

NCCIC Is a Service of the Child Care Bureau

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THE COMMUNICATION PLAN¹

Communication that works well is communication that's planned well. To build effective communications, establish informal and formal communication links and communicate openly and frequently. Create a communication plan that is responsive to the different kinds of agencies and people in your collaboration. Talk to your partners about what information is most important to them and how they want to receive it. Having a communication plan or commitment in writing keeps partners focused, involved, and accountable.

When developing a communication plan, consider the following:

- Informal communications creates a more personal connection. It happens as you share information with your partners and as you each report back to your own organization.
- Formal communications require time and effort to document, produce, and distribute so make an agreement about what to communicate, and in what format.
- Identify all possible communication vehicles – meeting agenda and minutes, agency reports and newsletters, email, Web links, FAX, conference calls, presentations, community bulletin boards and newspapers, radio, television, community meetings, and events.
- Keep all formal communications focused on decisions and actions.
- Consider all of your audiences – from the core members of the collaboration to the consumers, the organizations that deliver services and those that offer guidance and support.
- Identify key people in each organization who participate in decision making and are to receive formal communications.
- Outline the type of communication different people need to receive. Plan when each type of communication will be sent. Decide who will be asked for feedback and how to obtain their feedback.
- Set up a system for tracking formal communications.
- Determine who in the collaboration will be responsible for monitoring communication among the key people in each organization.

¹ Winer, M., & Ray, K., (2000). *Collaboration handbook, Creating, sustaining and enjoying the journey*. St. Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance; and Ray, K., (2002). *The nimble collaboration – Fine-tuning your collaboration for lasting success*. St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

- Develop a logo or 'special look' for all of your collaboration documents and printed materials so they will be easily recognized.
- Organize a communication steering committee to guide the planning process, implement the plan, and monitor its effectiveness.
- Regularly acknowledge significant milestones of the collaboration in your informal and formal communications.