

## Community Collaboration

### **Importance of collaboration:**

A collaborative approach among the justice system, community agencies and the public are important in order to improve public safety.

Community-based collaboration refers to the process of citizens, agencies, organizations, and businesses working together to make formal and sustainable commitments to work towards achieving a shared goal or vision. Nine trends have been identified that highlight the importance of community collaborations:

1. Collaborations allow the community to take on more responsibility for addressing and designing solutions to community problems and issues.
2. As the federal budget deficit continues to constrain government action on social problems, private sector firms are contracting to perform many traditional, government functions, which is blurring the boundaries that have traditionally defined the roles of the public and private sectors, as well as individual versus institutional responsibilities.
3. Policy Development--Both public and private sector policy support the merging of existing and new resources to focus on commonly defined issues.
4. Addressing new issues that are affecting children and their families at a faster pace than previously experienced and often without any pre-existing solutions to the problems.
5. Citizen participation would allow more people to get involved in community issues and be a part of the solution.
6. Quality of life issues, particularly the health of children and families can be addressed and resolved.
7. Fragmentation of Services--Although cooperation is replacing competition, there is still fragmentation, unproductive competition, lack of communication, and unplanned service delivery.
8. Focus on Root Causes--A clearer understanding of youth development and the factors that dramatically increase the successful growth to adulthood is evolving along with the recognition that the community is a vital part of each person's life.
9. Shared Decisions--Organizations are examining the efficiencies gained by addressing common issues or jointly delivering similar services as collaborations reduce duplication of cost and effort.

### **Challenges to Collaboration:**

There are also many challenges that must be overcome when trying to collaborate with other groups. These include:

1. Turf Protection and Mistrust--Groups may not be receptive to new ideas or to sharing resources.
2. Determining how decisions will be made, by consensus, majority rule, or some other method may be initially difficult.
3. Groups may feel restricted because of limited funding and the inability to obtain new resources.
4. Members may feel compelled to resign from the collaboration if conflict over policy occurs.
5. Members or organizations that are going through a crisis may reduce collaborative involvement.
6. Working toward obtaining a true representation/cross section of the community.
7. Maintaining open and frequent communication so that all individuals and organizations feel included.
8. Solid Leadership--Groups that engage a facilitator or maintain strong leadership have a greater likelihood of success.

### **Common Characteristics of Successful Community-Based Collaborations**

Here are a few characteristics of a successful collaboration:

1. Partners have clearly and specifically defined outcomes and benchmarks.
2. Commitment to improving one or more conditions within the community for the long run.
3. Partners who are willing to define their commitment, specific role and ask for information, and resources.
4. Partners are open to and accepting of change and adjustment, while supporting each other and acknowledging citizens and outside support.
5. Partners acknowledge, understand, and share in risk taking.
6. Partners monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the collaboration.

### **References:**

Chandler Center for Community Leadership. (n.d.). Community-based collaboration: Community wellness multiplied. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.cyfernet.org/nnco/wellness.html>

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