

Working Together for Kids – Project Overview

The overall objective of both our community partner (Growing Great Kids System of Care) and this project is to move families more seamlessly through the system and address waitlists by using resources in a family-centred manner which can respond to needs without existing professional norms and practices posing barriers to effective care. Our goals, therefore, involve supporting the significant culture shift required for the involved professionals and agencies to identify and develop the kinds of collaborative practices needed to continue with the gains achieved by the integrated entry point for services.

The design of this project builds upon our growing expertise in complexity sciences methodologies. While not new to organizational change literature, IPE interventions based on complexity science are only beginning to emerge. These methodologies stress the importance of relationships and local interactions over de-contextualized models. Our previous research (specifically in the Health Canada funded "PIER" project and the HFO funded "MIME" project) supports the notion that the development of best practices in IPC needs to take into account local conditions and history with the use of a process driven approach.

Another key objective of the project aims to improve our understanding about the nature of interprofessional collaboration (IPC) and how differences in connection to legitimacy, authority and influence between practitioners affect the quality of their interprofessional relationships. We propose the development of a curriculum which has an explicit focus on exploring and understanding, in depth, the nature of authority and legitimacy and how they link to interprofessional collaboration and care. Despite their significance, in general interprofessional courses only touch lightly on issues of professional authority and influence. Instead the majority, of course, focus on the development of improving skills and knowledge of roles, responsibilities and scopes of practice. While the acquisition of such competencies is important, the ability of any one professional to collaborate also involves an understanding of how professional authority and influence operates. A more informed understanding about how factors such as authority and influence affect practitioners' collaborative practice will ultimately help to provide more effective care.

Specific objectives for the project include: 1) Identifying and training trans-disciplinary/trans-agency "interprofessional champions" who can be a resource to their agencies and the family-centred teams in the service of creating integrated interprofessional practice. We also hope to 2) create curricular resources to help deepen awareness and skill for all professionals to address the issues of power, control and authority which often interfere with successful interprofessional practice. 3) Finally, as all these agencies partner with university and community college training programs, we will increase capacity of front line clinicians and preceptors to teach interprofessional collaboration as part of their usual student placements as well as increasing the awareness of university based educators to the constraints and demands of front line practice.

By focusing on processes and skills which are based within the context of daily work and service delivery, we ultimately hope to both improve existing service, but also build confidence to continue using these methods for the known upcoming challenges of providing seamless and effective service for children ages 6-18. Specific outcomes include: 1) an ongoing plan and strategies to support cultural change to IPC; 2) an educational toolkit to best meet the educational needs of other community agencies; 3) clinicians who have participated in continuing education and are able to facilitate IPC amongst themselves and with students.