visioning. If there is no consensus on challenges, the team will need to conduct an activity such as the one below for this purpose.

**Focus Question**: Given our SWOTs (our current context) and our vision, what are challenges we will need to address via action planning so that our vision can be achieved?

1. Appoint a facilitator, recorder and timekeeper.

2. The **recorder** sets up a story board* of 2 flip chart pages taped side-by-side to the wall, making one large chart with a heading of "Team Challenges". The focus question is written on flip chart paper and posted.

3. **Each team member** each identifies 2-4 answers to the focus question, recording 1 answer per post-it with a magic marker.

4. **Each team member** posts all post-its on chart.

5. **Facilitator** presents the focus question to the team and leads them in merging similar ideas into groups.

6. The **recorder** notes the name/title of each grouping near that grouping. These names/titles become the challenges that the team will consider pursuing.

7. The **facilitator** leads the team in deciding which grouping(s) to pursue. The team may decide to start with only one challenge and make note of other challenges for future reference. Then, when the initial challenge is addressed, they can reconsider the other identified challenges. They may also choose more than one challenge or all. Keep in mind that teams are encouraged to "think big and start small" choosing challenges to address that are not only beneficial but also doable in a reasonable amount of time. If the team cannot arrive at this decision via discussion, the **facilitator** may ask the team to "vote for" the challenge that they think is the top priority.

8. **Timekeeper** helps team track time (30 minutes).

* This activity calls for post-its. It can also be done using a story board as described in the activity for Assessing Your Community's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. If a story board is used, as the facilitator leads the merging of cards into groups that are set up as vertical columns. At the top of each column, leave a blank card on which the name/main theme of the cards in the column can be written by the recorder.

# COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM ACTION PLAN FORM

| | |
|---|---|
| **TEAM:** | **PERIOD COVERED BY PLAN:** |
| **VISION:** | |
| **CHALLENGE:** | |

| Objective | Strategies/Action Steps | Resources | People | Timeline | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

## COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM ACTION PLAN continued

| Objective | Strategies/Action Steps | Resources | People | Timeline | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM ACTION PLAN

**TEAM:** **PERIOD COVERED:** *Generally preferable to have action plans with a timeframe of a year or less.*

**VISION:** *What you want to see at some point in the future (usually 3 to 5 years) as a result of challenges having been overcome. In effect, what you are working toward.*

**CHALLENGE:** *A problem you are trying to solve that is standing in the way of achieving your vision, e.g., staff lacking the knowledge and skills that they need to perform critical functions.*

| Objective | Strategies/Action Steps | Resources | People | Timeline | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Tangible things we want to accomplish to overcome the challenge and move toward the vision, e.g., parent training and support groups, transition policies and procedures, community resource directory, committee/structure to address interagency issues on an ongoing basis, mechanism for communicating with physicians on child and system basis, etc.* | *For each objective, list the series of steps that your team will need to take in order to accomplish that objective.* | *Identify the resources (money, people, training, materials, etc.) that you will need in order to implement your action plan. Your strategy column should include steps to access the resources.* | *Identify the people who will be responsible for implementing each step in the strategy column.* | *Identify the timeframe during which each step in the strategy column will be completed.* | *Leave this column blank so that the team can use this planning form to document plan implementation and evaluation. That is, you can make notes here re:*<br>✓ *Did you do what you said you would do?*<br>✓ *Did it produce the results you wanted?*<br>✓ *What have you learned as a team as a result of plan implementation?*<br>✓ *What are next steps?* |

## Action Planning Activity

1. Appoint a team facilitator, recorder, and timekeeper.

2. The **recorder** makes "Header Cards" and posts on the story board that is 2 sheets of flip chart paper high and 2 sheets wide so that it looks like this:

**Action Plan Objective**

| *Strategies/Action Steps* | *Resources* | *Person Responsible* | *Timeline* | *Outcome* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

These pages are then sprayed with 3M Spray Mount Artist's Adhesive. This is a temporary adhesive which feels like the "sticky part" of a post-it. Because it is a temporary adhesive, you can stick note cards or similar materials to the story board and then move these materials around on the story board. **The recorder** places a note card with the appropriate heading at the top of each column as shown here.

1. **Facilitator** asks team members to generate strategies on note cards to respond to the following focus question:

2. *What are strategies we should undertake to help us achieve our action plan objective...that will take us toward our vision?*

3. If the group is 4 or less, participants can respond as individuals. If the group is 5 or more, have them work in "small groups" of 2 to 5 members (depending on the size of the group) to generate strategies. The facilitator should also participate in this activity...either as an individual or as part of a small group.

4. Participants/Small Groups write with magic markers on the cards ONE STRATEGY PER CARD. If you are using small groups, give them about 10-15 minutes to talk about and agree to the strategies that their group want to share. It is helpful to set a timer (e.g., a kitchen timer) or have a **timekeeper** remind them about how much time they have left at various points in the activity to help keep them focused.

5. When time is called, participants take their cards up to the board and post them on the story board. They do not need to worry about sticking them under the strategy column. They can just place their cards any where on the story board.

## Action Planning Activity (continued)

6. **Facilitator** leads the team in reviewing the strategies that have been generated and removing any duplicates. In some cases, you may decide to "merge" 2 or more common strategies into a new statement. In this case, the team's **recorder** will write this new strategy on a card and give to the facilitator for posting.

7. Once the team has non-duplicative strategies, the **facilitator** leads the team in putting these in order/chronological sequence under the strategies column. That is, what will we do first, then second, etc. As you post the cards, DO NOT overlap the note cards. Just place them close together, one under another. In doing this sequencing, the team will likely determine the need to rewrite a strategy, add a strategy or delete a strategy. The **recorder** will write revised/new strategies as needed and give to the facilitator for posting.

8. Once the strategies column is complete, the **recorder** puts blank note cards under the each of the columns remaining.

9. The **facilitator** reviews each strategy and asks the team as a whole the following:

   - **Resources** - What, if any, resources do we need to carry out this strategy/action step (e.g., a survey, a fact sheet on our program to share, people whose input we need, fiscal resources, meeting space, etc.)? The facilitator or recorder records their response. If no resources are needed, leave the card blank. Do not remove the card.

   - **Person(s) responsible** - Identify the people who will be responsible for implementing each strategy/action step in that column.

   - **Timeline** - Identify the timeframe for completing strategy/action step in that column.

   - **Outcome** - Leave this column blank so that the team can use it to document plan implementation and evaluation. As you proceed with plan implementation, review the action plan at each of your team meetings, making notes in this column re:

     ✓ Did we do what you said we would do?

     ✓ Did it produce the results we wanted?

     ✓ What have we learned as a team as a result of plan implementation?

     ✓ What are next steps?

## Action Planning Activity (continued)

1. When the planning process is complete, the **facilitator** will help the team wrap-up and evaluate how they felt about the process and what they accomplished. If necessary, the facilitator will help the team plan next steps, such as scheduling another meeting, conducting investigations related to the action plan, etc.

2. The **recorder** will take the scotch tape and start with the first header card (strategies) and run the tape down the column, thus taping all of the cards in that column together. Then, start with the header card and pull the column off of the paper. You may need to hold the edge of the paper so that it does not pull off of the wall while doing this. Once the taped column is removed, fold it up accordion style. Repeat the process until all columns are removed. The recorder will use this material to transcribe the plans on to the action planning form. In transcribing, it is often helpful to tape the columns on a wall to "recreate" the story board and then transcribe from that.

## Round Robin Activity for Editing Multiple Action Plans

**Purposes**:

1. To help the team achieve consensus on action team plans - IF the team develops action plans addressing multiple challenges

2. To help the team review all action plans to get a sense of the "big picture" so that final plans resulting from the action teams are "congruent" across all of the team's action plans.

**Preparations**:

1. Each team is assigned a different colored marker with which to makes edits, e.g., team 1 edits with a red marker, team 2 with a blue and so on. It is also helpful to have 4" x 6" post-its and extra note cards that can be used, where necessary for recording new ideas or idea modifications.

2. This activity takes place at a point when initial drafts of multiple action plans have been developed (see previous Action Planning Activity). These are posted on flip chart paper on which cards are posted with the various components of the plan as follows:

   **Action Plan Objective**

| *Strategies/Action Steps* | *Resources* | *Person Responsible* | *Timeline* | *Outcome* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

**Instructions** - These instructions presuppose the team has 4 action plans. Obviously, the number of action plans would vary depending on the team's priorities and might range from 2 action plans to several. If this is the case, adapt the following activity according to the number of plans you actually have.

1. Each team assigns one person to stay behind as **"home team" facilitator**, while the rest of the team moves to another team's work.

## Round Robin Editing Activity (continued)

2. Each team rotates so they have a chance to review and comment on the work of all other teams. Set time allocations for each rotation. 10-15 minutes is usually adequate. If you had 4 teams, it would operate as follows:

| | Round 1 | Round 2 | Round 3 | Round 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Team 1 is at | Station 1 | Station 2 | Station 3 | Station 4 (Home) |
| Team 2 is at | Station 2 | Station 3 | Station 4 | Station 1 |
| Team 3 is at | Station 3 | Station 4 | Station 1 | Station 2 |
| Team 4 is at | Station 4 | Station 1 | Station 2 | Station 3 |
| Team 1 is at | Station 1 | Station 2 | Station 3 | Station 4 (Home) |

3. When a new team arrives, the **"home team" facilitator** clarifies but does not defend "home" team ideas.

   The visiting team edits ideas by asking themselves, "can we live with and publicly support within our own agencies the ideas that we see posted here?" If not, the team should edit the ideas by:

   (1) adding new ideas;
   (2) deleting or marking through (but not eradicating) ideas; or
   (3) otherwise modifying the home team's ideas.

   Each team can edit any work appearing at the station...even putting back in ideas another team "deleted". They should review the "persons responsible" if their names are mentioned on another team's plan in order to confirm that this is something they are willing to do. If their name is NOT assigned to a strategy in which they have an interest, they should be encouraged to "sign up".

4. The **"home team" facilitator** listens to the visiting team's comments, asking questions as needed to "seek to understand" their rationale for their edits. When the set time has expired, teams rotate to the next station, continuing to do so until they have visited each team's work and returned "home".

5. When teams return to their home stations, the **"home team" facilitator** leads them in a debrief through which the team attempts to come up with a final set of recommendations that reflect ALL the teams' ideas. These are then presented to the large team for a final review. Usually, the team is able to accept the recommendations fully...or with only minor edits.

## Generic Format for an Interagency Collaboration Agreement

**EXPLANATION:** The following provides a generic format for an interagency collaboration agreement. The **bolded items** reflect topics typically included in such agreements. The none-bolded information provides instructions for the user re: adapting this format to meet unique community needs.

**Interagency Collaboration Agreement**
**Participating Agencies:** (List agencies signing the agreement.)

### I. Purpose of Collaboration

Briefly describe the reason for the collaboration addressed in this agreement, such as to achieve a shared vision, provide high quality services to children and families, maximize resources, meet community needs, and so on.

### II. Period Covered by the Agreement

Identify when the agreement will take effect and when re-consideration of the agreement will take place (unless reconsideration is requested sooner by any of the participating agencies).

### III. Brief Description of the Collaboration

Summarize the basic nature of the collaboration. Potential areas of collaboration include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following 12 collaboration areas:

1. Family Involvement;
2. Child Outreach/Child Find, screening, referrals, and evaluations;
3. Service eligibility;
4. Individual program planning (e.g., Individual Family Service Plans and/or Individual Education Programs);
5. Primary and related services delivery (If the collaboration is for the purpose of blending direct services among two or more agencies, include a description of the proposed model, number of days, hours per day, service area, agencies involved, services to be provided, numbers of children to be served, etc.);
6. Service settings that, to the maximum extent possible, work with children in natural settings typical for age of child and which educate children with disabilities along with children without disabilities;
7. Resource sharing including, but not limited to, facilities, materials, and equipment, collaborative services, screening, etc.;
8. Transition;
9. Confidentiality;
10. Records transfer;
11. Joint staff training;
12. Sharing child count data.

## IV. Applicable Legal Requirements

Indicate if this agreement is pursuant to any state or federal legal requirements. If so identify policy, regulation, statute, etc. and who will be responsible for ensuring compliance.

## V. Contact Person(s) in Each Participating Agency

For each participating agency, indicate by position title, persons responsible for decision-making and problem-solving for each agency related to the collaboration agreement. Provide contact information for these people, current as of the date of the agreement signing.

## VI. Participating Agencies' Responsibilities

For each participating agency, describe activities, timelines, and persons to be held accountable. A variety of formats may be used for providing this information:

1. Topical listing in narrative/paragraph form in which a collaboration area is identified (e.g., Child Find) followed by the respective responsibilities of each of the participating agencies.

2. Agency listing in narrative/paragraph form in which each of the participating agencies are listed. Under each agency, all responsibilities relevant to the agreement are listed.

3. Chart format in which the areas of collaboration are listed down one column with applicable participating agencies' responsibilities being listed across corresponding columns.

## VII. Mechanism for Coordinating Agreement Implementation

Describe how participating agencies will coordinate agreement implementation, including provision for how:

1. decisions will be made and by whom and
2. representatives from the participating agencies will meet to plan activities and resolve issues as they arise. Include a schedule for meetings and who should attend.

## VIII. Evaluation and Program Improvement

Delineate the schedule and process for evaluating the outcomes and impact of the collaboration, including how this information will be used for program improvement. This should be done preferably by a team comprised of representatives from participating agencies. It should include formal and informal feedback on progress and needs for change from administrators, staff and families directly involved in the collaboration as well as data on child impact, as appropriate. Include an agreed-upon process for annual assessment of the partnership itself.

## IX. Resource Sharing

Include a description of resources that may be shared such as direct services, facilities, materials, equipment, personnel, food services, transportation, training resources for staff and/or families, etc. As described above under the section on "Participating Agencies' Responsibilities", a variety of formats may be used for providing this information.

## X. Amendments to the Collaboration Agreement

Indicate what process will be necessary and who will need to sign-off on amendments.

## XI. Termination of Agreement by Either Party

Indicate process by which the agreement can be terminated. Include timelines, notifications, and authorization required.

## XII. Signatures

For each participating agency, provide that agency head's or his/her designee's signature, name (typed), title, agency, and date.

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