



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

Standard of Practice

SERVICE COORDINATION

In January 2010, the Arizona Early Childhood Taskforce was convened by First Things First to establish a common vision for young children in Arizona, and to identify priorities and roles to build an early childhood system that will lead to this vision. The Task Force identified six systems outcomes including that the “early childhood system is coordinated, integrated and comprehensive.” First Things First’s role to realize this outcome is to foster cross-system collaboration among and between local, state, federal and tribal organizations to improve the coordination and integration of Arizona programs, services and resources for young children and their families.¹

Service agencies that work together and achieve high level coordination and collaboration are often easier for families to access and the services provided are more responsive to the needs of the families. Cross-system efforts may also result in increased capacity to deliver services because of the work that organizations do to identify and address gaps in service sectors. Therefore, by supporting a variety of cross-system efforts, First Things First will be instrumental in creating a high quality, interconnected, and comprehensive early childhood service delivery system that is timely, culturally responsive, family driven, community based, and directed toward enhancing children’s overall development.

Cross-system efforts may include a wide variety of activities. These activities may include convening regional grantee meetings, networking with regional partners, planning and implementing multi-agency outreach events. However, the desired outcome of all cross-system efforts is to support organizations to develop relationships that allow them to achieve system outcomes for families and children that are not as likely when agencies work in isolation. A number of terms can be used to label organizations that work together toward mutually beneficial goals. Among these terms are: alliances, coalitions, collaborations, cooperatives, networks and partnerships.

While all cross-system efforts involve two or more organizations working together for a common purpose, these efforts operate at varying levels of intensity.² The intent of

¹ First Things First, Arizona Early Childhood Model System, 2011, found at:
<http://www.azftf.gov/WhatWeDo/Documents/Arizona%20Early%20Childhood%20Model%20System.pdf>

² Coordination Brief, Grantee Resources, SOP, found at:
<http://ftf/extranet/apps/pgms/pages/default.aspx?RootFolder=%2fextranet%2fapps%2fpgms%2fGranteeResourceDocuments%2fStandards%20of%20Practice%20FOLDER%2fCoordination&FolderCTID=&View=%7b718608B4%2d216B%2d4C1B%2dAFF5%2d83C31D969CDD%7d>

coordination strategies developed by First Things First is to support participant organizations in achieving high levels of coordination that result in significant changes in policies, programs and practices in the delivery of services to families with children birth through age 5.

COORDINATION STANDARDS

Service coordination is a system-level intervention that supports timely and efficient access to services provided by public and private service providers in the community. The primary objectives of service coordination are to:

- Reduce duplication and increase access to services
- Improve service delivery timeframes
- Establish pathways and mechanisms for exchange of service delivery information and data
- Engage in service planning and assessment of service delivery that assures that services are provided in a collaborative manner that promotes flexibility, fosters positive engagement among providers, and provides consistent information to family members and the community.

Structures promoting this collaborative model may need to be developed in diverse communities. Building a collaborative service model can take time as communities develop capacity and move from networking to collaboration. Participants (key stakeholders) will need to commit to:

- a shared vision and common goals
- working together
- investing time and organizational resources
- respectful engagement of partners and collaborators
- defining outcomes and working toward them.

In addition, for collaborative service models to be effective, participants must be committed to the objectives of service coordination and have the authority to make commitments on behalf of their organization.

A collaborative service model includes the following processes and activities:

- Convening and facilitation of networking of partners who share an interest and commitment to service coordination
- Implementing a formal process to determine the current level or degree of coordination and potential for partners to collaborate

- Establishing a framework and agreements for meetings and decision making, including:
 - Governance structure
 - Frequency of meetings
 - Setting agendas
 - Attendance policies
 - Decision making process
 - Communicating meeting results and follow-up
 - Accountability
 - Assessing progress and outcomes
- Conducting a community needs and service gap analysis
- Identifying service delivery system improvements
- Developing a strategic plan that provides direction and focus for service coordination with defined goals, objectives, outcomes and measures of progress. This plan should include the following components:
 - Assessment- The assessment helps define the service coordination issues, needs and gaps that currently exist.³
 - Capacity- Capacity building involves mobilizing human, organizational, and financial resources to meet service coordination goals.
 - Planning- Planning involves the creation of strategies aimed at meeting the service coordination outcomes.
 - Implementation- Carrying out specific tasks and activities necessary to implement the strategies, as well as identifying and overcoming any potential barriers. For example, confidentiality agreements and mechanisms for sharing family and agency information across service provider networks.
 - Evaluation- Evaluation is addressed in the strategic plan to help participants measure progress toward the coordinated service system envisioned. Evaluation influences the future planning for service coordination and provides the impetus to continue, change tactics, or identify new opportunities for coordination and collaboration.

³

[A Self-Guided Assessment Tool:](#)

http://www.wilder.org/reports/summary.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=Paul%20Mattessich&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=2162&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=311&cHash=fbb1b082b5

- Sustainability- Sustainability refers to the mechanism put in place to assure that service coordination becomes a norm as well as a continuing element of the early childhood system.