A Warm Welcome

from

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NRC/Adoption – John Levesque

Making it Work in Child Welfare

Transparency, Communication & Consistency:

Arizona's Collaborative Work in the Adoption Community in Developing a Process to Select Adoptive Families

Learning Objectives

- Engage & Involve Stakeholders in the development of consistent adoption policy
- Increase child/youth, caregiver and parent's voice in the "placement selection process"
- Pilot, Implement and Sustain policy & practice changes

Context: What was happening in Arizona in 2008/2009

- Adoptions were Up & Timely / CFSR Data
- Foster/Adoptive Parent Association
- Utilizing AdoptUSKids
- Family Advocacy position

"Looking Good"

How do we get to "the need" ?

- Process not well understood
- Differences statewide
- Caregivers wanted more voice in the process
- Stakeholder interest

The "Red File"

- What was this?
- How did it get this name?
- How did it operate?
- Is this transparency?

Identifying Stakeholders

Expected Outcomes

"Public CW cannot do it alone"

1. Identify the range & inclusion of all stakeholders
2. Develop Strategies – partners, communication, assessment & sustaining effort
3. Analyze one's own system within community
4. Action Plans to Improve community partners

Setting Priorities

- Identify & Involve Stakeholders
- Galvanize in One Direction / Adoption Community
- Increasing Parent's Voice
- Increasing staff's competence & confidence
- Transparent Process
- Impact on Recruitment of New Resource Families

Evaluating: **Readiness For Change**

- Why do something?
- What are consequences for “lack of action”?
- How to deal with passionate stakeholders?
- How to deal with the increased involvement of attorneys?
- How to involve such a large & diverse community?

Why involve the NRC/Adoption?

- Expertise / Best Practice
- Credibility / Evidence & Research
- Neutral Facilitators [Principles over Personalities]
- National Perspective
- Strategic Planning / Focus
- Assessment & Work Planning
- Ongoing Support, including timeliness & accountability

NRC/Adoption Mission

To assist States, Tribes and other federally-funded child welfare agencies in building their capacity to ensure the safety, well being and permanency of abused and neglected children through adoption and post legal adoption services program planning, policy and practice.

Childrens' Bureau T/TA Network
10 NRCs / 5 ICs

Adoption
Child Protection
Data & Technology
Organizational Improvement
Legal & Judicial
Tribes *
Recruitment & Retention of Foster/Adoptive Parents
Youth Development
In Home Services *
Permanency & Family Connections

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

Arizona Foster Care and Adoption Coalition

Presents

Arizona Adoption Roundtable 1, 2 & 3
Selecting Families for Children and Youth

Purpose of Roundtable 1 / Jan 2009

TO ENGAGE Stakeholders in DIALOG ON

Arizona's Core VALUES & Key PRINCIPLES

in "Selecting Families for Waiting Children & Youth"

Purpose of Roundtable 2 / July 2009

Formalize Arizona's goals for adoption placement selection

Identify actions needed to improve practice statewide

Purpose of Roundtable 3 / April 2010

Core Values & Key Principles

Review & Test Workgroup's Tools & Strategies

Gain Feedback from Stakeholders

Inform Implementation Planning

Roundtable Participants

Who was included/ invited?

- DCYF Administration
- Field staff
- Adoption and foster care agencies
- Attorneys
- Tribal representatives
- Adoptive and foster parents
- Child Advocate/lobbyist
- Adoptive and Foster Parent Association
- Legislators
- Alumni

Discussion Questions / Roundtable 1

Where are we now? / Where do we want to go?

Moving forward, what <u>Core Principles and Key Values</u> should guide our decision-making in selecting permanent families for children & youth in the care of Arizona?

Do our laws, policy, practice, training <u>reflect</u> these core principles & values ?

Will they take us in the direction we want to go ?
[i.e. strengthening our family selection process]

Small Breakout Group Questions

What **core principles** were useful in guiding your groups' "family selection process"?

What **key values** came up during your groups' discussion and decision-making?

What is **presently in place** [practice, policy, law, training etc.] that **support** the family selection process?

Are there **additional** supports, principles and/or values you would add or change?

Would you recommend any **other changes** or modifications to help strengthen this decision-making process?

Process/Roles/Outcomes

Roundtable 1

- Passionate Voices
- Everyone had a “chance” to voice opinion
- Diverse “opinions”
- Identifying “inconsistent practice”
- Linked to Current Initiative

Outcomes: Core Issues Identified

Roundtable 1

- Adoption Competent Practice
- Child/Youth-Centered Decisions
- Timely Permanence
- Family Involvement
- Full Disclosure/Full Presentation

Outcomes: **Themes**

Roundtable 1

Consistency, Transparency & Communication

- Process that works throughout the state
- Include all families across the jurisdictions
- Collect critical information on family members
- ‘Red file’ process / “perception of secrecy”
- Practice inconsistencies

Outcomes: **Themes**

Roundtable 1

Consistency, Transparency & Communication

- Help involved families to understand the selection process better
- Help families through the process and keep them connected through the community
- Information that is consistently provided to families—full disclosure prior to placement
- Increase the collaboration between agencies when transitioning a child/youth

Process/**Roles**/Outcomes

Roundtable 2

- Smaller Representative Group
- Sub Work Groups by Key Area
- Co-Led by Stakeholder & State Staff
- Values Drive Practice
- Identified Key Issues / Final Decision
- Common Focus – Avoid Distractions

Outcomes: Key Areas Identified
Roundtable 2

1. Child Assessment & Preparation
2. Family Assessment & Preparation
3. Decision Making & Family Selection
4. Adoption Competency Training

Workgroups Process and Outcomes

- Identified focus of the group and recruited participants
- Rethink Priorities
- Investment of community stakeholders
- Development of tools
- Process built relationships and provided networking opportunities

Process/Roles/Outcomes

Roundtable 3

New Practice Tools

&

Defined Strategies to Pilot

&

Wider Stakeholder Feedback

Presentation: **Selection Process** & **Draft Tools**

- Decision-making and Consensus Building on Family Selections
- Child/Youth Information Tool
- Family Response to Child/Youth Information Tool
- Family Selection Worksheet

Breakout Groups / Roundtable 3

- Mock selection staffing
- Presented scenario requiring selection of an adoptive family for child/youth
- Group members assigned roles and presented case
- Groups used draft process and tools to select family for child

Breakout Groups Feedback

Roundtable 3

Work Group Implementation Strategy
Strengths
Challenges
Modifications [if needed]
Implementations Strategies

Regional Pilot /Evaluation

- Process and tools revised
- Pilot units were identified and trained
- Feedback provided from selection meetings
- Staff, agency and family feedback

Developing & Finalizing **Policy/Practice Changes**

- Present to Agency Leadership
- Incorporate/institutionalize new process into policy
- Train adoption staff and community providers about the new process and tools
- Use process statewide

Implementation
Planning, Piloting & Execution

- Training Statewide
- Co-Trainers [CO staff & APM from field]
- “Buzz” had been built in field
- Well received
- Prepared for change
- Involved in the “process”
- Training and tools revised per ongoing feedback
- Ongoing training and feedback

Improved Outcomes: Child/Youth

- Emphasis on Needs of the Child/Youth
- Gather more detailed and up-to-date information about child/youth:
  - Tribal Affiliation
  - Medical/Behavioral/Developmental/Educational
  - Daily routine
  - Personality/values/traditions
  - Relationships
- Gather information from current and former caregivers & former case managers
- Contact other people who know the child/youth such as teachers, coaches, kin, etc. for information

Improved Outcomes: Families

- Emphasis on Needs of the child/youth and how the family can meet those identified needs
- Provides for families to have more information about child/youth prior to being considered
- Process for family to provide up-to-date information
  - Changes in home
  - Training
  - Recent moves of children/youth in or out of home
  - Support for family
- Process for family to provide information specific to the needs of the child/youth

Improved Outcomes: Process

- Process is consistent statewide
- Process is transparent, as all involved have been provided the information
- Communication to prospective adoptive parents is clearer
- Case managers are more confident in the process and more able to explain "How decisions are made and by Whom"
- Selection of family is made by consensus*

Improved Outcomes: Overall

- New process gives greater voice to all those involved with the child/youth
- Prospective adoptive parents have more information about the child/youth
- Process is consistent statewide
- Opportunity to change language (Adoption Selection Meeting)
- More accountability for all involved
- All participants are better equipped to explain how decisions are made
- Better working relationships with stakeholders
- Enhanced credibility

What would **Arizona** do differently?

- Engage & include “youth” in process
- Rethink the pros & cons of “time lines” used
- Incubate, fertilize etc.
- Identify what is out of agency’s control [restructuring, geographics, furlough days, laws, etc.]
- Implementation training with adoptive parents
- More formal evaluation / cohort groups

Questions, Comments, Responses?

Your

Experiences

With

Placement Practice

&

Stakeholder Involvement

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Thank You All

and

Please let us know if the NRC/A can provide T/TA to support you too!