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# **Advantages and Disadvantages of Collaboration in Child Welfare: Results from 24 Demonstration Grants**

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Promote strengthening of the family unit to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families, and encourage reunifying families if separation has occurred.

- Kinship Navigator
- Intensive Family-finding
- Family Group Decision-Making
- Residential Family Treatment
- Combination (KN, IFF, and FGDM)

## Private / Not-for-Profit vs. Public

Program Area	Private / Not-for-Profit Agency	Public Child Welfare Agency
Kinship Navigator	6	0
Intensive Family-finding	4	0
Family Group Decision-Making	1	0
Residential Family Treatment	4	1
Combination	3	5
Total	18	6

## **Expectations**

- Install and test new, unique and distinctive approaches to deliver services to children.
- Develop programs as identifiable sites that other States and locales can look to for guidance, insight, and potential replication.
- Conduct site-specific evaluations to improve processes and services, demonstrate links between activities and improved outcomes.

## Research Question

- How effective are Family Connection programs in helping children who are in or at risk of entering foster care connect with family members?
- For what purpose, how, and to what extent do programs collaborate with partners, advisory groups, and other stakeholders, particularly local and State child welfare agencies, to serve parents, children, and families?
- How and to what extent does collaboration enhance services?

# Family Connection Cluster Logic Model

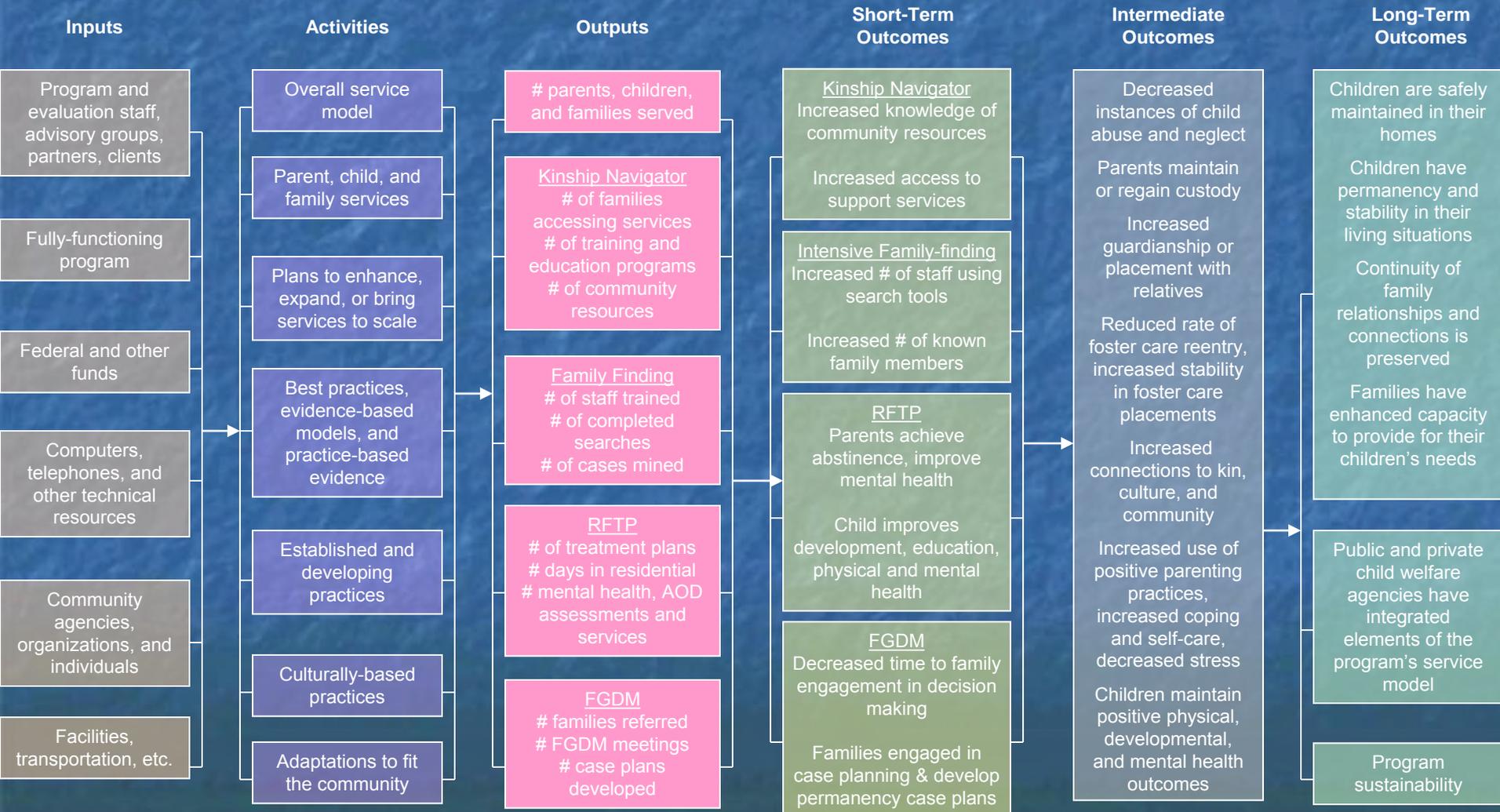
## Goals

Promote strengthening of the family unit to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families and encourage reunifying families if separation has occurred.

As demonstration projects, develop programs as identifiable sites that other States and locales seeking to implement family connection services can look to for guidance, insight, and possible replication; develop and implement an evidence-based model with specific components or strategies based on theory, research, or evaluation data; or replicate/test the transferability of successfully evaluated program models.

## Research Question

How effective are kinship navigator programs; programs utilizing intensive family finding efforts; programs utilizing family group decision-making meetings; and residential family treatment programs in helping children who are in or at-risk of entering into foster care connect with family members?



## Addressing the Research Question

- Reviewed grantee applications, evaluation plans, logic models, reports, and other local documents.
- Designed a semi-annual evaluation report template for grantees to submit local process and outcome data.
- Site visits to program and evaluation staff to confirm what we think we know, and **find out what we don't know.**

## Collaboration Questions

- Who are grantees' key program partners, and how do grantees work with them?
- How have proposed relationships with partners worked out?
- What are advantages and disadvantages of working with partners?

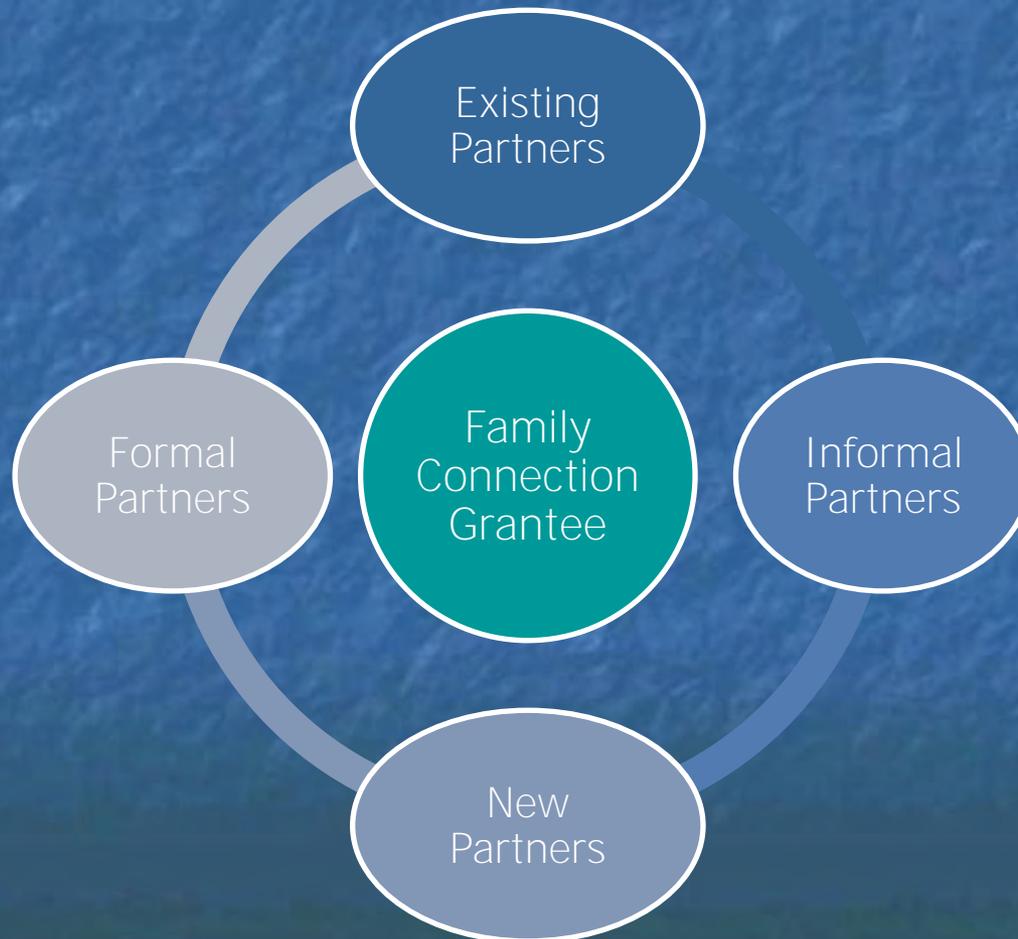
## Collaboration Questions

- How have grantees overcome challenges working with partners?
- How have grantees incorporated advisory groups into their program and to what effect?
- What are key strategies for developing and sustaining a successful collaboration or partnership?

## Types of Program Partners



## Types of Program Partners



## **Service Providers**

- Provide services that supplement what grantee provides internally (e.g., case management, domestic violence, severe mental and behavioral issue treatment).
- Provider staff co-locate within agency.
- Enhance grantee credibility and facilitate broader exposure.
- Some programs implemented collaboratively by a team of organizations led by the grantee.

## **Public Child Welfare Agency**

- Participate in planning, implementation, and ongoing maintenance.
- Provide staffing, resources, office space.
- Provide referrals.
- Conduit to administrative data.
- Collaboration at all levels within the agency.
- Integral aspect of Family Connection-funded program services.

## **Local Community Organizations**

- Several legal entities include District Attorney, Courts, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), and private attorneys.
- Many community partnerships are informal, such as Salvation Army, food pantries, utilities, Goodwill, YMCA/YWCA, and housing organizations.

## Evaluation and Other TA

- Contribute expertise, training and consultation.
- Family-finding TA by Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (CCSW), Kevin Campbell.
- FGDM TA by Casey Family Programs .
- Evaluators implement local evaluation plans, coordinate data collection with program staff, and communicate with all stakeholders.
- Evaluators have helped design and implement programs.

## **Working with Advisory Groups**

- Existing groups include Board of Directors, etc. that oversee all agency functions.
- New groups created to guide Family Connection-funded services.
- Repurposed groups created from existing boards, networks, committees, teams, etc.
- Strategic membership based on experience and expertise, community relationships, availability, and shared values and goals.
- Streamlined advisory groups are most effective.

## **Advantages to Collaboration**

- Shared sense of responsibility for the family.
- More coordinated case management.
- Increased referrals and broadened service area.
- Additional, expanded avenues of service and shortened wait times.
- Families may be more receptive to private / not-for-profit service providers.
- Access to state data systems enhances evaluation evidence that can support the program.

## **Advantages to Collaboration**

- Additional knowledge informs and improves key services, facilitates the adoption of complimentary service models into grantee work, and promotes integration of grantee services into the child welfare system.
- Partners advocate for a program, decrease competition, and increase chances for sustainability via new funding opportunities.
- Partners educate grantees on the contextual landscape of service implementation.

## Collaboration Challenges

- Learning the cultures, philosophies, and operations of multiple organizations in a way that enables everyone to increase child safety, permanency, and well-being.
- Navigating public agency structures and processes causes delays and frustration.
- Contract turnover and reorganization impacts hiring, fidelity, service continuity, and caseloads.
- More partners and providers = increased need and cost to coordinate and standardize services.

## Collaboration Challenges

- Services seen as duplicative, unnecessary, or as competition.
- Inconsistent participation and confusion around the purpose of advisory groups.
- Relationship building, training, and addressing HIPAA required to access public agency data.
- Evaluation tasks, including paperwork and electronic systems, a burden to program staff.
- Less understanding of the benefits of random assignment and control groups.

## Key Relationships

- Understand the priorities of collaborating organizations well enough to create goals that organizations can only reach together.
- Understand the partner well enough to have the right conversation with the right person.
- Define mutual expectations, develop clear roles and responsibilities, and resolve ambiguity within the grantee organization, among partners, and within the advisory group.

## Effective Communication

- Engage partners at the beginning in developing goals, policies and procedures, and evaluation methodologies .
- Promote common understanding of key concepts.
- Maintain fidelity to service delivery processes.
- Timely communication with front line staff improves trust and fosters respect.
- Consistently educate each other to eliminate misconceptions, build confidence, and identify opportunities for sustainability.

## **Working with Public Agencies**

- Learn to (better) navigate public child welfare and other public agency structures and processes.
- Seek timely contracting.
- Obtain support of public child welfare caseworkers for services, or services offered by a private / not-for-profit agency.
- Develop advocates and program champions within the child welfare agency to support meaningful change within the system.

## **Better Evaluation**

- Educate and obtain support from partners for rigorous evaluation design.
- Limit burden of evaluation tasks for program staff. Simplify paperwork and provide support for electronic data collection and reporting systems.
- Be prepared to build relationships, obtain multiple approvals, and address confidentiality concerns to access secondary, administrative data.
- Highlight successes to create enthusiasm and generate support.