

Round Table discussions

after

Panel # 6: *Partnerships – within communities, across agencies*

Child Advocacy Centres Knowledge Exchange, Ottawa

Tuesday afternoon, March 1, 2011

Panel # 6: *Partnerships and Collaborations among Agencies Working to Support Child Victims and Witnesses*

[Cindy Paskey](#), Executive Director, Child Advocacy Centre Niagara, St. Catharines, ON

[Karyn Kennedy](#), Executive Director, BOOST Child Abuse Prevention & Intervention, Toronto, ON

See Presentation: [Kennedy] [Toronto – BOOST – Partnerships & collaborations](#)

After this panel, delegates at the Round Table addressed four questions:

Question # 1 : *How to stimulate community commitment to a CAC*

Question # 2 : *Barriers to multi-disciplinary partnerships*

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Question # 1) How do you stimulate significant community involvement and volunteer board activity, including in fund-raising, to support the development of CACs, or similar multi-disciplinary, child-centred services.

Media coverage drives public support

A high-profile case involving the abuse or neglect of children can identify gaps in the system and trigger community response. In some circumstances, a CAC or similar type agency has developed following a formal inquiry and specific recommendations.

Local media can be valuable in a campaign to build support for a CAC – particularly in the months after a local sexual abuse or neglect case has received much public attention.

Find local celebrity supporters

The Zebra Child Protection Centre in Edmonton cultivates relationships with local sports celebrities in NHL hockey and other professional sports, to attract attention to its fundraising projects. The Orca Children's Centre in Victoria received money from the Foundation of NBA star Steve Nash to fund the development of its website. Celebrities are often receptive to helping child-focused non-profit organizations. Boost has the Toronto Maple Leafs involved in their fundraising campaigns.

Delegates agreed that there usually are people in any community who have some useful expertise and interest in good causes. Find out who they are, and recruit them into the CAC cause for that community.

Each community's CAC must respond to local needs

The ways in which a CAC delivers its services will vary somewhat from one community to another. Local differences will be driven by the special populations in each community and the identified unique needs of each community.

Delegates felt strongly that one model should not be decided in Ottawa, and presented to local communities was "the only way to go."



Mary Ainslie (Vancouver), Jean-Marc Voisard (Saskatoon), Brooke Harker (Yellowknife) and Lara Rooney (Ottawa) discuss the different needs of communities across the country.

Fundraising to start a CAC and also support existing ones

Everyone agreed that fundraising is extremely time-consuming. Some delegates then suggested that hiring professional fundraiser could be the solution.

Others suggested that fundraising campaigns need the skills and connections of two kinds of leaders – both those who can bring in money and in-kind donations – and those whose expertise in children’s issues brings credibility to the cause. It was noted that, in some provinces and territories, there are restrictions on government employees playing an active fundraising role.

Both corporate and private donations, as well as government funding, must be pursued.

Several people mentioned that ideal fundraising partners would be major national corporations or business associations with high recognition value, such as Telus, Rogers, the Canadian Homebuilders Association, etc.

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QUESTION # 2) What barriers might be encountered when developing multi-disciplinary partnership and protocols? Describe some promising practises and/or guidelines for overcoming these barriers and developing strong, enduring

When working towards a common goal, you sometimes need to extend boundaries.

Police pose challenge

There was a general consensus that police can sometimes be the toughest group to draw into collaborations. At several other points throughout the Knowledge Exchange, many delegates named the RCMP as the police group that most prefers to keep to itself.

Mandate protection and funding worries

Several people mentioned that agency leaders should undertake the difficult challenge to *“leave their egos – and their agency’s mandate -- at the door,”* if they hope to negotiate a successful collaboration.

A first step in that direction is to become better informed about what potential partner agencies actually do for the children they serve.

Limited funding and budget cuts are over-arching problems that cast a shadow over efforts to collaborate. Many agencies seek money from the same funders. They worry that, while everyone is trying to do more with less resources, collaborations may reduce their own funding base, and strain their resources even further.

The general public may also become confused about where the mandate of a CAC-type service overlaps – or not – with Children’s Aid-type services in the same community. In many large centres, there may be several Children’s Aid / Child and Family Service agencies: public, Catholic, Jewish and Aboriginal. Some Children’s Aid societies worry that a CAC will drain funding away from their usual sources.

Several delegates commented that it gets complicated, when several different government ministries are involved, in various ways, in funding different services to children. Delegates from Quebec described how, in the early years, their Ministries of Health and Justice claimed that a CAC would be the responsibility of the other Ministry. Eventually, an agreement was reached that both Ministries would support the Centre d’expertise Marie-Vincent.

Sell the concept to key leaders

The establishment of a CAC requires enthusiastic interest and commitment from the community. Two key types of people are needed: recognized community leaders (who will promote your plans in the many different circles in which they move); and senior management at each agency (to push their front-line people to cooperate).

Senior management wants to hear how the proposed partnership or protocol will make things more efficient for their agency.

Find and use strong empirical evidence to support your argument for the benefits of collaborations across service groups.

Keep the focus on the child

When negotiations over protocols and practices become difficult, the best advice is - *“keep the focus on the needs of children.”* Every agency naturally wants to protect its own interests, when protocols are under negotiation. It helps to stop, every now and then, and ask: *“what’s best for the child who has to use the protocols we’re negotiating?”*

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