

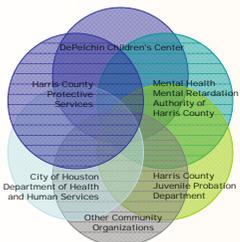
Evaluating Collaboration Functioning Among Diverse Stakeholders in Systems of Care: A Model from the Harris County Systems of Hope

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Introduction

Collaboration is regarded as an integral component to the Systems of Care philosophy. In Harris County, Systems of Hope (SOH) seeks to reflect these principles and values, especially in the creation of "an adaptive network of structures, processes, and relationships." Five agencies, in addition to various community organizations and individuals, are involved in the governance of the initiative. With vested stakeholders ranging from youth to agency executives, the question addressed was "what is the level of collaboration or cooperation within the Governing Board and how does it change over time?"



Methods

Respondents were identified and compiled using attendance sheets collected during Governing Board and work team meetings. The Systems Of Hope Project Director and Cultural and Linguistic Competency Training Coordinator also provided assistance.

Respondent Criteria:

Individuals involved in the governance of Harris County Systems of Hope (SOH)

- Voting members of the Governing Board
- State Official Representatives and Alternates
- SOH Staff and Contractors
- Other stakeholders who attend Board and/or work team meetings

A respondent list with email addresses was sent to the SOH Family Coordinator Supervisor, Executive Director of Houston Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, and Lead Family Evaluation Partner for review.

Measure: Collaboration Functioning Scale; Adapted from the University of Wisconsin Web based survey designed in Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com)

Data Collection

The web based survey was sent out on three occasions:

- July 27, 2007
- August 14, 2007
- September 12, 2007

Hard copies were also made available to families who share email addresses, and individuals who have blocked Survey Monkey from their inboxes.

A final announcement about the survey was made at the September 12, 2007 Governing Board meeting; hard copies made available.

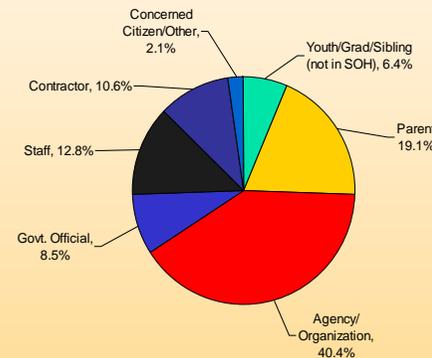
Response

- 73 respondents received the survey by email
- 48 responded

OVERALL RESPONSE RATE = 67.6%

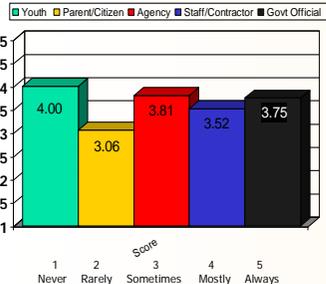
Respondent Characteristics

- Voting Members – 51.1%
- Non-Voting Members – 46.8%
- Unsure – 2.1%
- Majority (65%) had been involved with SOH governance for one year
- Majority (54%) actively involved with SOH

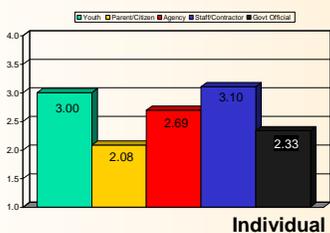


Results Quantitative

Satisfaction

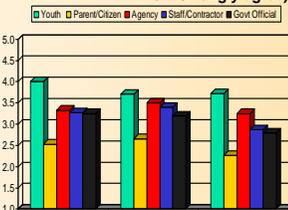


Impact on the Community: (4 pt scale :1=No benefit , 4 = Much benefit)

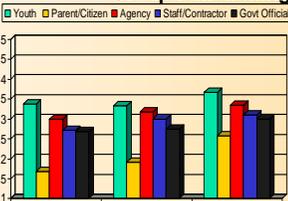


Community-Wide

Group Functioning (5 pt scale: 1= Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)



Group Functioning



Qualitative Results

Respondents also commented on their perception of the governing board's impact, effectiveness, and future contributions to SOH. We assessed the comments according to developmental stages of collaboration as discussed by Hodges et al., (1999) in *Volume VI: Building Collaboration in Systems of Care:*

Building Collaboration in Systems of Care:

- Stage I: Individual Action
- Stage II: One-on-one
- Stage III: New Service Development
- Stage IV: Professional Collaboration
- Stage V: True Collaboration

It should be noted that while the stages are organized in increasing levels of collaboration, the collaborative process is not necessarily linear. In general, the comments were indicative of every stage; however, several comments conveyed the characteristics of 'Professional Collaboration' (PC).

Shared responsibility and group decision making are a few of the defining characteristics of PC. Many respondents, when commenting on the board's impact, referred to how SOH brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, concerned about mental health, around the decision-making table.

Summary

Hodges, et al (1999) contend that while the stage of 'Professional Collaboration' brings about a shared vision or mission, the child must be seen holistically. Such a conceptualization of the child is the catalyst for true collaboration.

The quantitative results reveal a consistent trend among stakeholders. The 'Parent/Citizen' group was less satisfied when compared to others. In contrast, youth rated the collaboration highly, while agency and staff/contractors maintained comparable scores. The perception of collaboration within the SOH Board is not shared by all partners.