The Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative:

Child Welfare Organizational Capacities[1]

The Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative partners with State child welfare agencies, Tribes, and courts to assess and enhance child welfare capacity. The Collaborative's three centers—Center for States, Center for Tribes, and Center for Courts—help child welfare and legal professionals and organizations build the capacity necessary to strengthen, implement, and sustain effective child welfare practice and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Building "Capacity"

A variety of internal and external factors and conditions can affect a child welfare system's ability to achieve its goals. When an agency or court is able to develop and mobilize key human and organizational assets, its capacity increases. Capacity can change and develop over time, and capacity building activities attempt to enhance concrete assets as well as intangible qualities, like motivation, relationships, and skills.

Dimensions of Organizational Capacity

Researchers have identified several different aspects of capacity. The Collaborative has organized them into five general categories or dimensions. These dimensions can be used to examine the health and functioning of an organization or to consider factors that may affect an organization's ability to initiate and sustain change.[2]

RESOURCES:
Concrete materials and assets

Examples: Staff, funding, facilities, equipment, data collection tools and systems, informational and program materials, curriculum, and technology.

Why resources are important: Adequate and stable resources are necessary to allow an organization to meet its ongoing needs as well as targeted changes.[3]

INFRASTRUCTURE:
Organizational structures and processes

Examples: Policies, procedures, governance structure, service array, decision-making processes, practice protocols, training, human resource systems, and quality improvement systems.

Why infrastructure is important: Organizational processes and structures—independent of the people who work there—help codify and embed practices into the larger system.[4]

Definition of Child Welfare Organizational Capacity

The term "capacity" describes the potential of a child welfare system to be productive and effective by applying its human and organizational assets to identify and achieve its current and future goals.

Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative

BETTER OUTCOMES, BRIGHTER FUTURES

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:
Expertise and competencies

Examples: Practice knowledge, culturally responsive service delivery, data and analytic abilities, and leadership skills (including team building, performance management, and change management).

Why knowledge and skills are important: Adequate knowledge, skills, and confidence are needed to properly implement programs and policies.[5]

CULTURE[6] AND CLIMATE:
Norms, beliefs, values, and attitudes that influence behavior

Examples: Shared vision, goals, morale and motivation, attitudes, and openness and "buy-in" to new programs and practices.

Why culture and climate are important: The culture and climate of a system can affect acceptance and support of practice changes, which then influence child and family outcomes.[7]

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP:
Intra- and inter-organizational relationships

Examples: Stakeholder involvement, internal teaming, connections, communication, and collaboration across agencies/entities, inter-agency agreements, and shared authority.

Why engagement and partnership are important: Internal collaboration is an important factor in fostering successful organizational changes,[8] while collaboration with other agencies increases availability and integration of services.[9]

Enhancing Capacity to Improve Performance

Each of the five dimensions can be important to States, Tribes, and courts as they conduct the challenging work of improving child welfare outcomes. For example, an agency that aims to improve its performance by introducing a promising program will need to explore whether it has adequate staffing to carry out the program (resources), the "know-how" to implement new practices (knowledge and skills), willingness and readiness among staff to embrace changes in how things are done (culture and climate), established policies and procedures to institutionalize the practices (infrastructure), and collaborative mechanisms to more fully integrate the program into the wider child welfare system (engagement and partnerships).

Needs for capacity building vary depending on an organization's specific goals and pre-existing capacity. Capacity building services target one or more of the dimensions, depending on which are most important in achieving a given change. The Collaborative partners with States, Tribes, and courts to assess capacity, consider strengths and needs, and identify goals. The three centers select and provide appropriate services to assist child welfare systems with strengthening the dimensions of capacity necessary to help them achieve their goals and improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children, youth, and families.

For more information about the Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative or to obtain resources, call 844-222-0272, email **capacityinfo@icfi.com**, or visit **https://capacity.childwelfare.gov**.

[1] This factsheet summarizes work presented in James Bell Associates, Inc., and ICF International. (March 2015). *Identifying, defining, and assessing child welfare organizational capacities*. Prepared for the Children's Bureau under the Cross-Center Evaluation of Children's Bureau Capacity Building Services.

[2] Flaspohler, P., Duffy, J., Wandersman, A., Stillman, L., & Maras, M.A. (2008). Unpacking prevention capacity: An intersection of research-to-practice models and community-centered models. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41(3-4), 182–96. doi:10.1007/s10464-008-9162-3.

[3] Harsh, S. (2010). Gaining perspective on a complex task: A multidimensional approach to capacity building. Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center at Edvantia.

[4] Kislov, R., Waterman, H., Harvey, G., & Boaden, R. (2014). Rethinking capacity building for knowledge mobilisation: Developing multilevel capabilities in healthcare organisations. *Implementation Science*, 9(1), 166. doi:10.1186/s13012-014-0166-0.

[5] Potter, C., & Brough, R. (2004). Systemic capacity building: A hierarchy of needs. *Health Policy and Planning*, 19(5), 336–45.

[6] Organizational culture is similar to the concept of corporate culture in business. Cultural responsiveness, a necessary capacity in delivering services to communities in a culturally appropriate manner, is part of the Knowledge and Skills competency dimension.

[7] Williams, N. J., & Glisson, C. (2014). Testing a theory of organizational culture, climate and youth outcomes in child welfare systems: A United States national study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 38(4), 757–67. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.09.003.

[8] Armstrong, M., McCrae, J., Graef, M., Richards, T., Lambert, D., Bright, C., & Sowell, C. (2014). Development and initial findings of an implementation process measure for child welfare system change. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 8(1), 94–177.

[9] Leake, R., Green, S., Marquez, C., Vanderburg, J., Guillaume, S., & Gardner, V. (2007). Evaluating the capacity of faith-based programs in Colorado. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 17(2), 216–28.