

SDDFS NOTES

ON COLLABORATION

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Special Points of Interest:

- Elements of Successful Interagency Collaboration
- Collaboration in School Districts
- Types Of Collaborators
- How To Do It - Collaboration Made Easy
- Who's Who? Prevention Collaborators In Florida

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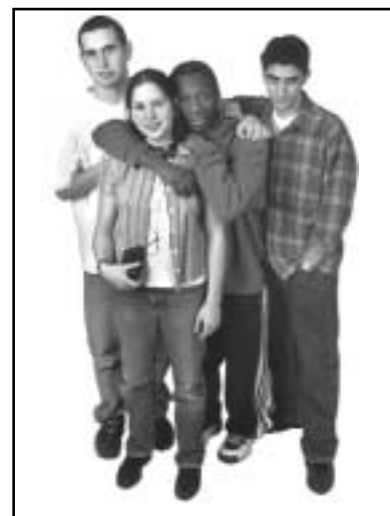
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Collaboration: Reaching Goals that Cannot be Achieved Acting Singly

Collaboration has enormous value in reducing the effects of youth substance abuse and violent behavior, and for enabling awareness about these issues across different state agencies. Although collaboration can mean many things to many individuals, Bruner (1991) sums it up as "A process to reach goals that cannot be achieved acting singly". He goes on to say that "collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The desired end is more comprehensive and appropriate services that improve family outcomes." Further, Bruner contends collaboration includes jointly developing and agreeing to a set of common goals and directions; sharing responsibility for obtaining those goals; and working together to achieve those goals, using the expertise of each collaborator." Implied here is the idea that cooperation exists at the intersections of agencies, organizations, and people in order to respond to and serve needs, and to address those essential human and environmental needs that indelibly impact youth. In collaboration strategies, partners share a common vision, establish common goals, and essentially agree to use a variety of institutional influences to achieve them.

Interagency cross-linking makes it conceivable for one agency to interface its goals, tasks, priorities, and projects with another in response to youth related problems such as underage drinking or antisocial behavior in the classroom.

The Florida Department of Education, the Governor's Office of Drug Control,



the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Health, and other social service agencies recognize that only by working together can they provide integrated services that are multidimensional and continuous for all Florida youth. Each agency understands that working together is substantially beneficial, so neither competition nor turf protection interferes in this proactive process. Interagency collaboration has become one of the most important efforts to improve social and educational services for youth and families.

Collaboration at the school district level also brings about many benefits. School district leaders are able to draw upon the integration of state agency-delivered services to address individual or community-wide needs related to

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Collaboration

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youth. A good example of district-level collaboration is the interagency Shared Services

Network which

delivers a comprehensive and integrated delivery system of education and human services to children and their families. The Shared Services Network is a model which had proven its effectiveness throughout Florida in numerous school districts.

This issue of SDDFS Notes covers many aspects of collaboration. You will read about state-level agencies that are currently working together. There is a "how to" guide which gives practical guidance for initiating collaboration at the district level. Another article is included to help you understand the important elements of interagency collaboration. These Notes also review the functions and purposes of different collaborative groups that may be distinguished by size or membership. This issue ensures you, the practitioner, sharper insights into the tremendously beneficial effects of agency collaboration. You're invited to read the next few pages, and share what you learn with colleagues. Each story will give you a new perspective on collaboration and a better understanding of the proactive strategies that have been undertaken to expand the statewide collaboration network.

Elements of Successful Interagency Collaboration

Collaboration allows for mutual leadership, shared decisions and responsibility, a unified vision, and ultimately ownership with long-term buy-in and commitment. It also leads to continuous interfacing of resources and personnel, and expanded capacity within organizations.

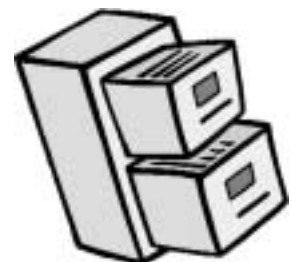
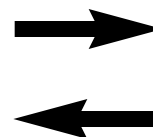
Florida's interagency collaboration network has evolved and is becoming a model for other states for various reasons. One reason is that the agencies share common elements typically found at all agency levels while balancing the political and technical dimensions of systems change (Melaville, Blank, and Asayesh, 1993). These agencies

- provide services and programs for children, youth, and families, and therefore depend on school staff and school district personnel to participate in the delivery of services and programs;
- use services tailored to target populations or neighborhoods that have clearly defined or unique needs;
- rely on available and significant data to develop comprehensive community profiles that establish baseline indicators showing the status of children, youth, and families, as well as where gaps in services exist;
- use existing resources fully, and aggressively pursue external support for planning, pilot efforts and other such activities that lead to system wide policy changes;
- maximize the use of a variety of human capital (e.g. training, and leadership development) to accomplish agency goals; and
- pursue the involvement of citizens, at all levels, in decisions about the social and economic well-being of children, youth, and families.

Interagency collaboration simply means easier access to a greater assortment of intervention, prevention, treatment, and related support services.



PERSONNEL



RESSOURCES



Ideally, school staff, community agency personnel, parents, and community members should all participate in the collaboration process. Each is able to offer a unique perspective as well as human or financial resources to help alleviate youth or family problems. The way in which these parties collaborate depends on clearly defined goals and outcomes. However, a set of common priorities and practices may lead to highly effective partnerships.

One way to determine how the partners in collaboration may experience success is to assess needs by asking tough questions about current system needs that are associated with shared goals and objectives. For example, questions that relate to reassessing desired outcomes in light of the overlapping economic, health, employment, education and human service needs of children in the community should be explored.

Collaboration in School Districts

Moreover, one might ask if the district is ready to participate in an interagency partnership since the buy-in of all parties is necessary in a successful collaboration process. Each of these questions carries significant weight in how strong a partnership becomes.

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Is there a key role that a school district can play to help in the collaboration process?

There is not just one role, but several. To begin, a district can gain substantially from an interagency partnership by making agencies aware of the pertinent problems that relate to school climate and academic success, and by identifying and examining impact data that is produced through the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS) and the Youth Risk

Behavior Survey (YRBS). To carry its efforts further, the district may also consider involving key stakeholders in discussions and review of the key issues affecting the district, especially when the community as a whole may be affected.

Once these essential hurdles have been crossed, it is necessary to take the collaboration process a few steps further.

For example, it may be beneficial for a district to identify current interagency collaboration activities within its community and determine how the district's mission and goals are aligned with such efforts.

Finally, a useful task is to identify different individuals who are responsible for service delivery (e.g. social workers, community members, teachers, etc.) because they will be instrumental in carrying out some of the district's initiatives or long-term goals.



Types Of Collaborators

Building relationships is fundamental to successful collaboration. In these relationships expectations are clearly understood by all members of the collaboration team. Partners identify tasks, delineate roles and responsibilities, and work plans are prepared with very specific outcomes identified. Furthermore, there are many levels in the col-

laborative process. Teresa Hogue of the Oregon Center for Community Leadership describes five levels of relationships and gives examples of the interrelatedness that contributes to the infrastructure of the collaboration. Each level is briefly described below:

LEVELS	PURPOSE	STRUCTURE	PROCESS
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Dialogue and common understanding * Clearinghouse for information * Create base of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Loose/flexible link * Roles loosely defined * Community action is primary link among members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Low key leadership * Minimal decision making * Little conflict * Informal communication
Cooperation or Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Match needs and provide coordination * Limit duplication of services * Ensure tasks are done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Central body of people as communication hub * Semi-formal links * Roles somewhat defined * Links are advisory * Group leverages/raises money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Facilitative leaders * Complex decision making * Some conflict * Formal communications within the central group
Coordination or Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Share resources to address common issues * Merge resource base to create something new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Central body of people consists of decision makers * Roles defined * Links formalized * Group develops new resources and joint budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Autonomous leadership but focus in on issue * Group decision making in central and subgroups * Communication is frequent and clear
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Share ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems * Develop commitment for a minimum of three years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * All members involved in decision making * Roles defined * Links formal with written agreement * Group develops new resources and joint budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Shared leadership * Decision making formal with all members * Communication is common and prioritized
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks * Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Consensus used in shared decision making * Roles, time and evaluation formalized * Links are formal and written in work assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high * Ideas and decisions equally shared * Highly developed communication

Collaboration and Academic Success

While each state agency has a clear mission and numerous goals to support it, Florida youth receive services from each of these agencies in a different way. However in a concerted effort, state agencies share goals that are aimed at protecting the physical, social and emotional welfare of Florida's youth. All students are entitled to experience academic success. Ensuring students success in the classroom can be achieved through the coordinated efforts of youth centered agencies in the Florida system.

Following are potential results.

- Improved student-grade point averages
- Improved competencies in basic skills
- Improved school attendance
- Increased graduation rates
- Increased number of high school graduates who pursue higher education
- Reduced teen pregnancy rate
- Reduced numbers of youth requiring mental health and substance abuse services
- Increased numbers of school-aged children who are generally healthier
- Increased numbers of parents involved with school programs
- Reduced number of children exposed to abuse and neglect
- Increased literacy rate in the community

(Interagency workgroup on Full Service Schools, 1991)



History of Collaboration



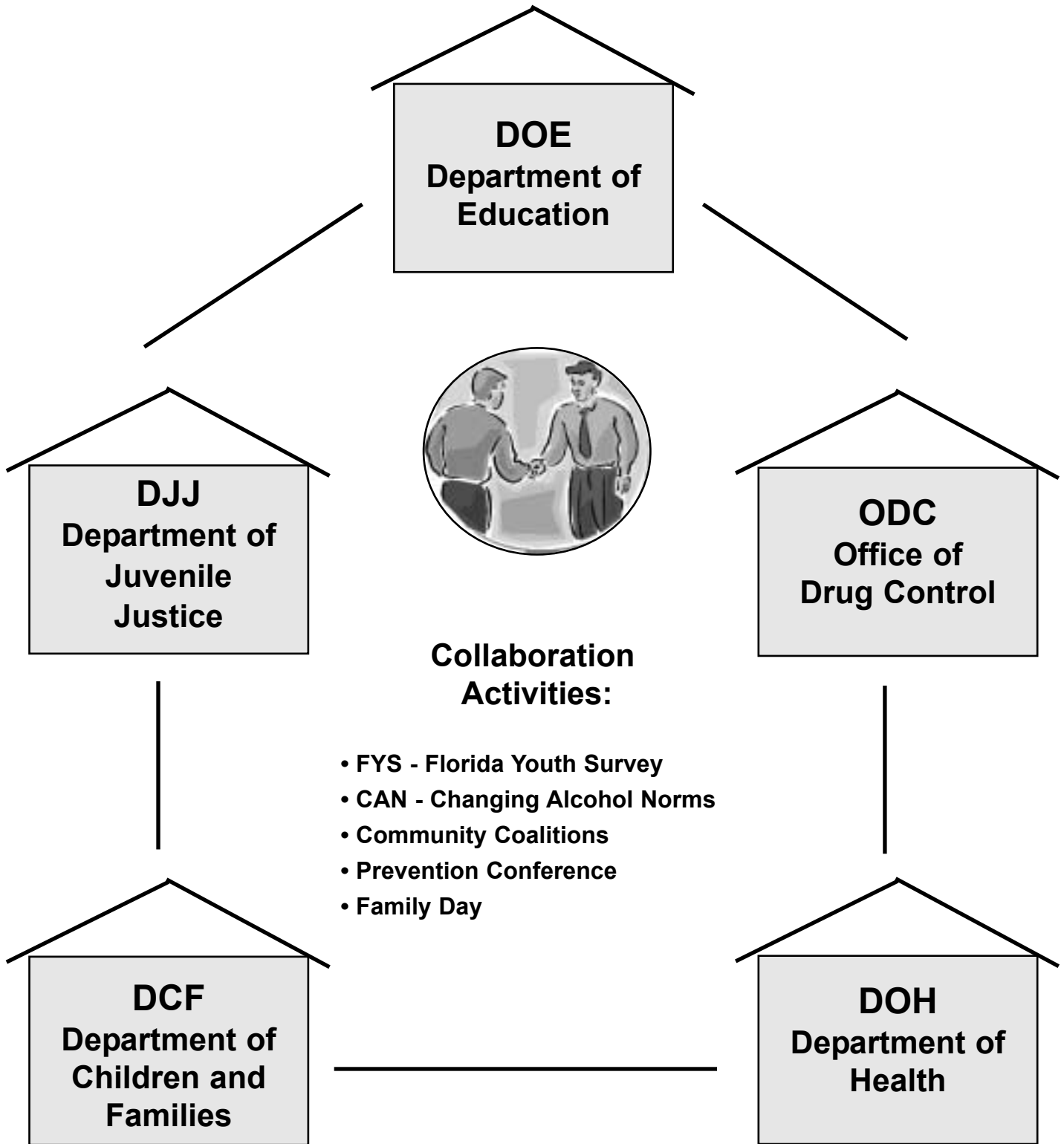
SNAPSHOT

Collaboration is not a new process. In fact, it existed in this country prior to the twentieth century, with settlement houses in the late 1800s working together to identify problems and otherwise offer comprehensive services to families. Over time, noteworthy strides shaped our views and actions in collaboration at national, state and local levels.

In the 1960s the War on Poverty caused leaders to deliver more services in areas targeted as less fortunate. It is worth noting here that two outcomes in the 1960s were Head Start and Community Action Agencies. Federal service integration initiatives occurred in the 1970s under Eliot Richardson and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which primarily sought greater coordination and accountability among institutions serving children and their families. In the eighties more modest federal efforts to develop comprehensive services for children and families were instituted.

These initiatives encouraged joint planning among health, human service, and education agencies. In some cases federal funding was conditioned upon joint planning. This emphasis on cross-system planning soon provided a catalyst for a variety of state initiatives that emphasized collaborative approaches to serving children.

Who Are The Prevention Collaborators In Florida?



HOW TO DO IT - Collaboration Made Easy

Many scholars suggest there are key features associated with the collaborative process. The success or failure of interagency collaborations depends largely upon a variety of factors. The literature on collaboration provides some basic guidelines that have wide applicability. While the approach of each partnership will vary, some actions should remain consistent. They are:

- ◆ Involve all key players so that decisions and activities will received widespread support and recognition;
- ◆ Ensure that the leadership is visionary, is willing to take risks, and facilitates change rather than directs it;
- ◆ Establish a shared vision of how collaboration should progress, and of the expected outcomes;
- ◆ Build ownership at all levels. Commitment to change must be mobilized at all organizational levels of member agencies and among community members involved in the collaborative process;
- ◆ Establish communication and decision-making processes that accept disagreement among participants as part of the process and establish ways to address conflict constructively; and

- ◆ Institutionalize change by encouraging member agencies to include collaborative goals in their own institutional mandates and by earmarking funds to carry out collaborative activities.

KEY POINT: *Agency representatives should be allowed time from regular responsibilities to meet and interact with one another to build trust and respect for each other's knowledge. Bringing these skills to the table ensures collaboration with harmony. Personal interactions across agencies will help to sustain positive, long-term cross-agency relationships.*



RESOURCES

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The members of the SDDFS staff, as well as the staff of the Safe and Healthy Schools Office at the Department of Education, stand ready to provide support through training and technical assistance to schools and school districts. Please encourage educators to take advantage of our services. For additional information on these resources or to find out how to access these resources, please contact Patricia Elton at (850) 414-0236 (SunCom 994-0236) or by email at sdfs_librarian@firn.edu.

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