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Becoming Trauma-Informed: Building Organizational Capacity for Collaborative Inquiry and Improvement

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Study Context: BSC on Trauma-Informed ECE

➢ Breakthrough Series Collaborative with six urban ECE programs, led by the city’s public health department and funded by the US Department of Justice

➢ Dual focus:

1. Trauma-Informed Care practices
2. Teach methods for organizational improvement and CQI
Study Purpose

➢ To Investigate the use of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology for improvement to promote adoption of trauma-informed practices in the ECE context.

➢ To examine how the BSC fostered a culture of collaborative inquiry in participating organizations.
What is the BSC Model for Improvement?

➢ A quality improvement method for implementing, spreading, sustaining new practices

▪ To close the gap between what we know and what we do
▪ Promotes spread & sustainability
▪ A systems approach
▪ Extensive evidence supporting this approach in health care sector

• Institute for Healthcare Improvement, www.IHI.org
The Learning Collaborative Process

Pre-Work
Set improvement goals, collect baseline data and prepare for Learning Session 1

Action Period 1
Adapt and test improvement strategies

Action Period 2
Further refine improvement strategies, begin spreading successful changes throughout the organization

Action Period 3
Adopt successful changes throughout the organization

Document work, report on results and lessons learned

Learning Session 3

Ongoing support:
Phone conferences, monthly team reports, on-site peer-to-peer visits
Continuous Quality Improvement Conceptual Framework
Derrick-Mills, Sandstrom, Pettijohn, Fyffe, and Koulish, 2014

Environment
- Government mandates and guidance
- Accreditation, licensing, and professional development systems
- Nongovernmental funders such as foundations
- Time

Organizational Characteristics
- History of improvement efforts
- Size
- Structure
- Program characteristics

Continuous Cycle
- Develop and revisit goals
- Gather data
- Analyze data
- Review and synthesize
- Prioritize and plan
- Implement plan
- Monitor performance
- Evaluate outcomes

Culture of Collaborative Inquiry
- Create safe space
- Share learning
- Engage partners

Commitment of Resources
- Commit leadership time
- Commit staff time
- Finance and sustain technology

Analytic Capacity
- Assess data capital
- Assess technological capital
- Assess human capital

Professional Development
- Understand data systems
- Develop analytic capacity
- Integrate knowledge and beliefs

Leadership
- Be transformational
- Lead change
- Communicate clearly
- Motivate innovation and creativity
- Distribute responsibilities
The Contribution of Relational Coordination Theory: Building a Culture of Collaboration

**Structures**
- Hiring and training for relational competence
- Cross-role performance measures and rewards
- Cross-role conflict resolution
- Relational job design
- Cross-role protocols
- Cross-role meetings with relational space

**Relationships**
- Shared goals
- Shared knowledge
- Mutual respect
- Frequent
- Timely
- Accurate
- Problem-solving communication

**Outcomes**
- Quality
- Organizational learning and improvement
- Staff/worker engagement, retention
- Family engagement, satisfaction
- Scalable, sustainable, replicable

- Relational Coordination Research Collaborative: [http://rcrc.brandeis.edu/](http://rcrc.brandeis.edu/)
Study

• Workplace relationships and communication
• Their influence on learning & improvement process and outcomes
• Multiple comparative case study
Relationships of Shared Goals, Shared Knowledge, Mutual Respect

- Parents/Families
- Infant Toddler Teachers
- Support Staff
- Preschool Teachers
- Mental Health Clinicians
- Program Directors & Supervisors
- Children
Mental Health Clinician

• “[The BSC] allowed me to build some more relationships with other staff members that I might not have had as open communication with before.”
Teacher (talking about a parent)

• “When I saw [the parent], I shed a tear because ... at the beginning of the year, this was a woman who was like giving me F-bombs who wouldn't come to the school, who wouldn't pick up phone calls, who wouldn't return letters. And at the end of the school year, now she's showing up for everything. She's sending me notes and writing in the book and giving me phone calls just to check in on her daughter.”
How does Relational Coordination work?

- *Shared goals* help participants to align their actions with each other.
- *Shared knowledge* helps participants to understand how their work/roles fit together.
- *Mutual respect* helps participants to value the contributions and input of others.
Together, relationships of shared goals, shared knowledge, and mutual respect:

– Provide an *organizational culture* that supports inquiry and improvement
– Help staff and administrators to connect *around* the child/family
– Foster psychological safety in the workplace: to experiment, speak up, try something new
  • “I found my voice a little bit” (teacher)
Organizational Structures that Support Relational Coordination

• Cross role meetings:
  – regular, safe space, reflective, participatory
• Team composition guidelines/policy
• Personnel Policies and Protocols:
  – Supports for staff: breaks, supervisory check-in protocol, self-care included in performance evaluation
Conclusions

1. Structures to build and sustain relational capacity
2. Relationships of shared goals, knowledge, and mutual respect
3. High quality communication and psychological safety
4. Support inquiry cycles, taking a risk or experimenting with a new idea,
5. Culture of improvement and innovation
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References

• Available from author upon request
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