National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for
Systems of Care

Meaningful Family Engagement: Beyond the Case Plan
Webinar Presentation
September 21, 2010

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in this Webinar. Our telephone lines are maxed at 125 participants. We apologize if you are not able to access the audio portion of the Webinar.

The Webinar will be recorded and transcribed and made available via the Child Welfare Information Gateway (http://www.childwelfare.gov)

Webinar Overview

- Introduce the National Technical Assistance Center for Systems of Care

- Provide an overview of the *Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care* initiative

  - Key findings from the cross-site evaluation

- Introduce

National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

Integration of technical assistance and evaluation providing:

- Technical assistance to strengthen grantee implementation and capacity

- Evaluation of cross-site implementation and infrastructure change

- Build, generate and disseminate new knowledge about systems change through shared learning

What is Systems of Care?

- Systems of care is an initiative that incorporates a core set of principles that combine to meet the diverse needs of children, youth, and families.

- The systems of care concept provides a framework that States, Tribes, counties and cities can utilize as they develop the infrastructure to support key guiding principles:
    - Interagency Collaboration
    - Individualized, Strengths-based Care
    - Cultural and Linguistic Competence
    - Child, Youth and Family Involvement
    - Community-Based Approaches
    - Accountability

    *DeCarolis, G., Southern, L. and Blake, F. (2008) Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care: Building the Infrastructure. US Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care

- Five-year demonstration initiative
- Operated through 9 grantees in 18 communities
  - Rural, Urban, County, Tribal
- Goals:
  - Engage in **infrastructure development** activities to change the culture of child welfare agencies and the conceptual framework within which services are delivered (systemic change)
  - Work collaboratively with partner agencies in order to assure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and their families (Child & Family Services Reviews, Program Improvement Plan)

Systems of Care Grant Communities
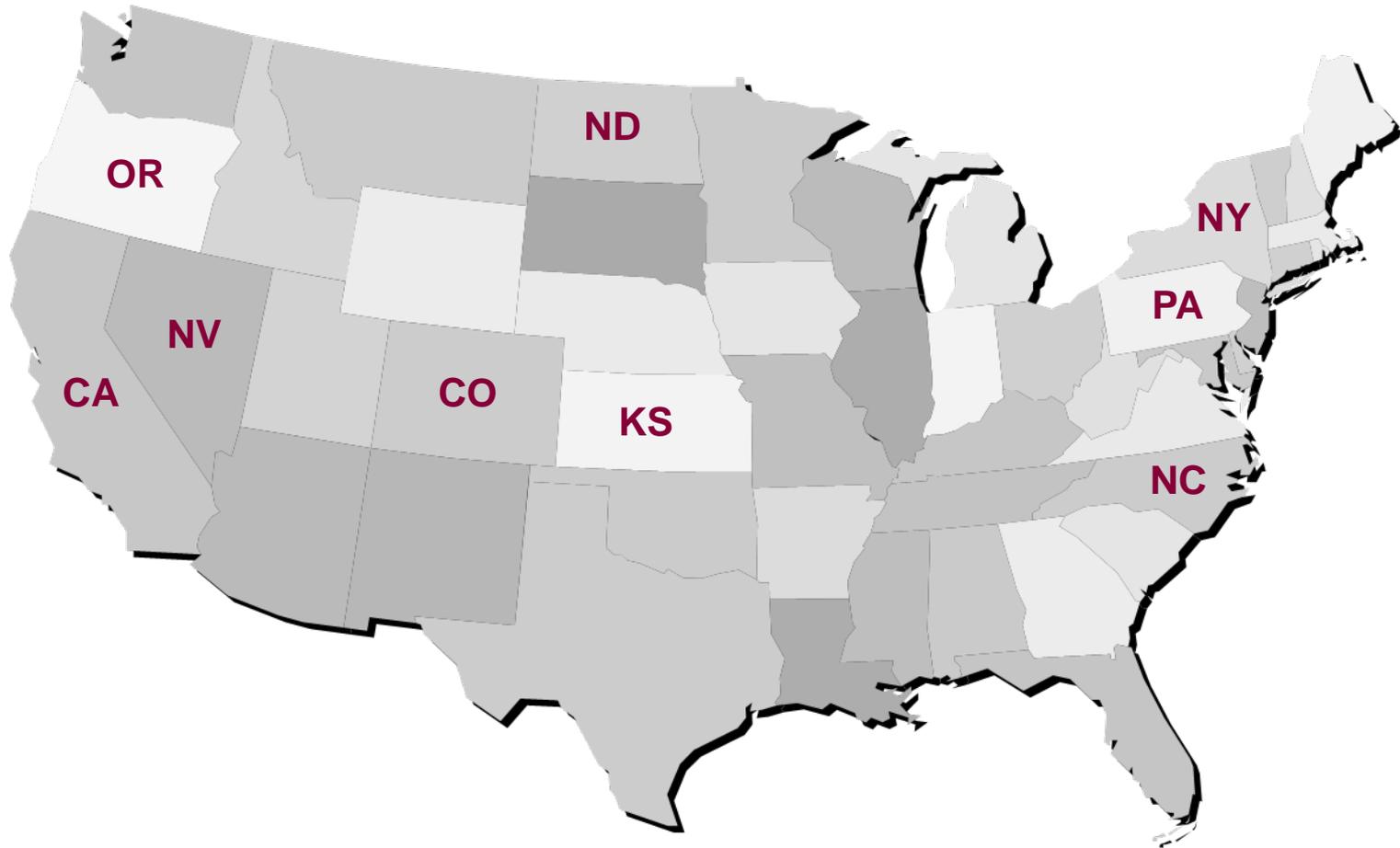
Summary of Evaluation Findings

- Implementation of the Child Welfare led Systems of Care initiative supported systems and organizational level changes across grant communities

- The initiative facilitated meaningful family involvement and active community engagement across multiple child welfare agencies

Family Involvement Findings

- Family involvement was central to the work of all grant communities

- Implementation of family involvement was facilitated through:

  - Policies and procedures to support family-centered practice

  - Peer support program models to help families navigate the system

  - Integration of family members on decision-making bodies and committees to inform the development of agency policies, procedures, and practices

Family Involvement Findings

- Families felt supported, informed, and empowered to make necessary changes

- Peer support programs can result in improved safety and permanency for children and families
  - 9% reduction in alleged re-abuse cases of children placed with kin-caregivers (Clark County, NV)
  - 62% of children whose parents were served by a peer mentor reunified with their parents within 18 months of removal, compared to 37% of children whose parents did not have a mentor (Contra Costa, CA)

Family and Community Engagement

- Through the grant program child welfare agencies discovered new ways of working with families and the community

  - Community collaboratives created a space and place for family and community engagement
  - Policies and procedures developed to support family-centered practice

Meaningful Family Engagement

Beyond the Case Plan?

A closer look at Contra Costa County and the Parent Partner program

Program Development

- Contra Costa County, California

- Federal Children's Bureau System of Care grant (2003 – 2008)

- A system ripe for change:
  Enthusiastic agency administrator
  CFSR and county-focused SIP
  Family-to-Family context

What Are Parent Partners?

Former parent clients engaged as agency staff.

All experienced:

Child removal

Services

Reunification

Life-trained paraprofessionals

Principles of Parent Partners

- Recognition of family strengths

- Parents are experts about what they need

- Social support

- Peer support & mutual aid

Role of Parent Partners

- Mentor

- Advocate

- Coach

- Cultural Broker

A New Paradigm

- A relationship-based approach, free of bureaucracy and paperwork

- Voluntary Participation -→ Empowers parents to take charge of their own lives

- No-fault match

- Inclusion of fathers

- Delayed service termination
  Opportunity to re-open at parent request
  No wait-list and no forms to fill out

- Informal vs. formal services offered

- Parent Partners live and work in client communities

Goals of the Approach

Safe reunification

    Address parents' intrapersonal barriers

    Collaboration challenges

    Social isolation

Who are Parent Clients?

Parent clients are approached at the Detention Hearing

New to the child welfare system

Study Questions

1. What are parent and key informant experiences with the Parent Partner program?

2. How do rates of reunification compare for families with access to, or no access to Parent Partner services?

Study Approach

PROCESS STUDY

OUTCOME STUDY

Findings

Client Survey

Program was implemented with high validity to its intended objectives.

Exceptionally high degree of satisfaction.

Parents felt:

Supported

Informed

Empowered

Findings

Parent Client Focus Groups

- Shared experience

- Communication

- Support

Shared Experience

"The parent partner is still more ... they're on your level and they've experienced what they have experienced; they went through what you went through. And the CPS workers haven't went through it; they just went through the school. Most of the CPS workers are just school smart—they're not experienced and went through it."

Communication

Parent Partners admired for:

- plain talk

- frequent contact

- contact with other professionals

- acting as a role model

- availability

- accessibility during nights and weekends

Support

A key intervention

- Emotional support

- Material support

- Support in developing self-reliance

- Support regarding substance abuse

Findings

Parent Partner Interviews

- A personally redemptive experience

- Helps to improve parenting skills

- Improves confidence

Findings

Allied Professionals

- Very positive reviews

- Reduces parents' anxiety

- Increases parents' understanding of the child welfare system

- Changes allied professionals' views about parents

Findings

Outcomes
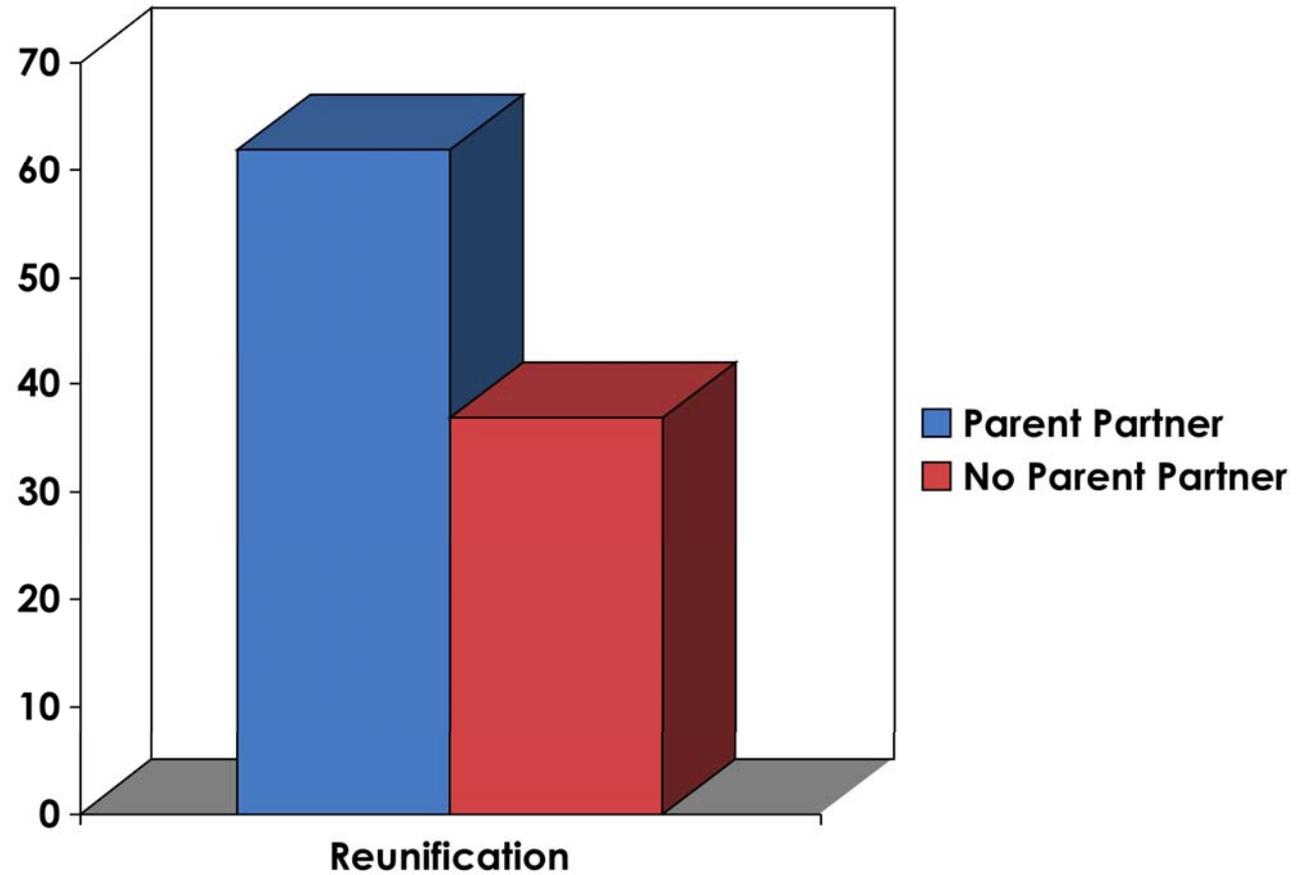
"There are many people with so many problems, problems like our problems… and they need the support. They [the County] need more people like her [parent partner]."

Practical Considerations

- Training

- Supports

- Culture Shift

- Maintaining a Clear Vision of their Role

Questions???
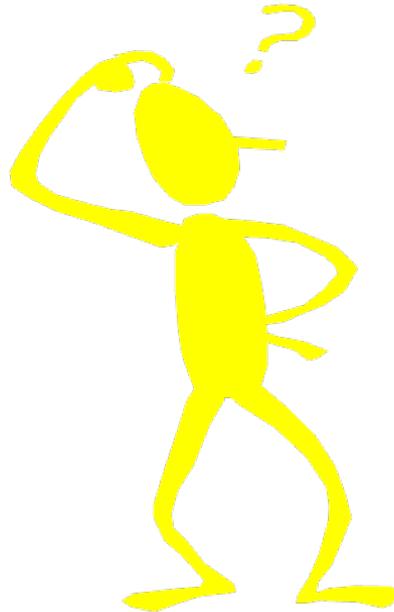
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Key Knowledge Development Products

- Systems of Care: A Guide for Strategic Planning
- Building the Infrastructure: A Guide for Communities
- A Closer Look Series
  - Overview of Systems of Care
  - Interagency Collaboration
  - Youth & Family Involvement
  - Individualized Strength-based Care
  - Cultural & Linguistic Competence
  - Community-based
  - Accountability

- System of Care Infrastructure Toolkits

  For more information visit:
  http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/

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Additional Information on the Systems of Care Initiative, Reports and Products:
http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/