

## Engaging System Partners

One of Webster's definitions of collaboration is, "To work with others toward a common goal." Another definition from Webster is, "To cooperate with an enemy who has invaded one's territory." We all would like to think the first definition is what all go by. We may think we do most of the time, but there are times we become territorial. How do we knock down these walls, so we can achieve the first definition? It is important to recognize the society and legal mandates of each child serving system and how these mandates shape the system and its workers. With every mandate, agency requirement, and society perception comes pressure to perform in a certain way.

Opportunities for High Fidelity Wraparound (HFW) workforce members to meet with staff from other agencies, share information and understand their strengths and culture can lead to effective interagency collaboration. Rather than thinking that HFW is competition, system partners will begin to understand that you are there to help them be more productive in their role with the youth and family.

Some system partners think that HFW is only involved to represent the voice of the youth and family. They may not be aware that there are nine other HFW principles (notably, team based, collaboration, and integrated planning). Lead by example; ask what they want for the family. What are the mandates or goals they are working on. Tell them how HFW can help them with their mandates/goals. Managing and addressing youth and family needs with other system partners will lead to more effective meetings and better outcomes. Some examples of engaging system partners may be:

1. Engage in a conversation about experiences they have had working with youth and families. Explain that their knowledge will help a youth and/or family you are working with. The majority of us are in this field because we care and want to help others. We all feel good when we are able to help. This is a way to demonstrate interagency collaboration. Reiterate why it would be beneficial to have a system partner like them on a HFW team.
2. Accompany the youth and family if they are going to a session with a provider. Introduce yourself and briefly explain what you do. The appointment is for the youth and family. Offer to send literature, give the provider your business card, and explain how HFW can work with the provider.
3. The population of the youth and families we work with may require clinical professionals. In addressing these concerns, a provider may need to be a part of the team. If the need identified by the youth and family warrants a provider, help the youth and family on selecting the proper fit for the need. Many ideas can be brainstormed to also help with this need and if there is no provider already working with the family begin talking about this with the youth and family.
4. System partners and providers may not want to be a part of something that is going to take up more time away from their already busy schedule. A concise, yet detailed description of the process and how it can help them be more effective with the youth and/or family is warranted, along with how the process can help with meeting their goals and mandates. You may lose engagement with the system partner/provider if the HFW process is not clearly defined.

5. Remember the Theory of Change and how it can be taught from the beginning. Incorporate the providers' information in the stabilization plan/s and the Strengths Needs and Culture Discovery. Gather information from them and acknowledge their work with the youth and family. Show them that you are there to work with them and possibly enhance what they are already doing.
6. What is in it for them? There are many examples listed that you can share regarding the benefits of HFW. When engaging them to the process, share how HFW can help them with new ideas, getting buy-in from the youth and family, sharing responsibilities, etc.
7. Create a list of comments from other providers on how this process has helped them. When sharing the benefits of HFW you can use quotes from other providers and how they see HFW.
8. It is important to reduce the number of occurrences where system partners/providers who are on HFW teams do paperwork, or sit quietly with little or no participation. This may be more of cooperating rather than collaborating. These system partners may not know what their role is in the meeting. It is important to continue to engage them. This is something that we need to do before meetings also. Defining the role and responsibilities of system partner/providers on the HFW team in advance of the meeting will result in a more productive and engaging meeting.
9. System partners may not participate because they are not able to bill. They may decide to come on their own time to discuss goals and needs between meetings. An action step could be for the youth or family member to ask the system partner for their input about a goal that the team is working on. They may be able to participate with the team by helping with a goal even if they cannot attend the team meetings. This can be done by asking them their thoughts and ideas over the phone or through e-mail.
10. There are going to be many times when a system partner cannot attend a meeting. When this happens we need to make sure that they are informed about what the meeting agenda and outcome was about. Ask if they have any brainstormed ideas or other comments for the team. Once the team meeting is over, a plan can be sent to them and reviewed. We want the system partner to feel engaged in the success of the team and begin to value the benefit of the team process.
11. Evaluate the High Fidelity Wraparound process through the eyes of the system partner. Solicit feedback from system partners who are on youth and family teams to ensure their needs are being met. We want to make sure that we are valuing every team member and their voice.