

INTEGRATING FAMILY SERVICES Newsletter

December 2015

Vol.1 Number 6



A Word from the Integrating Family Services Management Team

"It's not who we work for, it's who we serve." This statement was shared at a recent Building Bright Futures meeting and speaks to the goal behind IFS. You will see in this issue many examples of integration with state and community partners working together to serve Vermonters in need of support.

There are two regions implementing the IFS approach. At the same time there are many other efforts occurring across the state that highlight the value of integration. We are fortunate to have committed, passionate colleagues who continue to grapple with the complex changes needed to move integration forward in a way that will improve the lives of those we serve. This IFS newsletter highlights many of these efforts.

Best wishes to you all during this holiday season and for the new year,
Carol, Cheryle and Susan, IFS Management Team

IFS Milestones

Regional Steps to Readiness

In the spirit of continuous quality improvement (one of IFS' guiding principles), we have developed [this tool](#) for IFS regional governance teams to use. Thanks so much to those of you who provided input on the draft. While we strongly encourage some type of annual self-assessment as a team, it is up to each team to determine the best process to use and its preferred tool(s). If you do use this tool, we would greatly appreciate your feedback so we can improve upon it as needed.



Voices from Families: Addison County Parent Child Center

We often highlight what IFS means for the work of integrating systems and we need to always be thinking of what this approach means for families in their day-to-day lives. The following is a quote from a parent

who has been supported by the Addison PCC, one of three IFS grantees, in Vermont:

*The Addison County Parent Child Center (ACPCC) has been helping young families for over 30 years. It is a place for young moms and dads to go to for many needs – education, support, or just a hot meal. Their child care team is awesome! “I was fortunate to be involved with the ACPCC.” They are all very well trained and work with each child on their individual needs and teach them how to interact with others. **I was fortunate to be involved with the ACPCC.** I am a single mother of three and just got my high school diploma thanks to their support. And lastly, the ACPCC is always “paying it forward” – all participants get a chance to go out into the community and donate their time. A specific time I remember is after Hurricane Irene hit Vermont, ACPCC participants went and helped on a farm and at a donation drop off point.*

Practice Highlight **Howard Center ARCh**

Integrating Family Services’ guiding vision states:

“Vermonters work together to ensure that all children, youth and families have what they need to reach their full potential.”

Long before IFS stakeholders articulated this vision over a year ago, HowardCenter developed ARCh – **Accessing Resources for Children** -- to address emerging gaps within the system of care. Blending support techniques from Children’s Mental Health and Developmental Services, ARCh is a collaborative program that seeks to be both inclusive and specialized. It embodies the spirit of IFS through its efforts to serve children, youth and their families, irrespective of diagnosis and socioeconomic status. To this end, ARCh engages in – and facilitates – a dialogue between Developmental Services and Children’s Mental Health, to better serve the community through understanding and collaboration.

To read more about HowardCenter’s innovative work, [click here](#).

Update on "Turning the Curve" **Reducing the Number of Children and Youth in Residential Care Settings**

AHS and our partners continue to move forward with “Turning the Curve” on the number of children and youth in residential settings. What this means is we want to see more children and youth in family settings and when that is not possible, for increased family engagement for children and youth placed in residential settings to work towards improving caregiver readiness.

On Friday, December 11th at an AHS Quality Fair focused on utilizing a Results Based Accountability framework, a small advisory committee (consisting of staff from IFS, DMH, DCF, and AHS Central office) presented information about the efforts occurring to turn the curve. [Click here](#) to see the information that was shared. If you have questions or would like to get involved in this effort please feel free to reach out to

any member of the advisory committee: Karen Vastine (DCF), Barb Joyal (FSD), Laurel Omland (DMH), Jessie McKinnon (DMH), Kate Dearth (IFS) or Cheryle Bilodeau (IFS).

IFS Supporting Integration



Teaming Initiative-Providing Integrated Services for Families with Complex Needs

How do we ensure services and supports are coordinated for families that have complex needs that require coordination across the Agency's departments and its funded community partners? This is not a new question, and many highly capable people have worked for many years toward better and more integrated ways of serving children and families. Still, as we enter 2016, a family involved with multiple parts of the service system will likely have separate and disconnected plans; plans that are intended to help families achieve goals related to a wide range of needs, such as: medical, substance abuse and/or mental health, employment, child safety and legal. With each of these plans comes one – or in many cases, more than one – professionals, all intending to help the family. IFS is exploring how to bring its helping professionals together to figure out:

- The best way for the Agency to maximize its resources to support families receiving services from multiple divisions of the agency;
- How we can support these families who are most vulnerable; and
- How we can work as one agency rather than as separate entities.

We are working as a group, at the state and in the community, to achieve a system where we as professionals coordinate and communicate in more effective ways with the hope that families can use their energy to focus on their needs, rather than spending so much time and energy trying to understand the complicated service delivery system.

We are just reaching out to the two IFS regions to explore with them what new practices, protocols and/or resources are needed to achieve this integration goal.

Autism Supports and Services

How do we use our collective resources to move autism services forward for children and their families in Vermont?

This is the question a new work group is focusing on. The group is co-led by IFS and DAIL (Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living). A couple of years ago both the Agency of Education (AOE) and DAIL lost specialized staff positions focused on autism. This past IFS decided to focus on better understanding needs around the state related to autism spectrum supports and services.

We started with the 2009 Interagency Autism Plan (AHS and AOE) – and updated the goals that were articulated in that inter-agency agreement. [Click Here](#) to view the full document. At the first work group meeting on November 13th, a group of state, community and family members came together to discuss the history and context of autism supports and services, including what services and supports have shown success, and where gaps exist. You can view full meeting minutes [here](#) on the IFS website. Our next meeting will be held on **Friday, January 29th from 9:30-11:30** at the new state Waterbury complex. We will be focusing on data relevant to services and how to prioritize action steps to address the gaps in services and leverage more of the success.



If you have questions and/or would like to be involved please contact Cheryle.Bilodeau@vermont.gov or Diane.Bugbee@vermont.gov. This group is open and your input and participation is welcome.

Work Group Updates

Leadership and Governance, *Chaired by Carol Maloney, Terri Edgerton and Mary Moulton*

This group has been focusing on engaging in discussions with Agency leaders about how to continue moving the vision of IFS forward in local regions. A series of meetings were held this fall To see full meeting minutes from all three of these meetings please [click here](#). One clearly articulated philosophical belief that is widely shared is a commitment focus supports and services on the family rather than the individual. This work group will begin working on IFS guiding principle #4 this winter, which states: Ensure that youth and families' voices inform processes, plans and policies.

State and Local Service Delivery, *Chaired by Belinda Bessette and Cheryle Bilodeau*

This work group continues to develop the IFS service delivery matrix. This group has been thinking about how we assure consistency in IFS regions while simultaneously supporting innovation and creativity. The matrix when complete will answer the question of what makes an IFS region.

Community Based Prevention and Promotion, *Chaired by Carol Maloney and Charlie Biss*

This group is spending each meeting reviewing each of the five Strengthening Families® Protective Factors, one at a time. The group will be prepared to offer suggestions and principles about how to embed these protective factors in the IFS regions and how to support them at the state level.

Finance and Payment Reform, *Chaired by Heather McLain and Susan Bartlett*

Payment reform continues to inch along. Our pilot regions have met with a national Medicaid payment reform consultant, and some folks from Washington County joined the last discussion. Our goal is to work to get all the major questions and issues on the table and then move forward to create a system of payment that could be used anyplace in the Agency. As often happens at the beginning of a big project, we seem to be much better at asking questions than finding answers!

One of our questions in front of us right now is: How does IFS payment reform align with the larger conversation that is just beginning with the designated agencies in the areas of substance abuse and adult services payment reform?

We began our IFS work with the desire to get to the actual cost of various services and the idea that these costs could then be used to develop a payment method. Right now we are thinking about developing more case rates, simply because we are familiar with case rates and we have the systems in place to apply case rates in our policy and budget processes. However, developing independent case rates for a range of services doesn't get us to integrated services. It's merely a stepping stone to integration.

In the New Year this group will get on a regular schedule. Others not currently in the work group are welcome to join the conversation. Contact either chair with your questions: susan.bartlett@vermont.gov, or heather.mclain@vermont.gov.

Accountability and Oversight, *Chaired by Cheryle Bilodeau and Keith Grier*

December concludes this group's work identifying the population indicators that will inform IFS regions about how they want to target supports and services in their area. Starting in January, this group turns its attention to determining performance measures for IFS regions. If you would like to see more about where this group's thinking is on population indicators [click here](#). Cheryle and Keith would also like to express our sincere thanks to Dru Roessle, Performance Improvement Manager in AHS Central Office, for her special assistance these past few months as a member of the work group who has consistently gone above and beyond to help craft agendas and to do data follow up. We appreciate it!

Links to Articles of Interest

Have you heard the term, *Appreciative Inquiry*? This is a way of thinking that IFS has embraced as a model for looking at the best of what's working and determining how we do more of that. An easy way to think of this is that it is about asking the questions that appreciate where success is occurring. This approach isn't about ignoring gaps or what may be issues that need to be addressed, however, it is about spending the most energy on what's working well because when we do that we decrease the things that aren't working. For a brief overview of Appreciative Inquiry [click here](#).



[Early Childhood Leadership Institute 2016 Application](#)

The Early Childhood Leadership Institute was initiated in 2014 and seeks to stimulate enthusiasm for and effective participation in efforts to improve early childhood work in Vermont. A group of diverse

participants will come together, each year for twelve seminar days over six months starting in May 2016, to gain leadership skills and a deeper knowledge and understanding of the science and landscape of early childhood issues in Vermont.

ECLI will give participants the information, tools and inspiration to make greater contributions in their organizations, their communities and Vermont toward early childhood issues. ECLI Associates will join a professional network of over 700 Vermont Leadership Network Alumni, with a projected 100 early childhood leadership institute associates. ECLI is grant funded: Tuition is \$400. [For more information.](#)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: January 14, 2016

Please email with any questions

Thank You,

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For general questions about IFS, contact any of the IFS Management Team members:

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OR

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