

Chapter Six: Stakeholder Collaboration



Commonwealth of Virginia: Roadmap for Evidence-Based Practices in Community Corrections

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Collaboration

Collaboration is critical to any sustainable change effort, whether it is working as a team within an agency or several agencies working together. As discussed in the other chapters of this Roadmap, developing an evidence-based organization is difficult. It is equally if not more difficult to develop the system in which the agency operates. It takes a well-planned and collaborative effort for system stakeholders to work together toward a common goal such as recidivism reduction.

This chapter is intended to provide guidance about effective collaboration and teamwork. A great deal of literature is available on the subject, and the following framework is pulled from five primary sources: “Implementing Evidence-Based Policy and Practice in Community Corrections, second edition” by the Crime and Justice Institute¹¹; “Teamwork: What Must Go Right/ What Can Go Wrong¹²” and “When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What it Takes to Succeed¹³” by Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto; “The Five Dysfunctions of a Team” by Patrick Lencioni¹⁴; and the Collaborative Justice website¹⁵.

Why Collaborate?

In the criminal justice arena, community correction agencies are one component of a complex collection of federal, state and local, executive and judicial agencies focused on improving public safety. In order to bring about systemic change within this multi-faceted system, collaboration is essential. Police, courts, community corrections, jails, community providers, victim advocates, faith based organizations, state agencies, policy makers, the community at large and other social service agencies are some of the many criminal justice stakeholders. Any systemic change effort requires that these stakeholders work together toward a common goal. As agencies become evidence-based they will change how they do business. These changes will inevitably influence and be influenced by their fellow stakeholders. No stakeholder operates in a vacuum; they all operate within the larger, more complex system.

¹¹Crime and Justice Institute at Community Resources for Justice (2009). *Implementing Evidence-Based Policy and Practice in Community Corrections*, 2nd ed. Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections.

<http://cjinstitute.org/projects/integratedmodel#Model>

¹² LaFasto, F.M.J. & Larson, C.E. (1989), *Team Work: What Must Go Right/ What Can Go Wrong*

¹³ LaFasto, F.M.J. & Larson, C.E. (2001), *When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What It Takes To Succeed*.

¹⁴ Lencioni, P.M. (2002) *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*

¹⁵ The Collaborative Justice website, <http://www.collaborativejustice.org/home.htm>

One agency working alone is not able to address all the factors that influence the risk of recidivism for the clients served by community corrections agencies. The issues faced by pretrial defendants and local probationers are complicated and diverse. These clients can and often do have issues that extend beyond the traditional borders of the criminal justice system. They can face the main drivers of criminal behavior (e.g., antisocial behavior, antisocial personality, criminal thinking and criminal associates) and other obstacles such as substance abuse, mental and physical health issues, housing needs, low levels of employment or educational attainment, etc. Multi-agency, multi-disciplinary collaboration is essential if criminal justice interventions are to succeed.

"We have learned that no one program or agency can make our streets and schools safer. The most effective efforts spur collaboration among community residents, faith-based organizations, schools, businesses, and the criminal justice system."

Justice for America: Annual Report to Congress (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2001)

For example, a study of OST results may indicate a significant portion of local probation clients have a criminogenic need, but services to address the need are not available in your area. This may mean resources need to be shifted to align services with needs. Judges, attorneys and community providers who are accustomed to the existing program option(s) may not think another service is necessary. They may not see the need for a new service or be unaware that poor or inappropriate treatment could increase the risk of recidivism. Or, VPRAI results might support the recommendations for supervised release of defendants awaiting trial. However, without collaboration between the pretrial agency, local jail, Commonwealth's Attorney and the court, the release decisions may continue to be driven by a defendant's financial obligation to post bond rather than the risk assessment. In both of these scenarios it will take a collaborative effort on an agreed upon common goal to put the needed changes in place.

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is working together to achieve a goal that one entity cannot accomplish alone. Collaborative efforts can ensure a comprehensive approach to achieving a shared and mutually beneficial goal. True collaboration emphasizes a mutual shared benefit and shared values. For example, when stakeholders share a common goal to reduce recidivism there is a mutually beneficial goal. The common and mutually beneficial goal can form the basis of accountability for these stakeholders to use proven practices toward that end. Collaborations provide a forum to:

- Create a shared vision that supports the change effort;
- Enrich the change process;
- Cross train and educate stakeholders;
- Comprehensively identify, analyze and solve issues;
- Reduce or eliminate barriers;
- Share information and complementary resources;
- Reduce duplicative efforts;
- Expand the capacity to achieve mutually beneficial goals; and

- Increase opportunities for success.

A true collaborative relationship includes a commitment to:

- The definition of mutual relationships and goals;
 - A jointly developed structure and shared responsibility;
 - Mutual authority and accountability for success; and
 - Sharing resources and rewards.
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- ***At the Individual Level:*** those who provide direct services to clients can collaborate to form a more holistic and informed approach to address client needs. For example, an officer and a service provider can share information. They can work collaboratively to help each provide a well-informed and responsive strategy to address client needs, develop attainable case plan goals, provide access to needed services and provide ongoing support.
 - ***At the Local Level:*** those who have policy and decision making authority can work collaboratively to ensure the local system is working in alignment with evidence-based practices. Members of the CCJB can join together to open access to needed services (e.g., implement a needed cognitive behavioral intervention). These members can review policies and practices that are working at cross purposes and find ways to improve them. The CCJB can also communicate and reinforce these efforts within their respective agencies to ensure employees at all levels are joining the change effort so that it happens in practice as well as policy.
 - ***At the State Level:*** those who have broader policy and decision making authority can work at the state level to ensure the system is in alignment with evidence-based practices. DCJS and VCCJA can work together to bring about needed changes in state-level public and administrative policy. For example, policy and funding resources can be shifted to increase access to treatment services for moderate and high risk clients while finding effective alternative treatment services for lower risk clients across the state. Another example would be to ensure the EBP Steering Committee is functioning as a true collaborative. This committee can collaborate to agree on statewide requirements for all EBP sites and set forth an audit or accreditation process to certify sites as operating with fidelity to EBP.

Misperceptions of Collaboration

Collaboration is frequently misunderstood. Most stakeholders believe they are collaborating for a number of reasons. However, it is important to understand what collaboration is and what it is not. This will help you to forge true collaborations and understand what you can reasonably expect from fellow stakeholders along the way. Many times stakeholders join multi-agency efforts, sign memoranda of agreement, meet periodically and may even occasionally change a practice as a result. But is this truly collaboration?

The term “collaboration” is mistakenly used to describe individual and agency relationships at varying stages of development. Collaborative relationships go beyond networking, cooperating, or coordinating. These words are often used without being clear about what is implied in each. Networking is typically a means to share information. Coordinating can mean making minor adjustments in practice to make things work. Cooperating is a way to share existing resources and do what is required or asked. Collaboration is a more formal arrangement that involves making decisions and using resources to achieve a common goal. Figure 6-1 provides a description of the various types of relationships that can help you to better understand and set expectations for working together.

Figure 6 – 1: Relationship Types

	COOPERATION	COORDINATION	COLLABORATION
Basis of Relationship	Trust and Reliability	Integrity and Discipline	Understanding and Selflessness
Nature of Relationship	Informal or Ad Hoc	Semi-formal	Formal
Resource Investment	Minimal	Minimal	Major
Degree of Involvement	A few people	A handful of people (e.g., a horizontal slice)	Several people (e.g., horizontal and vertical slices)
Control over Resources	Unchanged original agencies	Designated but controlled by original agencies	Shared or transferred across agencies
Authority to make Decisions	Retained by original agencies	Assigned to specific people in original agencies	Shared or transferred across agencies

The purpose of Figure 6-1 is to point out the differences among various types of relationships. Before beginning any collaborative effort it is important to be clear about what kind of relationship will be necessary. As you move forward with an interagency collaborative it will be helpful to refer to the Figure and determine the type of relationships necessary. When stakeholders come together it is important they know what the relationship will entail. Sometimes a collaboration is necessary and other times simple partnerships based on cooperation and/or coordination are appropriate. At the end of the day, any partnership that can improve EBP-alignment within the system is helpful.

Tips for Collaborating

When stakeholders come together to work on a joint effort there are a number of factors that can prohibit the group from achieving its intended outcome. Common barriers faced in collaborative efforts are similar to those faced in studies of teamwork, including:

- Power and control issues;
- Absence of trust;
- Fear of conflict;

- Lack of commitment;
- A lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities;
- Unclear expectations;
- Ineffective communication or unsuccessful information sharing; and
- Lack of accountability for results.

A collaborative group can break down when any of these issues are present and allowed to pervade. For example, when there is a lack of trust, members can be reserved and avoid openly sharing their thoughts and ideas. This causes members to disengage and can contribute to a fear of conflict. The failure to actively participate, engage in discussion and manage conflict results in members not having a sense of ownership or commitment to the collaborative. Without commitment, members do not feel the obligation to hold each other accountable, and are not focused on achieving the common goal. Instead, members remain focused on personal motivations and the collaborative can fail. It is important to understand these issues and proactively lay out a structure that will enable the group to overcome them.

In “The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable,” Patrick Lencioni discusses the five major ways that teamwork breaks down:

- *Dysfunction #1: Absence of trust*
- *Dysfunction #2: Fear of conflict*
- *Dysfunction #3: Lack of commitment*
- *Dysfunction #4: Avoidance of accountability*
- *Dysfunction #5: Inattention to results*

These issues are all interconnected. Like a chain with just one link broken, teamwork deteriorates if even a single dysfunction is allowed to flourish.

Who Should be Included?

The determination of which stakeholders to bring to the table should not be taken lightly. It is important that both supporters and those who pose potential obstacles be included. Collectively, these individuals will create a richer process and more vibrant results. While all relevant stakeholders need to have a voice at the table, group size will also play a role. The group must be of a manageable size (generally no more than twelve members) and communication strategies must be in place for communicating within the group and within the larger system (see the chapter on Managing Change for communication strategies). Even if certain stakeholders decide not to collaborate it is still important they be kept informed (e.g., newsletters, meeting minutes, periodic open forums, feedback surveys). Leaving stakeholders who decide not to participate out of the loop can encumber your group’s efforts. For example, if contrary opinions are not considered by your collaborative group, then decisions that you make may be rejected by the larger community of system stakeholders. If contrarian opinions are brought to the table and discussed, then the decisions that are adopted by the group are more likely to be widely accepted by system stakeholders. When determining which stakeholders to include, it is important to consider the following questions:

- What individuals or agencies:
 - Have a vested interest in public safety?

- Are directly or indirectly responsible to providing services to our clients (e.g., educational, vocational, counseling, pro-social support, etc.)?
- Work closely with or advocate for crime victims?
- What stakeholder partnerships already exist?
- What stakeholder partnerships will be needed?
- How would membership in this collaborative group assist these individuals or agencies in achieving their mission and vision?
- Do these stakeholders bring relevant expertise?

A few examples of potential stakeholders are:

- Criminal courts (e.g., judge, district attorney, defense council)
- Jail and/or corrections agencies
- Law enforcement agencies
- Mental health agencies
- Public health departments and other healthcare agencies
- Education agencies
- Victim advocacy organizations
- Housing authorities
- Employment agencies
- Social services agencies
- Faith-based organizations
- Community members
- Client representatives

The composition of membership may change depending on the purpose of your collaborative. It is also wise to reevaluate membership over time to be sure you are not leaving out key stakeholders. While Virginia code clearly defines the membership of a CCJB, you may want to consider if the CCJB is the appropriate forum for a specific purpose, or if another related collaborative group would be better suited to achieve the goal at hand. For example, perhaps the CCJB can charter an EBP subcommittee that can have more targeted membership to problem solve or innovate ways in which the system can better align with EBP.

How are Structure and Expectations Set?

It is important to consider the goal at hand in order to understand the type of effort and structure necessary. There are generally three kinds of teams or collaborative groups: those that are established to solve problems, to innovate or to execute a plan. Each has a unique purpose and requires certain elements.

- **Problem solving** teams work on a continuous basis to troubleshoot and resolve problems. This group requires a great deal of trust in that members must have integrity and respect for each other and feel the atmosphere is collegial. This enables the members to effectively work together to solve problems.

- **Creative** teams are established to try out new ideas. This group requires freedom and autonomy from existing policies and practices. They need to be able to operate in the realm of “what-ifs” to explore alternative ideas and possibilities.
- **Tactical** teams are put in place to carry out a well-defined plan. This group needs to have tasks and roles clearly defined so they can execute the plan.

Consider the purpose of your collaborative effort so you can structure the group accordingly.

A good way to charge and structure the collaborative group is through chartering. (Additional information on chartering can be found in Chapter 3 on Strategic Planning.) For the purposes of interagency collaboration a charter is useful, especially when you know the kind of group necessary for the goal at hand. The charter may also need to include additional information so it can be clearly understood across stakeholders. For example, it may need more background information than would be needed for an internal workgroup. The charter should become a guide for the work to be done by this group. The figure below provides a general format for chartering an interagency collaborative group.

Figure 6 – 2: Sample Components of an Interagency Collaborative Charter

Background

- Overview of the problems behind the need for this collaboration (e.g., jail overcrowding, recidivism rates, etc.)
- Commitment of support from an authorizing body (e.g., CCJB’s commitment to the safety of the community and the need for improvement)
- Specify the purpose of the group (e.g., to provide the CCJB with recommended steps to reduce the rate of recidivism among the clients served by the Charlottesville community correctional system)

Responsibilities

- Describe the tasks to be completed (e.g., analyze recidivism rate trends, review the ways the system works, identify barriers to recidivism reduction and recommend methods of correction to be considered by the CCJB)

Guidelines

- Define ground rules for how the group members will work together (e.g., decision making, authority, communication plans, safe space for debate)
- Describe how the group members will interact within the larger environment (e.g., brokering information with their member organizations, reporting to the CCJB, celebrating milestones, etc.)

Resources

- Identify any other resources the group may utilize (e.g., clerical support to arrange meetings or neutral facilitator)

Expectations

- Document due dates for deliverables and milestones (e.g., every three months the group will provide progress reports to the CCJB and by January 2011 the group will report its recommendations to the CCJB)

What are the characteristics of an effective collaboration?

The collaborative group should set forth a set of relationship expectations and ground rules it plans to follow. This will ensure the proper tone is set and establish a set of norms for interpersonal relations. The ground rules can be concrete such as the type of agenda, meeting frequency or decision making. Ground rules can be more value-oriented in that they convey expectations for how members intend to

interact with one another. These ground rules will set the stage for how the group will function and what members can expect from one another.

Drawing on the literature of successful teams there are several characteristics that are worthy of emulation in a collaborative. These characteristics include:

- A clearly defined vision and problem. Members share an understanding of the problem they plan to solve and what they are trying to achieve (as discussed throughout the Roadmap). The vision is clear and compelling enough for all members to understand, support and commit to achieve.
- Honesty, integrity, openness and consistency. Members feel it is safe to share ideas and are receptive to the perceptions and ideas of one another. They understand and appreciate each member agency’s history, successes and challenges.
- Members expect a certain degree of quality and credibility from one another. They expect one another to perform according to an established level of excellence. They are technically competent and can maintain interpersonal relationships, so they are capable of collaborating effectively.
- Communication that fosters the development of relationships (e.g., formal and informal opportunities), documents efforts (e.g., issues discussed and decisions made) and creates transparency.
- Accountability for results to ensure performance meets expectations. Members share a sense of loyalty to the group and its purpose. They hold each other accountable to achieve the goal.
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for individual members, how they fit, and how their roles are intended to work toward achievement of the goal.
- Judgment or decisions made on the basis of objective facts. The group focuses on data and uses it to continually evaluate progress toward milestones and the goal. They use data to form the basis of their policy and practice decisions.
- Resources necessary to maintain momentum. For example, a skilled facilitator to keep the group organized, focused and productive.

In this type of atmosphere the collaboration can flourish. In addition, a group that operates upon such ground rules and values has a greater chance to exert pressure on itself to make changes and constantly improve its performance and functioning. This type of collaboration is likely to develop a reputation for achieving results and leading collaborative work in the community. Building such a strong reputation will also help to position the group favorably in administrative and public policy arenas.

In the work done by Larson and LaFasto they found the most frequent reason for team failure was the lack of a clear goal. They found eight common characteristics of successful teams.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A clear and elevating goal</i> • <i>A results driven structure</i> • <i>Competent team members</i> • <i>Unified commitment</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaborative climate</i> • <i>Standards of excellence</i> • <i>External support and recognition</i> • <i>Principled leadership</i> |
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How are decisions made?

It is important for a collaborative to adopt a decision-making model. This ensures that discussions can conclude with agreements on action. Often, collaborative groups aim for consensus, which is when everyone in the room agrees to support the decision the group has reached. In consensus, all members have the same formal power to support or object to a decision. All members are able to give their opinion and to understand implications of various options. In consensus, members may find the decision made is not their first choice, but they put the goal of the collaborative ahead of themselves. In this way they are truly collaborating. It is also possible to decide by majority vote of the group, or to delegate the decision to a topical committee and agree to abide by the committee's choice.

Consensus is advantageous because it educates members through active participation. This process builds a high level of support for the decision and implementation can occur more efficiently. Consensus also has disadvantages. It can take more time than other forms of decision making. It also relies on the collaborative skills of members to come to agreement.

Sometimes a situation will arise when the preferred decision-making model is not working, and it is helpful to decide in advance on a fall back decision making option. For example, if consensus is not reached in a specified time period then a fall back option is to narrow the options and bring it to an oversight body such as the CCJB or county administrator to decide.

What are some lessons learned about collaboration?

- Be patient. Forming a collaborative group is extremely hard work and it will take longer than you think. True collaborations take time to build.
- Begin clearly focused on the goal you hope to achieve. This will inspire others to join.
- Focus on building trust and relationships that are based upon mutual respect and an understanding of the opportunities and limits each member brings to the table.
- The capacity for change must be built; it is not a naturally occurring phenomenon.
- Be aware of, and understand, historical relationships between groups of people and agencies. Be informed by your history, not shaped by it.
- Communication is key.
- Remember that no one person or partner is "in charge."
- There's no real collaboration without negotiation and willingness to compromise.
- Start wherever you can—collaboration can begin at any level.

How is collaboration sustained?

In evidence-based practices, collaborations cannot become complacent or satisfied with the status quo. As evidence evolves, so does the need for collaborative effort to put the evidence to use. It is important to stay focused on where the collaboration is trying to go (e.g., its vision) and continually examine the actual impact of the collaboration's efforts. Along the way the collaboration will have to adapt to the external environment. Acknowledge that there will inevitably be roadblocks encountered. When they

arise, model leadership skills and avoid negative attitudes that can be incredibly damaging. For example, saying “we can’t work together because of this barrier” sends a different message than saying “how can we work together to overcome this barrier?”

When the collaboration reaches a milestone or experiences a win, no matter how small, take the time to celebrate. In this light, it is also important to communicate or advertise these successes within member agencies and the external environment. This will help to build the collaboration’s credibility and reliability. Another useful mechanism to sustain collaborative efforts is to include incentives for collaborating and/or changing practice. Being able to implement changes quickly can help to build and maintain the momentum for change. Finally, collaborations provide an exciting forum to take risks. The status quo is never changed by people who avoid risk. When the vision for the group is adequately compelling, risks may be required in order to find ways to achieve that vision.

How to know if collaboration is working

In order to determine if the collaboration is working successfully there are a few questions to consider, including:

- Is the collaboration able to adapt, evolve and sustain as evidence or the external environment changes?
- Does the collaboration reliably produce the work it is suppose to accomplish? Is it held accountable to achieve results?
- Do members of the collaboration recognize each other as partners working to solve a mutual problem? Do they trust and respect each other?
- Does the collaboration function efficiently with minimal cost?

In Summary

Collaboration provides an opportunity to work with stakeholders to achieve a shared goal. Working in isolation will not allow any one stakeholder to have the kind of impact on public safety that can be accomplished by multiple agencies and community partners. Be clear about what the collaboration is trying achieve, structure the group as necessary to achieve the goal, bring the right stakeholders together, charter the group, set clear expectations and model what it takes to be an effective team. Continually assess the collaboration’s progress and adapt as necessary to meet or exceed the demands of the external environment. Knowing this information and putting it to use will help you to collaborate effectively and achieve the desired goal(s).