



## ASSESSING NEED, COMMITMENT, READINESS and FIT

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Once a problem statement is developed, agency and community partners have a solid base from which to explore the Practice Model together, consider how it can assist in addressing the stated problem, and determine what refinements might be important. Here are several key talking points about the Practice Model that may be helpful in approaching this discussion.

### **COMMUNICATION TIP**

#### ***Key Practice Model Talking Points***

- The Practice Model is designed to guide culturally responsive and trauma-informed practice *generally*.
- Community partners bring the cultural understanding and perspective needed to implement the model in a way that is responsive to the *specific culture, trauma, history, and needs* of local children and families.
- Our agency recognizes that *community partner involvement is essential* in removing system barriers to improved outcomes and in creating a local child welfare system that is supportive, transparent, and accountable to the communities whose children and families are being served.

Providing the group with information such as the values, principles, core elements, and/or leadership and practice behaviors of the model and support exploration and discussion about the Practice Model. If there has already been a high degree of community partnership established within the jurisdiction and many years of targeted system work to address local disproportionality and disparities, strong buy-in, readiness, and support for the Practice Model may be generated quickly. Jurisdictions that are in early stages of building community partnerships and doing critical readiness work may need more time and facilitated discussion for agency and community partners to determine if the Practice Model is a good fit for the local context, issues, and needs. A printout resource is offered on the following pages to support local discussions to decide if the CFPM is the right intervention for the particular issues and needs in the jurisdiction. Including community and system partners and staff representatives from all levels of the child welfare agency (from line staff to director) in this assessment and planning process allows for a variety of perspectives and helps partners to design strategies to strengthen intervention readiness and investment in critical areas.

## *Assessing Need, Commitment, Readiness, and Fit for the Practice Model*

Each area of readiness on the following page has an associated *readiness goal* that describes what readiness looks like for that area. The goal is followed by key questions to support strategic planning about whether/how to move forward. The following group processes may be helpful to agency and community partners in discussing the readiness goals and key questions. However local facilitation, valued group processes, agreements, and creativity rule!

- *Readiness-Building Ground Rules:* Seek group agreement that the readiness discussion and activities will be considered a safe zone of communication where all questions, suggestions, ideas, and worries are respected as constructive to the overall goals of assessing and building readiness.
- *Group Discussion and Consensus:* After discussion of the key questions (and anything else important that the group needs to consider), encourage the group to re-read *the readiness goal* and come to consensus on the score that best reflects how close partners are to achieving the goal. [Perhaps use a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 as high readiness or goal reached and 1 as low readiness.]
- *Readiness Planning/Thinking Through Next Steps:* If a 5-to-1 scale is used, 5s and 4s can be considered green lights (move forward, even if there are a few readiness-building activities that might still be in process); 3s can be considered yellow lights (only move forward if readiness-building activities have been developed and are being put in place, and the group agrees it is sensible to proceed); and 2s and 1s should be considered red lights (develop whatever readiness-building activities are needed; ensure there are clear steps, timelines, and responsible persons identified to move them forward; and consider whether other areas of readiness can be worked on concurrently or if it is better to wait until readiness in this area is further developed.)

## Assessing Need, Commitment, Readiness, and Fit for the Practice Model

**NEED & COMMITMENT:** This area of readiness ensures that partners have developed a clear problem statement, are committed to working together to make needed changes, and have determined whether the Practice Model is responsive to the problem that partners have identified and is a good fit for local contexts and needs.

**Readiness Goal:** *Disproportionate representation and disparate outcomes for certain groups of children being served by our child welfare agency have been validated with data; partners are at consensus regarding the problem to be addressed and are committed to co-creating solutions together.*

### Key Questions:

- What data and evidence support the need for change?
- Have key community and system leaders been identified and engaged? Who is missing or needs to be added to the agency/community partnership group?
- Have agency and community partners looked at the data together, acknowledged the system contributes to disparities, and agreed there is a need for change?
- What problem statement and shared goals and outcomes have partners developed?
- Is there a commitment to work together to design and guide practice- and system-level changes that will address the problem?

**Note:** The above readiness goal should be mostly in place before proceeding. Partners need a problem identified before they can proceed with the RESPONSIVENESS & FIT discussion below.

**RESPONSIVENESS & FIT:** This area of readiness considers whether the Practice Model is responsive to the problem that partners have identified and is a good fit for local contexts and needs.

**Readiness Goal:** *Agency and community partners agree that the Practice Model aligns with their shared goals, values, and outcomes; is responsive to the identified problem; and is a good fit for the work of child welfare to meet the diverse needs of the children and families being served—.*

### Key Questions:

- Does the Practice Model align with the shared goals, values, and outcomes developed by partners? Does it align with agency mission, vision, and priorities?
- Do partners believe the Practice Model will help address the problem statement?
- Have community partners reviewed the model? Do they believe it is consistent with the needs of their children and families?
- Has leadership in the agency reviewed the model? Does it believe it is a good fit for the work of the agency and meeting the diverse needs of families?
- Has leadership in the agency expressed suggestions, concerns, and/or support for the Practice Model? How is the feedback being incorporated?
- What are the potential risks of implementing the Practice Model at this time?
- What are potential benefits of implementing the Practice Model at this time? Do these benefits outweigh the risks?

Once partners become clear about the work they want to do together and whether/how this involves the Practice Model, it will be important to create shared agreement on the purpose and goals of the partnership. Partners should consider the problem statement developed and the themes that came up in listening sessions and discussion of the Practice Model. What are partners motivated to work on together?

Here is an example of the shared goals developed by agency and community partners in an implementing jurisdiction. Listing these agreed-upon goals at the top of ongoing partnership meeting agendas reminds everyone of the important work of the group and keeps the work targeted and focused.

***EXAMPLE OF ONE JURISDICTION'S PARTNERSHIP GOALS***

- Advise the in-depth examination of local child welfare systemic issues and barriers experienced by African American and American Indian children and their families.
- Advise the development of solutions to address those systemic issues and barriers.
- Develop and support effective methods of working with children and families aimed at improving child welfare outcomes and reducing disparities in outcomes for African American and American Indian children and their families.

In traveling this path, it is important to be prepared for tensions that will flare-up or continue, and mistrust that will re-surface, especially around key issues or critical decisions and events. These tensions may emerge as a result of actions or decisions by the agency, policymakers, or others. Even when the child welfare agency has had no influence or control over a critical decision or event, the decision or event may trigger pain, loss, and anger toward the public system. Rather than representing a setback or failure, this is a sign of the ongoing need and opportunity for relationship building, resilience, and healing. At these difficult times, implementing jurisdictions have recognized that it is essential to stay in the conversation and be humble and respectful. The stronger the linkage between high-level agency and community leaders, the more socially significant the shared goals and outcomes of the partnership are to the community; the more meaningfully involved that community partners are in practice and system change efforts, the easier it will be to manage through these kinds of partnership tensions and adaptive challenges.