OJJDP

Lessons Learned From Safe Kids/Safe Streets

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Child abuse and neglect can harm young people in ways beyond the immediate pain and suffering inflicted. Many studies point to long-term consequences, finding that victims of child abuse and neglect are at greater risk of delinquency, substance abuse, adult criminality, and other problems than individuals who have not been victimized (Ireland and Widom, 1995; Kelley, Thornberry, and Smith, 1997; Lemmon, 1999; Weeks and Widom, 1998; Widom, 1995, 1996; Wiebush, Freitag, and Baird, 2001).

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) developed the Safe Kids/Safe Streets (SK/SS) program to help communities reduce child abuse and neglect and their aftereffects through collaborative, communitywide efforts.[1] Three DOJ offices—the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Executive Office for Weed and Seed (EOWS), and the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)—agreed to fund and monitor these communities, with OJJDP providing overall coordination.[2] In 1997, DOJ selected five localities to implement SK/SS. Three grantees were in mid-size cities (Huntsville, AL; Kansas City, MO; and Toledo, OH), one in a rural area (Burlington, VT), and one in a tribal area (Sault Ste. Marie, MI).

A national core team—consisting of program managers from the three DOJ offices,

Westat as the national evaluator, and a technical assistance team including individuals from the National Civic League and the Institute for Educational Leadership—supported the initiative.[3] The technical assistance team was added in the second year to promote a stronger focus on systems reform and to help sites access a wider range of technical assistance, which included onsite assistance and subsidies for training or consultation provided by other sources. DOJ also convened meetings twice a year for national team members and the sites to create a shared vision for SK/SS and to introduce best practices from other jurisdictions.

Safe Kids/Safe Streets Program

The goals of SK/SS were ambitious. The program was designed to help communities make significant changes in the policies, procedures, and practices of agencies that deal with children who are experiencing—or are at risk of experiencing—abuse and neglect and their families. DOJ expected communities to become more comprehensive and proactive in their efforts to combat child abuse and neglect, improve coordination and collaboration across agencies, and deploy resources more effectively. To engage the community, sites were expected to

Source for This Bulletin

The information in this Bulletin is adapted from the four-volume evaluation report *National Evaluation of the Safe Kids/Safe Streets Program: Final Report* (Gragg et al., 2004), available at www.ncjrs.gov. The report describes the results of Westat's national evaluation of the program's planning and implementation from 1997, when sites were first funded, through June 2003. Findings are based on multiple sources of information, including semiannual site visits, review of project documentation, three stakeholder surveys, a survey of agency personnel, and two structured surveys of key informants (e.g., individuals who played key roles in the child abuse and neglect system or who routinely observed the system's operations). The report also includes a logic model and a detailed case study of the SK/SS experience for each site.

develop broad-based local collaboratives, building on relationships and collaborations already in place. The SK/SS collaboratives were to include justice, child welfare, family service, education, health, and mental health agencies and also nontraditional partners such as faith-based organizations, community groups, the media, and victims and their families.

Each site also had to develop and implement plans covering four components (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1996):

◆ **Systems reform and accountability—** reforming agency policies, practices, and procedures and improving cross-agency training and communication.

◆ **An enhanced continuum of services, from prevention to treatment—** improving existing services, filling gaps, and using current resources more effectively, including those of public, private, and informal support systems.

◆ **Data collection and evaluation—** improving local data collection and information sharing across systems and agencies to support decisionmaking in individual cases and to help the community evaluate progress toward its objectives.

◆ **Prevention education—**educating the community about child abuse and neglect and how to report it, community services, good parenting practices, and the Safe Kids effort.

DOJ allowed sites considerable flexibility in program design but intervened if a site appeared to deviate significantly from the federal vision. Federal staff provided input on planning and, over time, clarified their expectations with support from the technical assistance team. This clarification emphasized the overarching importance of systems reform and the ways that the other program components could support it.

During the implementation phase, each site carried out a unique mix of activities. Some commonalities, however, were evident. For example, all sites worked to make more effective use of multidisciplinary teams in cases of child abuse and neglect. All invested in children's advocacy centers (CACs), which provide multidisciplinary handling of child abuse cases in a child-friendly setting. The five communities also worked to improve training for mandated reporters (personnel in various agencies such as education and health who are required by state law to report suspected child abuse and neglect). New services were implemented in each site, often through subgrants from the lead agency.

By mid-2003, when most data collection for the national evaluation ended, federal support was winding down in three sites—Burlington, Huntsville, and Toledo. However, they were expecting a final award to support the transition from federal to non-federal funding. Because their rate of spending was slower, Kansas City and Sault Ste. Marie still had a year or more of federal funding left.[4] Four of the five SK/SS collaboratives were hoping to survive beyond the term of federal funding. Kansas City was the exception; its collaborative planned to transfer its functions to another multiagency committee with ongoing responsibility for child protective services.

The SK/SS communities made impressive progress both in establishing effective collaboratives and in implementing plans to improve local systems and services. Several sites showed promising signs that they would continue new services designed to fill gaps in the continuum of services (e.g., home visitation, therapy for child victims and witnesses of violence, joint programs involving both domestic violence advocates and police, neighborhood-based programs).

In addition to improving services, all sites made significant organizational changes, improving multidisciplinary teaming through CACs; setting up specialized law enforcement, prosecution, or court units; and adopting new protocols and procedures. Many local stakeholders reported improvements in the following areas:

◆ Providing multiagency responses to child victims affected by domestic violence (67 percent).

◆ Educating the community about child abuse and neglect (61 percent).

◆ Improving services for children and families at risk of falling through the cracks (56 percent).

◆ Decreasing community tolerance for child maltreatment (54 percent).

◆ Leveraging resources across public and private agencies to support children and families (50 percent).

Evaluators did not expect to find significant reductions in child maltreatment during the evaluation period (1997–2003). In fact, it seemed likely that SK/SS would actually spur an increase in reported cases of child abuse and neglect—particularly if the projects raised awareness of child abuse, educated people about how to report it, and increased confidence in child protective service agencies. Such increases in reporting could easily mask any reductions in abuse brought about by other project efforts. Indeed, an examination of trends in child abuse reports, substantiations, and placements at these sites from 1997 to 2002 did not reveal clear, consistent patterns that could be attributed to SK/SS.

A supplemental study conducted in three of the five SK/SS sites (Burlington, Huntsville, and Kansas City) closely examined a sample of child maltreatment cases approximately 5 years after SK/SS started. Researchers compared these data with findings from studies of earlier or baseline cases conducted by local SK/SS evaluators.[5] It was difficult to draw conclusions from the Huntsville and Kansas City data because of variations in methodology between the baseline and later studies. In Burlington, however, results were noteworthy. Far fewer children were removed from their homes and many more of the

families who needed home visiting services or substance abuse assessments received them. There were also indications that families were getting services earlier in the court process and reaching permanency more rapidly. In all three sites, the majority of children had achieved permanency—either at home with their parents or in another placement—2 years after the target report or petition (Gragg, Cronin, and Schultz, 2005).

Lessons From the SK/SS Experience

The SK/SS experience offers a wealth of insights about collaboration building, systems reform, service options, and other strategies for jurisdictions contemplating similar initiatives and for organizations that might fund them. The broad lessons learned about community coordination of services through SK/SS helped to inform how other OJJDP programs operate. For example, findings from SK/SS informed the Green Book technical assistance project and the Safe Start Program. The findings continue to help OJJDP foster community coordination in other arenas more efficiently, with higher level decisionmaker involvement and more sustainable collaboration.

Community Context

The SK/SS approach can succeed in a wide range of communities. The SK/SS sites ranged from rural and tribal areas to mid-size cities. The SK/SS approach was easily adapted to environments with differing demographics and resource levels and was implemented by a wide array of agencies. The lead agencies in Huntsville, Kansas City, and Sault Ste. Marie had multimillion dollar budgets prior to SK/SS, compared with budgets of just $29,000 in Burlington and $700,000 in Toledo. An agency of a tribal government led the Sault Ste. Marie project; the other four grantees were nonprofit organizations. Two grantees—in Burlington and Kansas City—had been convening stakeholders with an interest in the child abuse and neglect system for years but were not direct service providers. In contrast, the other lead agencies had pivotal direct service roles in their formal child protection systems. Sault Ste. Marie targeted tribal members in a multicounty area. The other projects all targeted a single county, although Kansas City focused direct services on three high-need ZIP Code areas. Annual federal funding levels ranged from

$125,000 (Toledo) to $800,000 (Huntsville). (See table, page 4, for further details.)

Some community conditions are more favorable than others. In selecting sites, DOJ favored communities with existing capacity and infrastructure, supportive legislation and policies, and a readiness to undertake systems reform. The SK/SS experience suggests that it is important to have a lead agency with leadership experience, content expertise, and local credibility. Ideally, the community should see the agency as a neutral party and have an existing collaborative on which to build. If those two elements are absent, the community can expect to spend more time building collaboration and setting its agenda. Sault Ste. Marie, for example, suffered on both counts; it had no standing collaborative and its lead agency investigated and intervened in child abuse and neglect. Huntsville's lead agency had a collaborative in place, but as a major service provider and one of the largest agencies in the community, it was not regarded as neutral.

Program Design

Flexible program design and oversight help programs overcome barriers and adapt to new challenges and opportunities. DOJ established a broad vision and held to some key principles, but it allowed sites considerable latitude in finding the right mix of activities for their own communities. This approach helped accommodate a wide range of community circumstances and stakeholder priorities. Initial plans did not always work out, despite good faith efforts. For example, Huntsville tried several approaches for bringing services to neighborhoods before settling on a full-service school model. Kansas City's initial multidisciplinary team was abandoned and replaced by a different model, linked to the existing CAC. Burlington temporarily halted its CAC services to revamp its targeting criteria.

Sites need the freedom to explore opportunities. Many communities have multiple collaboratives, with new ones emerging. The SK/SS sites profited from aligning themselves with other collaboratives, even though the payoff was uncertain at the start. For example, Toledo's involvement with the OJJDP-funded Comprehensive Strategy program brought stronger alliances between child welfare, law enforcement, and the court. In Burlington, the relationship between SK/SS and the Family Court Permanency Planning Pro-

ject resulted in service enhancements and joint data collection efforts.

Planning and carrying out a systems reform effort takes a long time, even if the community has the infrastructure. All the SK/SS sites were intensively involved in planning for at least 18 months, although partial implementation began within a year. DOJ extended the planning phase beyond 6 months and the overall initiative beyond the $5\frac{1}{2}$ years originally envisioned. DOJ also released implementation funds incrementally during planning to address pressing community concerns and to ease the lengthy planning process. Following are planning recommendations based on the SK/SS experience:

◆ **Assume that it will take 9 to 12 months for project planning and initial collaboration building.** Collaborative initiatives should begin with realistic expectations about how long it will take to plan and organize, so that stakeholders do not become unduly discouraged or impatient.

◆ **Develop detailed timelines for accomplishing key activities and achieving specified outcomes.** Stakeholders should reach a consensus about the timeline, which should include recognizable milestones. Rather than being a straitjacket that prevents the program from responding to unexpected opportunities, the timeline should help the community make realistic plans, assess progress, and make necessary adjustments.

◆ **Assume that the overall initiative will take 8 to 10 years.** Communities and funders (both internal and external to the community) should be prepared for the long term. It may make sense to develop staged objectives: short, intermediate, and long term. The pace of progress will vary depending on a number of local factors—readiness to take on systems reform, the initial status of collaboration, the strategies selected, barriers encountered, and the targeted outcomes. Funders, if involved, might emulate DOJ's decision to provide stepped-down transitional funding toward the end of the initiative.

Collaborative Efforts

Each SK/SS site developed a governing council, supplemented by committees and workgroups, that played an important role in designing and carrying out the SK/SS

Site Characteristics

	Burlington, VT	Huntsville, AL	Kansas City, MO	Sault Ste. Marie, MI	Toledo, OH
Project Name	KidSafe	One by One	KIDSAFE	Building Strong Native American Families	Safe Kids/Safe Streets Program
Lead Agency	Community Network for Children, Youth & Families[1]	National Children's Advocacy Center	Heart of America United Way	Anishnabek Community and Family Services	Family and Child Abuse Prevention Center
Type of Agency	Private, nonprofit organization that is a partnership of agencies, community groups, and individuals working to improve the community's response to child abuse and neglect	Private, nonprofit organization that coordinates agency responses to child abuse and neglect to reduce trauma to victims and improve results for prosecution	Nonprofit agency serving six counties in the bistate Kansas City metro area that administers funds for nonprofit health and human service agencies	Tribal government agency that provides social, mental health, and substance abuse services to the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians	Nonprofit, community-based education, public awareness, and direct services agency
Agency Budget (Year Before SK/SS)	$29,120	$2,426,225	$3,580,370	$3,860,695	$397,216 (6 months)
Initial Award[2]	$424,494	$800,000	$923,645	$425,000	$125,000
Total Awards	$2,250,000	$4,125,000	$3,472,290	$2,250,000	$750,000
Primary Target Area	Chittenden County	Madison County	Jackson County, with special focus on three ZIP Codes	Mackinac and Chippewa Counties	Lucas County
Population in Target Area, 2000[3]	146,571	276,700	654,880	50,486 (8,243)[4]	455,054
Agencies and Groups on the Governing Council, 2002–03	26	30	33	18	29

[1] In 2003, the Community Network began doing business as KidSafe Collaborative of Chittenden County.

[2] DOJ expected funding for the first grant period to cover 18 months. Subsequent awards were for 1 year, but DOJ allowed projects to carry over unexpended funds.

[3] U.S. Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

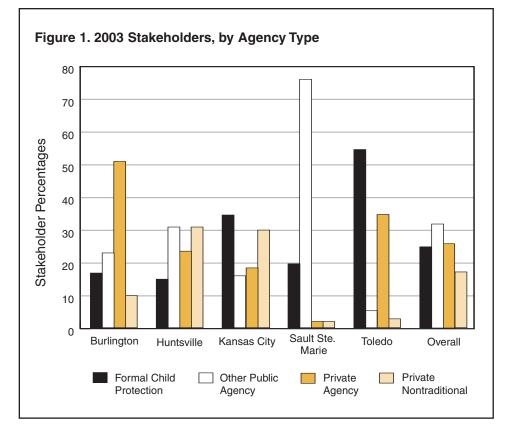[4] The figure in parentheses represents the Sault Ste. Marie tribal population.

agenda. Most of the sites also held communitywide meetings to publicize project activities and encourage input. The collaboratives engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, exceeding DOJ's core membership requirements. Further, the members shared responsibility, accountability, and, to a lesser extent, resources.

The 2003 stakeholder survey (n=277)[6] provides a glimpse of who these collaborators were toward the end of the project, the extent of their participation, and their level of commitment. This survey targeted participants in governing councils, task forces, committees, and subgrants.

Figure 1 (page 5) shows stakeholder affiliation by category: the formal child protection system (including child protective services, law enforcement, prosecution, and dependency court), other public agencies, private agencies (mainly service providers), and private "nontraditional" groups (e.g., community or neighborhood

organizations; professional, civic, or religious organizations; parents; youth; businesses). Overall, 57 percent of responding stakeholders represented the formal child protection system and other public agencies—25 percent from formal child protection agencies and 32 percent from other public agencies. However, the variation in affiliations across sites is marked. Public agency representation ranges from a low of 40 percent in Burlington to a high of 96 percent in Sault Ste. Marie. Toledo is the only place where respondents from the formal child protection system made up the majority (55 percent). Huntsville and Kansas City had the largest concentrations of nontraditional stakeholders, accounting for about 30 percent of all respondents at those sites.

The stakeholders reported significant commitments to SK/SS. The typical respondent reported spending about 2 hours per month on the program and attending five meetings per year.[7] However, each site had a core of much more active stakeholders. Overall, about one in five respondents spent 6 or more hours per month on SK/SS, and one in four attended at least one meeting per month. Other indications of stakeholder commitment include the following:

◆ In the past year, more than half the respondents (52 percent) reported attending community meetings convened by the project, and approximately one-third helped implement project-funded activities.

◆ Smaller proportions of respondents helped train (17 percent), write project plans or other documents (13 percent), and decide which groups should receive funding (7 percent). Toledo respondents were about three times as likely as other respondents to have been involved in writing plans or other documents.

◆ Although a modest correlation existed between receiving SK/SS funding and levels of participation in the collaborative, many of the respondents whose organizations had never received SK/SS funding were involved several hours per month, and 38 percent reported that their organizations had contributed staff to SK/SS efforts.

The responses to the stakeholder survey also suggest that many stakeholders felt a sense of responsibility to participate. When asked whether they personally had contributed sufficient time to SK/SS in the

Figure 1. 2003 Stakeholders, by Agency Type

past year, 34 percent reported that they had not and 20 percent said that their organization had not. Only 9 percent of stakeholders said that they had contributed more than enough time.

Many strategies that have been effective for other collaborative efforts also worked for SK/SS. Observers of other collaboratives have identified many strategies that help build and maintain effective collaborations (CSR, Incorporated, 1996; Farrow, 1997; Melaville and Blank, 1991; Mizrahi, 1999; Mizrahi and Rosenthal, 2001). Many of these same approaches, highlighted below, were applied successfully at the SK/SS sites:

◆ Involve key players early in the process.

◆ Establish a shared vision.

◆ Set readily attainable objectives.

◆ Devise creative and realistic strategies.

◆ Emphasize what partners agree on and respect differences.

◆ Avoid "red herrings" that might derail the initiative.

◆ Publicize success and acknowledge contributions from partners.

SK/SS demonstrates the value of additional strategies and tactics. Besides confirming previous insights, the SK/SS experience suggests several other lessons for communities trying to build lasting collaborations.

◆ **Be prepared to fine-tune the governance structure.** Every collaborative will need to adjust its committee structure from time to time and recruit new members to governance roles. Major restructuring may even become desirable. Huntsville and Sault Ste. Marie both wound up replacing their original governing body in an effort to bring in additional partners, accommodate new political realities, broaden the mission, and use resources most effectively.

◆ **Use community meetings to encourage participation and recruit people.** Community meetings can be an effective way to encourage and expand participation, to set the collaborative's agenda, and to recruit people into more active roles. Workgroups and committees can play a similar role, ensuring that a broad spectrum of stakeholders have a hand in the work and share the credit for accomplishments.

- **Redistribute some program funds through grants.** Funding local initiatives can bring key stakeholders to the table and enhance the program's legitimacy, especially if the stakeholders decide how to allocate the funds. Added benefits may come from a competitive funding process that heavily involves stakeholders in reviewing proposals. Burlington and Kansas City found that this helped stakeholders to write their own proposals and to think critically about how specific projects can contribute to systems reform. Kansas City's grant program, specifically targeted to nontraditional and grassroots organizations, also brought new stakeholders to the collaborative.

- **Do not be overly concerned about turf conflict derailing the initiative.** Given a broad agenda, the initiative can still progress in some areas while stakeholders who are at odds on other areas take time to find common ground. Also, some turf issues can be tackled directly and moderated through team-building training. The CACs in several SK/SS sites, for example, used team building to help staff from agencies with different missions and priorities develop common understandings of individual roles and responsibilities and establish protocols.

- **Start with a few activities that have strong stakeholder consensus.** Rather than rush the initial planning, begin with a few activities that have stakeholder consensus while planning is still underway. In every SK/SS site, this helped ease frustration and sustain stakeholder commitment. Even small efforts—such as the Family Fun Nights in Sault Ste. Marie—built support for planning and brought visibility to the project. Funders can help alleviate the urge to rush the planning process by releasing limited amounts of implementation funds to begin activities about which there is consensus.

- **Operate as a learning community.** A good collaborative should function as a learning community, valuing clear and open communication and revisiting initial plans and resource allocations with a critical eye. Early plans can flounder, community circumstances can change, and new information about best practices can emerge. A return to strategic planning elicits new ideas and initiatives that reenergize stakeholders. Burlington's development of statewide training for

mandatory reporters was one such idea. Toledo's decision to shift funding for Building Healthy Families, a home visitation program, from direct services to training and coordination was another.

Including nontraditional partners in a collaborative is a particular challenge, especially if the partners' ethnicity, culture, and experience differ from agency professionals. Although the SK/SS collaboratives sought a broad range of participants, they fell short of fully integrating nontraditional partners, especially residents and clients. Although most sites appeared to desire more nontraditional participation, none invested heavily in recruiting efforts. Some sites had trouble retaining the nontraditional participants they had recruited. Suggestions for involving nontraditional partners follow:

- **Identify nontraditional partners during the early planning stages and develop strategies for securing their involvement.** Identify obstacles and how they might be overcome. For example, the collaborative may need to convince parents and other nontraditional partners that it is in their interest to participate and that it will support them (e.g., through training, financial assistance, and accessible meeting times and places). Traditional partners may need convincing, too, not only about the benefits of having nontraditional partners, but about the need to invest to bring them to the table and to develop effective working relationships.

- **Budget for the costs of involving nontraditional groups.** Support involving nontraditional groups with funds for identification and recruitment, initial and ongoing orientation and training, transportation, and babysitting.

Sponsors can help by providing technical assistance, requiring sites to use it early in the planning process, and, if necessary, setting budget guidelines for investments in nontraditional involvement.

Systems Reform

The SK/SS sites affected the child protection system in numerous ways. According to stakeholders, SK/SS provided them with new contacts, training, and an improved ability to do their jobs. Most stakeholders also credited SK/SS with improving interagency and community communication and the quality of information available to use in making decisions.

Several approaches can be particularly effective in increasing the personal and professional capacities of stakeholders and improving interagency cooperation. For example, closer collaboration between the domestic violence and child protection communities was a particularly noteworthy result of project efforts in several sites. Two-thirds of all stakeholders stated that SK/SS had improved multiagency responses to children affected by domestic violence. Effective approaches for increasing capacity and improving interagency cooperation include the following collaboration:

- **A tiered approach to collaboration.** Sites used committees, teams, and workgroups to encourage both input and participation. These formats proved a training ground for later participation in governing councils. In addition, community meetings allowed less active participants to expand contacts and provide program input.

- **Service initiatives that promote stronger relationships among agencies.** Sometimes, SK/SS helped place agency personnel in new locations. For example, Huntsville's human services agency based a community liaison in a neighborhood; the liaison also made monthly trips on the bus route to the agency so she could talk informally with clients. Other service initiatives strengthened referral relationships or created new ones. In Sault Ste. Marie, the Family Service Team/Wraparound Program expanded referrals, particularly in the underserved rural western service area. Burlington and Kansas City held regular meetings for their grantees to promote working relationships. To better coordinate activities across multiple home visitation programs, Toledo established a committee of contract providers from all sponsoring agencies that conduct home visitations.

- **Cross-agency training.** Cross-agency training helps keep information consistent throughout the community's child protection system and, regardless of its content, helps people from different agencies get better acquainted. Some training, however, can be explicitly designed to promote closer working relationships. For example, Burlington started Building Bridges Workshops, which a different agency hosted each month. Kansas City, recognizing that domestic violence providers did not

typically work with child protective services staff and law enforcement, brought them all together for cross-disciplinary training. It inspired a broader initiative to create a coordinated and consistent response to co-occurring child abuse and domestic violence, modeled on the cross-agency Green Book Initiative coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Cross-agency training can be sustained by creating concrete products such as training curriculums, toolkits, and videos and embedding training requirements in local systems. The SK/SS sites demonstrated some success with these approaches. For example, Sault Ste. Marie turned its training for mandated reporters into a self-administered tutorial and required all new tribal employees to take it. Kansas City's training curriculum on Medical Aspects of Child Abuse and Neglect was mandated for child protective services workers and conducted by the local children's hospital. Huntsville's Resources 101, a monthly orientation on community resources, was required for new child protection staff at the Department of Human Resources and staff at Healthy Families.

Other types of training and support can further a system reform agenda. The SK/SS sites sponsored some training for community members at large, often in partnership with collaborating agencies. The Community Healing Process in Sault Ste. Marie was especially ambitious, consisting of multiyear training open to the entire tribe that was designed to infuse cultural values and practices throughout tribal programs. Admittedly, the environment was distinctive, involving a small, well-defined community of tribal members, and the content was tailored to a tribal audience. However, this experience suggests that other small communities (or perhaps a limited target area within a larger city) could attempt a broad-based public training.

The Community Healing Process in Sault Ste. Marie was the most comprehensive of the efforts to promote cultural competence. However, other sites used tactics that could be adapted to a wide variety of communities.

◆ Huntsville inaugurated Diversity Schoolhouse—a popular brown bag luncheon series on different cultures, ethnicities, and religions—for practitioners and others. Four other communities have already emulated this program.

◆ Burlington required prospective grantees to demonstrate how they were addressing cultural competence issues in their grant applications.

◆ Kansas City made small capacity-building and prevention grants, designed in part to engage more diverse service providers, such as neighborhood-based and grassroots organizations, in prevention programming.

Changes in agency structures and policies can be sustained. Perhaps the most impressive systems reform efforts at the SK/SS sites involved creating new agency structures for case handling, improving existing structures, and changing policies and procedures to improve case processing and outcomes. Most of these changes do not depend on SK/SS funds for their continuation. Other sites might look to them for inspiration.

◆ Two sites (Burlington and Huntsville) implemented new prosecution units.

◆ Four sites started drug courts (Huntsville, Kansas City, Sault Ste. Marie, and Toledo).

◆ Three sites (Huntsville, Kansas City, and Toledo) started or expanded law enforcement units to handle child maltreatment and domestic violence.

◆ The two sites that lacked CACs at the outset (Burlington and Sault Ste. Marie) started them with help from SK/SS.

◆ The other three sites made a variety of improvements in the training, procedures, and multidisciplinary team arrangements for their existing CACs.

◆ Burlington upgraded and expanded multidisciplinary teams for at-risk families. It also improved resources and facilities for forensic examinations of sexual assault victims.

◆ Kansas City and Toledo were especially active in developing new protocols, procedures, and guidelines. For example, Kansas City established protocols for filing court cases on drug-exposed infants and adopted new structured decisionmaking tools for child protective services. Toledo developed permanency planning protocols for juvenile court and new pediatric sexual assault guidelines.

Of these efforts, only the new CACs in Burlington and Sault Ste. Marie expected to be heavily dependent on further fundraising for their continuation.
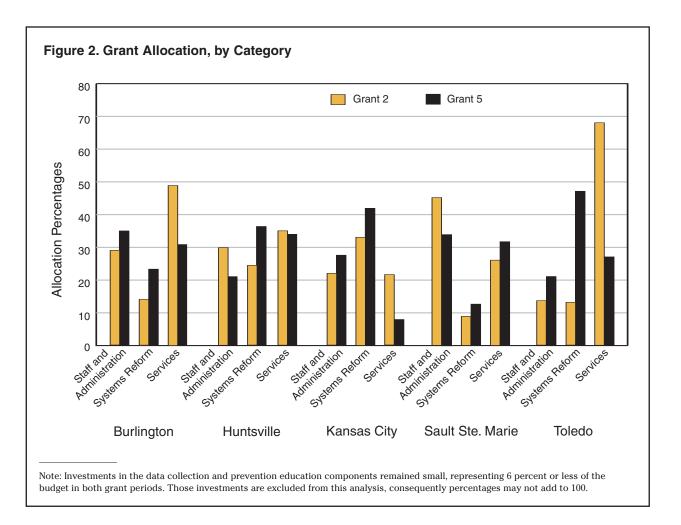
Collaboration can become the normal way of doing business. By 2002, evaluators routinely heard from key informants, stakeholders, and agency frontline staff that collaboration had become the expected way of operating in the community. This expectation cut across a wide range of activities, from working on individual cases to delivering training to developing new grants. Many respondents pointed out that it would be hard to reverse the process.

Enhancing the Continuum of Services

Most SK/SS sites successfully filled service gaps and made services more accessible, at least during the term of federal funding. Except in Kansas City (where systems reform was the primary emphasis from the beginning), services were their highest priority during the early phases of implementation. The services funded ran the gamut from prevention to treatment. In the service area, several sites expanded or improved home visitation, neighborhood- or community-based services, and parent education. Initiatives to help children affected by domestic violence were also common. Some sites emphasized coordinated and wraparound services. At times, however, service initiatives threatened to overwhelm the rest of the agenda, and DOJ had to be vigilant in emphasizing systems reform. Other comprehensive initiatives have experienced a similar tug of war for resources between systems reform and direct services (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1999).

One measure of DOJ's success in reinforcing the primacy of systems reform can be seen in the allocation of funds and the shift in site priorities over time—reflecting local judgments about need as well as input from DOJ and the technical assistance team. Figure 2 (page 8) compares how each site allocated its SK/SS budget for two grant periods, grant 2 (early implementation) and grant 5 (late implementation).[8]

Expenditures were distributed across several categories, three of which will be discussed here: core staff and administration, systems reform, and continuum of services.[9] The staffing category included the project director, other staff or consultants who primarily engaged in manage-

Figure 2. Grant Allocation, by Category

Note: Investments in the data collection and prevention education components remained small, representing 6 percent or less of the budget in both grant periods. Those investments are excluded from this analysis, consequently percentages may not add to 100.

ment or administrative support, and items such as rent, staff development, office expenses, and subgrants.

Several patterns of expenditures are noteworthy. Most sites budgeted from one-fifth to one-third of their SK/SS awards for core staff and administration during grant 2, and all were doing so by grant 5. During grant 2, Kansas City was the only site to allocate the largest share of its budget (33 percent) to systems reform. In contrast, Toledo's service budget far outstripped allocations for systems reform (68 percent versus 13 percent); Burlington and Sault Ste. Marie similarly had much larger service budgets (49 percent versus 14 percent in Burlington and 26 percent versus 9 percent in Sault Ste. Marie). The difference in Huntsville (35 percent versus 24 percent) was not as great. By grant 5, this picture changed substantially. All sites devoted larger shares of their funding to systems reform activities than they had before, although the change in Sault Ste. Marie was small (from 9 to 13 percent). Both Huntsville and Toledo had joined

Kansas City in making systems reform their number one category of investment. The turnaround in Toledo was truly dramatic, with services dropping from 68 to 27 percent of the budget and systems reform rising from 13 to 47 percent.

To achieve an appropriate balance between investments in direct services and systems reform, communities should develop an explicit rationale for service initiatives, indicating how they will contribute to the systems reform agenda. The rationale should answer the following questions:

◆ How will each service investment help improve community or systemic policies and practices?

◆ What will it take to sustain this service when grant funds are no longer available?

◆ If a particular service initiative is unlikely to have systemic impact, what other objectives will it serve?

◆ How can direct service initiatives help promote best practices, such as cultural competence, family-centered practices, and service coordination and integration?

Sponsors can assist by providing guidelines for balancing expenditures for systems reform activities and expenditures for new or expanded services, initially and over time. Applicants should be required to document and justify departures from guidelines.

Sustaining services is a continuing challenge. Most SK/SS participants concede that they should have started working on sustainability sooner. They also were unprepared for changes in economic conditions that reduced public and private sources of support. Overall, however, the prospects for sustaining SK/SS-supported services look promising. Several programs have already transitioned to other sources of funding—among them, most of the service programs in Burlington, Toledo's home visitation program, and Huntsville's

First Responders and Parents as Teachers programs. To build the capacity of service providers to continue valued services, several sites sponsored training in sustainability planning and resource development.

Data Collection and Evaluation

With limited local capacity and interest, most sites made data collection and local evaluation a low priority. Significant barriers to improving electronic case tracking and information sharing across agencies also were present—in the form of technology, cost, organizational structure, and confidentiality concerns. Nonetheless, local capacity to collect and use data did increase, and there was greater recognition of the need for data to inform decisions and track progress. In part, this was a response to the challenge of sustainability, as sites became more aware that they would need to document their achievements and challenges for new sponsors.

Although no site implemented a comprehensive interagency management information system (MIS), Toledo was in the early stages of two such efforts—one to track victims seen in the emergency room and the other for home visitation clients—and Kansas City and Huntsville were taking a second look at the possibilities. All sites did make more modest changes. For example, Kansas City and Huntsville improved the technology for interagency e-mail and cross-agency access to data. Burlington backed a new database for serious sexual and physical abuse cases at the CAC location, accessible to law enforcement, investigators with child protective services, and prosecutors. Sault Ste. Marie was working on an interagency plan to share information about substance abuse clients.

To fully integrate data collection and evaluation into systems reform efforts, jurisdictions should seek expert advice and onsite technical assistance early. In particular, communities should—

◆ **Bring local evaluators on board to assist in planning.** Trained evaluators may be scarce in small and relatively rural communities, so the search should start early. If such assistance is not available locally, sponsors may be able to help sites find appropriate help elsewhere or fund a national evaluator to fill in.

◆ **Connect local evaluators with collaboration members, ideally through committees.** SK/SS sites that formed committees to help develop their evaluations or other research efforts built demand for data and increased the capacity for understanding and using it in decisionmaking.

◆ **Focus on building capacity for "results-based accountability."** Training, technical assistance, and evaluation support can move communities toward data-driven decisionmaking by helping stakeholders identify clear, measurable outcomes. Grappling with how to measure outcomes may also expose the limitations of local data systems and ultimately stimulate some improvements.

◆ **Obtain technical assistance related to integrating data systems.** Technical assistance can help jurisdictions understand the full range of cross-agency MIS options, from low-tech to cutting-edge improvements. It can also suggest a range of approaches for addressing confidentiality issues.

SK/SS sites received technical assistance in the latter areas, initially too early to be effective and later too late to affect their agendas significantly. Timely assistance is essential to helping a jurisdiction do a better job of planning its agenda and allocating sufficient resources to data collection and integration efforts.

Prevention Education

At most SK/SS sites, modest prevention education efforts matured into more comprehensive strategies as the programs developed, though funding allocations typically remained small. The overarching lesson is to link prevention education efforts to the overall objectives of the initiative.

◆ All sites developed a wide array of resource materials, from sophisticated online information systems in Sault Ste. Marie and Huntsville to service directories, brochures, newsletters, community calendars, and other printed materials at all sites.

◆ All of the sites participated in neighborhood and community events.

◆ All of the sites produced or supported multimedia campaigns about child abuse and family violence, with the Sault Ste. Marie campaign earning national recognition.

◆ Kansas City provided grants to community-based organizations to build grassroots capacity and develop targeted awareness efforts.

Resources

The SK/SS communities were fortunate to receive substantial federal resources to carry out their efforts. Over the course of the initiative, sites received anywhere from $750,000 (Toledo) to approximately $4 million (Huntsville). However, evaluators noted significant accomplishments in all of the sites, regardless of funding level and wide variations in staffing. Although some resources are needed to convene and manage a collaborative effort, communities should not be discouraged if they lack comparable levels of funding. Many SK/SS efforts relied on donated staff time and, sometimes, on sponsors other than DOJ. In addition, many changes—particularly in the systems reform area—were institutionalized and require relatively little ongoing support.

Funders who contemplate support for similar efforts should be encouraged by the accomplishments of the SK/SS sites. Investments in collaboration can stimulate impressive changes in a community. Besides funding project activities directly, sponsors can also play an important role in providing training and technical assistance and helping communities adhere to a vision of systems reform.

Summary

While collaborative approaches have been used successfully in other arenas, the SK/SS initiative represents the most comprehensive application in the child maltreatment field. It succeeded in building broad-based collaboratives focusing on child abuse and neglect issues in five very different communities. The five collaboratives enabled their communities to forge stronger interagency relationships and to focus on systems reform issues. They also engaged a broad range of stakeholders in developing and implementing a complex and ambitious agenda and made collaboration a normal way of doing business. Other communities can learn many valuable lessons from the experiences of these sites.

Endnotes

1. The development of SK/SS was based on a yearlong effort involving input from researchers, practitioners, funders, survivors, and policymakers obtained through focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, and consultation. It was designed to identify those areas and strategies prime for federal support.

2. For most of the SK/SS program's history, these three offices were part of DOJ's Office of Justice Programs (OJP). In 2004, OVW became an independent office under DOJ, though it continues to work closely with OJP. Also in 2004, EOWS was renamed the Community Capacity Development Office, which remains part of OJP. Three other OJP agencies—Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and Office for Victims of Crime—provided funding to support technical assistance for the sites. In the program's early years, staff from these offices also participated in the OJP project management team. This interagency governance structure was designed to mirror the communities' experiences and situations.

3. During the first grant period and again in later grants, Patricia Donahue and Associates were involved as part of the technical assistance team.

4. All sites were eligible for five full awards, the first to cover an 18-month planning period and the others to cover implementation in 1-year increments. OJP recognized the need for a flexible timetable, however, and sites expended their awards at different rates. In 2003, OJP decided to augment the original funding by covering a year of transition to non-federal funding for all sites.

5. OJP required all sites to have a local evaluator who worked on projects and tasks determined by local stakeholders and staff.

6. Of all survey recipients, 71 percent (*n*=343) returned surveys. However, 66 respondents returned blank surveys, complying with the evaluators' request to return a blank survey if the respondent had not been an active stakeholder in the past 2 years. The analysis was based on the remaining 277 surveys.

7. The figures reported are medians, rather than the means, which were 5.1 hours and 8.5 meetings, respectively. The median is the midpoint of all responses, when they are put in order from lowest to highest. It more accurately reflects the typical or average response in situations where the mean (the arithmetical average) is skewed by a few respondents who report very low or very high numbers.

8. For Kansas City and Sault Ste. Marie, the grant 5 budgets represent projections for the grant period that was about to start.

9. With a couple of exceptions, investments in the other program elements (data collection/evaluation and prevention education/public information) remained small, representing 6 percent or less of the SK/SS budget in both grant periods (although in some cases the sites leveraged other support for these efforts). Those investments are excluded from this analysis, consequently percentages may not add to 100.

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