



## THE ADAPTIVE NATURE OF PRACTICE MODEL IMPLEMENTATION AND SYSTEM CHANGE

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After building active community partnerships and implementation infrastructure, resources and capacity to install the Child and Family Practice Model, committed leadership and implementation teams with the competencies for supporting active implementation and scale-up will be in place and working with community partners and others to guide and support all aspects of practice model implementation and system change. This provides the needed ingredients for the final building block in implementation and system change: ensuring all parts of the implementation infrastructure—the people, partners, processes, and linkages—are working for effective, sustained CFPM support at all levels of the agency.

Effective, sustained implementation support requires child welfare agencies and their leaders to be highly adaptive. Implementing jurisdictions working to embed and sustain the Practice Model had persistent and dynamic adaptive issues around organizational capacity, staff turnover and vacancies, high workloads and low morale, competing agendas and sensitive political contexts, limited resources and budgets, and hard-to-affect policies and systems. A top-down, uninvolved, and technical approach to implementing the Practice Model by local leadership was ineffective for its system-wide implementation. Implementing jurisdictions have been most successful in supporting and sustaining the Practice Model when there have been well-developed, linked leadership and implementation team structures that are continuously nurturing the development of a supportive, aligned, and adaptive system.

For instance, where an implementing jurisdiction's linked leadership and implementation teams were working closely together and with local community partners, they were able to act quickly and adaptively when a workforce action or strike was imminent in order to prevent delays in installing and usability testing the Practice Model. Another jurisdiction attempted to implement without a well-formed and closely linked leadership and implementation teaming structure and without an empowered system in which managers understood the decisions that they could make on their own. The jurisdiction was not able to respond quickly and adaptively to many emergent issues and needs that developed, including chronically low staffing levels. While the jurisdiction was committed and persistent in its efforts, it experienced many delays and a lack of momentum throughout several years of implementation until more intentional and effective linkages and supports for implementation were established and working smoothly at supervisory, management, and executive leader levels.

In reflecting on the implementation experiences and sustainability strategies across all of the implementing jurisdictions, sustainability work has been found to be particularly valuable in these three areas:

- **Continuous engagement and involvement** of disproportionately represented communities to ensure that their voices are heard and protected so that critical external perspectives and pressures strengthen system responsiveness; transparency; and accountability to the children, families, and communities are being served

- **Continuous support for system change and alignment**, which maintains a focus on the needs of the children and families being served and strengthens communication and feedback loops. This allows changes to be made to the organization and system to support the Practice Model and its delivery effectively, rather than changing the Practice Model to fit the agency and its existing service delivery system.
- **Prioritization of sustainability** of the Practice Model and of best practices in implementation and data-based decision making to strengthen Practice Model fidelity and to build supportive, sustainable infrastructure for the Practice Model at all levels of the organization and system.