

CORE INTEGRATION TEAM MEETING MINUTES

Thursday September 27, 2012

9am to noon

Mental Health Services

Present:

Susan Seaman, CSBD

Kelly Mathieson, Family Space

Theresa Dostaler, Researcher

Wendy Anderson, CYSN Coordinator

Pam Kent, PELASS

Cathy Utman, County of Hastings

Margo Russell-Bird, CTC and PSSL

Terry Swift, CMHS (co-chair)

Beverley Bell-Rowbotham, DAC

June Rogers, HPEDSB

Johanne Huiskamp, CLPE (co-chair)

Bianca Sclipa-Barrett, CHC

Michael Whiteman, PCYC

Anne Moloney, MCYS

Theresa Kennedy, ALCDSB

Debbie Milne, First Adventure

Susan Sweetman, Trenton MFRC

Chris Semark, Community Living Belleville & Area

Minute Taker: Thelma Perry (Family Space)

Regrets:

Tami Callahan, Highland Shores CAS

Paul Meadows, MHS-HPE

Cathie West, Youthhab

1. **Welcome:** Johanne Huiskamp
2. **Approval of Agenda:** Approved
3. **Approval of Minutes of June 28, 2012:** Approved
4. **Approval of Terms of Reference:** Presentation by Wendy on behalf of Working Group
This is a summary of the revisions to the TOR which were sent out in advance of the meeting. Clarity was requested in the areas of membership, funding request process and evaluation.

Four grant proposals are presently in process to support deliverables:

- United Way to print and distribute a Community Report Card brochure.
- Innovation Fund to support “No Wrong Door” / “Warm-Hand-Off” resources and training.
- United Way to promote November 28th Community Resource Information Fair.
- Innovation Fund to develop a partnership agreement for the Network.

Action: *Chairs are asked to bring recommendations from each of the integration teams to determine next steps at the October 25th meeting.*

Guest Presentation: Paul Johnson, Chair, Hamilton Best Start Network

Responses to preset questions:

1. *A brief overview of the Hamilton Best Start Network.*

Hamilton was a demonstration community that developed a Network from an existing early years' committee. The Network was convened by the municipality of Hamilton and chaired by a member of the community. The partnership between municipality and the community was a true community exercise. The members of the Network are comprised of 50 individuals from a variety of sectors. Police services had a member at the Network and used the early years as part of their crime reduction strategy. The Network is linked to the private sector and although they do not sit at the table, they have kept strong connections with them. The Network has monthly meetings as well as working groups to keep the work going. These working groups are supported by staff from various early years' agencies.

2. *What strategies do you use to help keep your network meetings running smoothly with such a large group of participants?*

A lot of time was spent defining how it was that participants came to the table. Groups that already met regularly regarding early childhood were involved in discussions that developed a vision about the Best Start Network.

The Hamilton Best Start Network believes that Best Start is about children, families, our future and making community connections. Knowledge for the police about early years was very helpful in their community work. The Hamilton Best Start Network has never made funding decisions. They don't decide on the allocation of resources. They advise and provide direction to the various funders in terms of where the funds roll out.

A lot of time and energy was put into planning the process. Experts such as Dr. Jean Clinton were around the table. People who are really good at facilitating meetings and have ways of engaging people so everyone feels that they are contributing were on the committee. They discussed who was best to manage the meetings, as well as provide content for the meetings. A small group (coordinating committee) meets two times a month to develop the agenda and the structure of the meetings. This committee provides recommendations around membership to the Network as well as recruitment of committee members. Discussions were held around "Should we be talking in plenary or should we meet in small groups?", "Should we communicate verbally or in writing"? These types of issues were discussed. This group is really important as well for evaluation following meetings; i.e., we had little participation or certain people didn't get to give their input. This committee prepares people before the meeting and makes sure there is stronger content in advance. Reflection is done by the chair, vice chair and three key staff from the Best Start Network and the Director of early learning and child care from the city.

3. *Could you describe how your coordinating team operates and how it manages to avoid making planning decisions?*

Everyone is welcome to attend meetings. Meetings are advertised ahead of time. Dates are set in advance (i.e. the 2nd and 4th Thursdays) so that people know when and where the meetings are. The chair does not allow conversations to drift into decision making areas. This coordinating group is not an executive committee. People who sit around the table know how to engage people in conversation and dialogue. The Best Start Network is the strongest example of collaboration in the Hamilton community.

Hastings Prince Edward Children and Youth Services Network

4. *Could you tell us about your strategies for engaging decision-makers from the various sectors?*

The network engages decision-makers with a personal approach. They have been successful in terms of engaging major players from health care, education, primary and secondary education, post-secondary college and university, child care, early years community information groups, police and libraries. Members from the network go out and have initial conversations with potential partners as a way to get them to the table. They meet and really talk about how the information from the network can work for these community partners. (i.e. The Medical Officer of Health can't attend meetings but is a corresponding member. Directors of Education can't attend but send someone from the superintendent or staff level who have the full support of the Directors.) This is not a prescription for them not being involved, they still want to be updated and have input into the Network. For example with the introduction of full-day kindergarten, both Directors of Education attended a meeting to talk about how the school boards were going to work with child care. Members meet with these supports who are not attending meetings once per year to update them and to solidify the relationship with them. The Network is a table that talks to everyone's agenda and they do not drift into very specific sectors. The idea is that you can come as a decision-maker of any sector and provide or receive important information that will be applicable to you. This Network provides a single point of access with a single system of care approach and provides stronger integration of community partners.

5. *How is the need for working groups determined by the network?*

The working groups are determined by the strategic plan. Two or three Network members are part of each working group, along with community members who can help on these committees. Sometimes peoples' skills are more suited to the working groups than the Network. These community members are thought of as members of the Network but they do not attend Network meetings.

6. *Do you have any suggestions for us as a newly restructured network?*

Take time to build relationships. Do not launch into the biggest issues of the day at your first meeting. Develop the ability to deal with issues and disagreements in a positive manner. Relationships need to be developed first.

In Hamilton funding slowed down after a change in the federal government but was one of the best things that happened to their new Network. It brought members together. You need strong relationships and a really strong working model. When you work together well then really great stuff can happen.

Another example was the knowledge that there would be impacts from full-day kindergarten and that there would be impacts to small business operators of child care centres. These operators had to respond and change very quickly. The Superintendent of Education called one child care operator to let her know that one of the full-day kindergarten sites would be in a school next door to her business, demonstrating the importance of communication. The phone call was a great relationship builder. We need to share good and bad news. We come to the table to be part of the good and bad and to share that together. This is the vision of Best Start, lived out in our community.

A promotional video was done by business people from the chamber of commerce. Wendy will send a mailing address to Paul so that he can send us a copy. A sample network evaluation form will also be forwarded to Wendy.

Question 6 continued:

Every year there is a discussion about membership; i.e., do we have the sectors that we need at the table? We schedule intentional discussion around the people who should be represented at our table. The group can change over time.

7. Question from the Floor: How do you facilitate parent engagement?

Parents have been on the Network from the initial stages. It is sometimes hard to get parent representatives for the Network because of daytime meetings that worked for the majority of organizations but made it difficult for parents to participate.

Parents are engaged by sitting on committees such as the Research and Evaluation Committee for Early Years.

The Parent Engagement Committee is a standing committee. The committee developed a parent charter (more flexible timing and parents more comfortable to be there). There were 8 or 9 participants, including four parent representatives. Wherever they can connect with parents is where they go. They hold focus groups and engage parents in conversations in their child care/early years centres. A half-day session was held to talk about the charter and online surveying of parents.

Parent engagement has many layers. Parents sitting on the Parent Engagement Committee provide feedback as well on how to reach parents in a broad way.

8. Question from the Floor: Explain the concept of “safe harbor” conversations.

The Best Start Network had two opportunities to bring in outside expertise around collaboration.

The first was Jay Connor from Michigan who is part of a collaborative publishing work that examined 75 communities where community collaboration was working. The second was David Chrislip who works with “Skillful Means”. In his work around collaboration, they have been building on “safe harbor” conversations.

This involves developing a skill chart of who you need around the table. Chris spent a day with the Network dealing with this process. The discussion was around collaboration at the table and the major issues and tensions that may happen. Different approaches need to take place to deal with issues that arise. The whole Network is not in on the discussion so that people have a safe place to bare their soul without the whole Network knowing. Tough conversations need to be held. Discussions need to be held to make sure that people are still committed to the Network and to articulate points that wouldn’t come out in a large meeting.

A plan then needs to be formulated regarding how to discuss the matter at the Network. David talked about the process and then a great conversation as a group was held. The Network talked to decision-makers about being involved in the process in the best interests of the community as well as making sure that there is no duplication of service.

Sometimes starting with small conversations that cannot be held behind closed door meetings, but need to be transparent, is the best way to start. What are we feeling, what is the best way to handle this? We want everyone to feel that they are still part of the team. As a community, plan for things in advance. You want everyone’s opinions and ideas heard. How can we make it a win, win situation? Collaboration needs to happen to find that common space.

Paul encouraged everyone to keep learning, it keeps us all stronger!

5. Wrap-up and Next Steps:

Johanne recommended that the Restructuring Working Group meet once more to review membership, the funding request process, responsibility for evaluation, and make necessary revisions in order to email to the Core for approval. Please respond right away to this email in order to move this process quickly. It is the intention of the Working Group to have the Terms of Reference approved prior to the October 25th meeting.

6. Next Meetings:

Thursday, October 25, 2012, 9:30 am–noon, location TBD

Thursday, November 22, 2012, 9:30am–noon, location TBD