Sailing the 7 C's of Social Change:
Evaluating Systems Change in an Early Intervention Project in the Russian Far East

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Early Intervention in the Russian Far East:

Changing a Complex System
Background

- Children born with disabilities in Russia have poor developmental outcomes and are often institutionalized, because families lack needed supports.
  - A lack of interdisciplinary, family-centered services for children with disabilities
  - Ineffective supports at all levels for such services (policy, social and institutional norms, medical expertise, family structure, etc.)
  - Insufficient understanding of and appropriate application of pediatric neurobiology in treatment of children with disabilities
  - Highly controlled systems in place
Early Intervention (EI) in the Russian Far East (RFE)

- EI project for abandonment prevention
- Based out of a small US organization
- 1 year USAID funding
- Russian – US Partnership
- Focus on interdisciplinary teams, family-centered practice
- Assessment and team consultation
Focus on Systems Change

Paradigm shift across the system of care for disabled children

- Medical
- Educational
- Family support
Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots . . .

(Peter Senge)
Some Basic Assumptions of Human Systems:

- Complex human systems are self-organizing constantly to adapt to their environment.
- We cannot predict specifically what will happen in the system, but we can identify patterns or trends.
- We cannot control the forces at work in systems but we can influence the path, speed, or direction of movement.
In a complex human system, an innovation or initiative must be:

- **Sensitive** to its environment so that changing patterns are detected in time to adapt
- **Flexible** enough to respond to changing patterns and to continue meeting the original need
- **Robust** enough to withstand emergent challenges and changing patterns in the systems.
Evaluation of the EI RFE Project

- Contextual data (e.g. needs assessment and literature review)
- Process data (e.g. observation, interviews and focus groups, service data)
- Outcome data (e.g. standardized child and family assessments)

Systems change analysis:
Seven Cs Social Change Framework
The 7 Cs Framework:

- Provides a **conceptual framework** for how systems change happens and how it is sustained.
- Is a structure that is both **uniform** and **adaptable**, providing a method across diverse fields and areas of change.
- Guides **iterative planning and action** at multiple levels.
- Aligns **process measures** (“change agent”) with **outcome measures** (“systems change”).
Change Agent

- Organization or Initiative focused on a specific change effort

Systems Change

- Changes in:
  - Programs
  - Practices
  - Policies
  - Resources
  - Institutional Norms
  - Social Norms
• Organization or Initiative focused on a specific change effort

• Loosely organized, collective systems change effort by people or organizations with a common purpose and solidarity in sustained interactions with the systems they are focused on changing

• Changes in:
  • Programs
  • Practices
  • Policies
  • Resources
  • Institutional Norms
  • Social Norms
The 7 C’s Framework

Connections

Coherence

Sustainability Factors

Communication

Constructs

Continuous Assessment

Commitment

Capacity Building
Whenever we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. — John Muir
Seven Cs levels:

- **Change agent(s)**
  US-based Organization
  Russia—American Team
  Polyclinic
  RFE EI Team

- **Social Movement**
  Organizations where team members worked
  Other organizations

- **Systems Change**
  Polyclinic systems
  EI systems across Vladivostok
7 Cs Analysis of the EI RFE Project

Systems Change Level
Communications

Indictors of success:
• Family is the hub of communication
• Cross-agency/discipline systems in place

I never believed that I would feel this way about families—that they can participate in the treatment for their children. Now I know that is the best way.

Cross-agency team meetings
Continuous Assessment

Indictors of success:
• Reflective supervision and peer consultation models
• Developmental assessment of children

Peer consultation model in place
Developmental Assessment beginning
Coherence

Indicators of Success:
• Institutionalized EI model across systems
• Systems include families

Team members practicing broadly
Families integrated at Polyclinic
Commitment to model at multiple levels
Constructs

Indicators of Success:
• EI team in place
• Parent group and resource center

Functioning Early Intervention Team
Parent group
Children’s group
Resource center
Connections

Indicators of success:
• Interdisciplinary team
• Referrals
• Expansion to other institutions

Integration of “teamwork” at all levels—with families, with colleagues, and across systems
Commitment

Indicators of Success:
• Allocation of Resources
• Expansion by RFE Team members

Polyclinic continued salaries and sought additional resources
Discussions with city and regional officials
Capacity Building

Indicators of Success:
• On-going training and supervision

Some continuation, but at risk
RFE Systems Change Reflection: Successes

- **Sensitive:**
  Family centered practice; developmental assessments; relationship between team partners

- **Flexible:**
  Family-centered practice; interdisciplinary team; support from polyclinic administration

- **Robustness:**
  Basic values of family-centered practice and interdisciplinary team
RFE Systems Change Reflection: Challenges

• Sensitive:
  Communication within broad systems; stigma; fear/protection of territory

• Flexible:
  Constraints of surrounding systems (e.g. maternity hospital); resources; multiple “bosses”

• Robustness:
  Competing models of care
Change Agent and Social Movement

Reflections and Key Indicators: Examples
Communications

Change Agent:
• Russian—American Team
• Specialists
• Electronic systems in place between visits
• Breakdown internally

Social Movement:
• Families spreading word
• Team members sharing at primary place of employment
• Respect of specialist—cross borders
Commitment

Change Agent:
• Demonstration of commitment by trainers critical
• Deteriorated over time at lead organization
• Limited commitment of funder
• Team commitment grew—time was “donated”

Social Movement:
• Expanded through team
• Maternity hospital and children’s hospital
• Library for the Visually Impaired
• University
Capacity Building

Change Agent:
• Strong iterative learning component (evaluation)

Social Movement:
• Resource center at clinic and Library for Visually Impaired
• University
QUESTIONS?