The Massachusetts Family Networks Implementation Study

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Family Networks is a comprehensive systems transformation initiative to reframe and redesign programs, both internal and external to the Commonwealth, to focus on family centered practice and enhance the quality of care children and youth in placement and for families served by the child welfare system.

Study Advisory Team

- Study Advisory Team members met to interpret the concept mapping and statement rating data. They distilled findings from the six cluster solution generated in the concept mapping exercise into a number of stories that represent the full range of activity for the next 1 to 12 months. Some activities are already underway. Others will benefit from increased attention.
- Family Involvment: includes activities to enhance family involvement in all aspects of family networks and MA/DSS service planning and delivery.
- Community Resource Access and Capacity: involves partnering with communities across the Commonwealth to support children and families who are in, or at risk of becoming involved with MA/DSS.
- Roles, Responsibilities, Relationships and Roles: suggests that clear guidance is required regarding the implementation of MA/SSS staff, Lead Agency and provider staff, and families.
- Education and Training: is required to support people in their new roles.
- Continuouus Quality Improvement: will involve the continual refinement of Family Networks in response to lessons learned, new opportunities, insights, etc.

Phase 1: IDENTIFYING CHANGE DOMAINS

Four focus groups (n = 170) generated statements in response to the prompt: “Generate a list of actions that need to happen in the next 6 to 12 months to continue to develop and sustain Family Networks.” Focus group participants included MA/DSS and Lead Agency managers, MA/DSS Supervisors and Social Workers; Family Advocates; and Providers. Participants (n = 133) rated 134 action statements into conceptual clusters. Maps were generated to display results of cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling.

Phase 2: IDENTIFYING SUCCESS CRITERIA

The UMMS research team, in partnership with the Study Advisory Team, created a template for framing stories, and met with staff to pilot the data collection strategy in two Area Offices. The teams began collecting stories from a wider pool of MA/DSS staff and stakeholders through the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. Next steps include the review of stories via active discussion in which significance is explored and success criteria are carefully documented.

Examples of Most Significant Change Stories

INSTRUCTIONS: From your point of view, describe a story that epitomizes the most significant change that has resulted from Family Networks in the past year.

A MA/DSS Social Worker’s Perspective

“Most significant story would be to watch a successful transition of a child that was in residential placement for years be successfully reunited with his mother. The team worked…to ensure the child’s needs, come off all the medications, and do the work that was necessary to transfer this child home to his family.”

Susan Phillips, February 2008

BALANCING RIGOR AND RELEVANCE

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FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: includes activities to enhance family involvement in all aspects of family networks and MA/DSS service planning and delivery.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE ACCESS AND CAPACITY: involves partnering with communities across the Commonwealth to support children and families who are in, or at risk of becoming involved with MA/DSS.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, RELATIONSHIPS AND ROLES: suggests that clear guidance is required regarding the implementation of MA/DSS staff, Lead Agency and provider staff, and families.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: is required to support people in their new roles.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: will involve the continual refinement of Family Networks in response to lessons learned, new opportunities, insights, etc.

STUDY IMPLICATIONS

Findings from the Family Networks Implementation Study. Study will inform MA/DSS strategic planning, system refinements, and the Family Networks outcomes evaluation. Continuous quality improvement strategies, drawn from study findings, will be relevant and applicable to other Massachusetts EDRMS agencies with similar service delivery systems and agendas. Project activities and products will promote the Commonwealth’s participation in the national dialogue regarding systems transformation in child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice.