Who’s in charge here?: Structures for Collaborative Governance in Children’s Mental Health

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Introduction

- Community coalitions used to promote:
  - Shared community commitment
  - Collaborative action
  - Community-based problem solving
- Growth of collaborative governance in part due to compulsory legislative mandates
- CMHI grantees required to establish policy/governance council
Our Research

- Identify key governance structures used by CMHI grantees
- Understand why particular governance structures are successful
- Consider various components of governance structures that impact success
Literature Related to Governance

Challenges of multi-agency change efforts

- Information and skill set barriers
- Attitudinal barriers
- Organizational/Regulatory barriers
Characteristics of well-functioning collaborative governing bodies

- Diverse, inclusive membership
- Incentive to participate
- Clear rules
- Transparent decision-making processes
- Decision making based on shared and articulated vision, mission, & theory of change
Methods

- Sample: 24 sites from Phase IV of the CMHI program (early 2000s)

- Data sources:
  1) the 2002 GFA document for the CMHI program,
  2) site proposals in response to the GFA, and
  3) the bi-annual system of care assessment conducted as part of the national evaluation of the CMHI program.
Characteristics of Interagency Collaboration

- Includes formal arrangements (Memoranda of Understanding, policy manuals, board minutes)
- Provides a broad array of services
- Should include child-serving agencies such as mental health, education, child welfare, child protective services, juvenile court, juvenile corrections, primary healthcare, substance abuse treatment & prevention, vocational counseling, and rehabilitation
- Is located in the community
- Specifies roles of agencies in a system of care: financial contributions, representatives in governance structure, participation in strategic planning and service delivery
- Specifies if agencies are local or state entities

(USDHHS, 2002)
Characteristics of Governance

- Group with authority to make decisions
- Membership should include: representatives from entity that received funding, collaborating state/community child serving agencies, family members, and community representatives including racial/ethnic populations
- Group should develop and uphold formal agreements
- Group should be accountable for standards of care such as cultural competence, family involvement, and standards of practice shown effective through research and evaluation studies
- Group should ensure that cooperative agreement funds are expended appropriately within the community by keeping up to date with reforms
- Group should monitor clinical and functional outcomes
- Group can be a board of directors, committee, task force, or workgroup

(USDHHS, 2002)
Methods

Analysis:

1) Inductive, constant comparative approach.
2) A priori codes developed from definitions of governance and interagency collaboration in GFA and other literature.
3) Data coded by multiple team members and compared/discussed for theme identification.
Findings

- Two types of governance structures emerged
  - *Single-level governance structure* was used in systems of care that are bounded as a single entity or considered “stand alone.”
  - *Tiered governance structure*, characterized by multiple levels of linked governance.
Single-Level Governance

- Single interagency council
- Workgroups, subcommittees, executive committees
- Independent of state oversight
- 7 county-based; 4 city-based; 2 state/territory; 1 multi-county
Tiered Governance

- State to regional to local linkages
- Decision-making and funding authority originate at top tier and may be distributed to regional or local tiers
- Interagency councils operate at multiple levels with top tier having ultimate authority
- Six states, two cities, two multi-county systems of care
Lessons Learned

- Both types are effective options
- Tiered appears to work better in larger geographic areas as well as in states where authority is centralized
- Single-level more appropriate when authority is delegated to counties and/or cities
Lessons Cross-cut Structure

Typologies

- Well-functioning governance requires attention to practical size
- Membership diversity requires committed effort
- Clarity around role and responsibilities of governing body supports interagency collaboration
- Budgetary authority shapes decision-making power
- Participation should be formalized without being too prescriptive
Future Research

- Processes rather than form or structure of governance
- Effectiveness of various decision making processes (consensus, voting, deadlines)
- Mechanisms for conflict resolution
- Negotiation of MOUs and other written agreements
Reference

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