

Collaborating at the Local Level to Serve Veterans and their Families



**SID GARDNER
CHILDREN AND FAMILY FUTURES
STRONG FAMILIES, STRONG CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP**

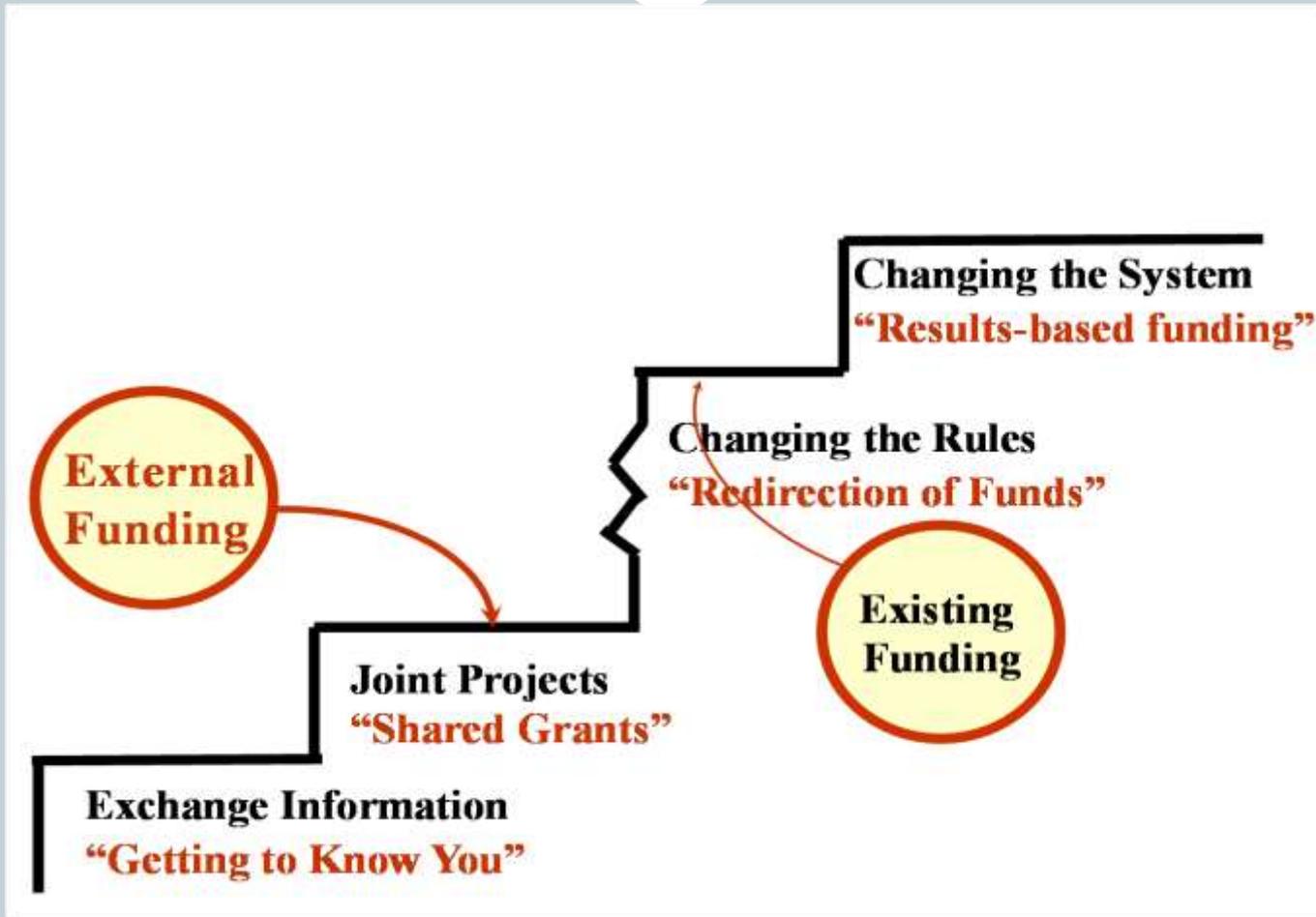
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Overview



- **How can veterans' agencies collaborate to achieve better results and wider funding?**
- **The numbers: how many children and veterans?**
- **The need**
- **The networks: the potential for collaboration**
- **Obstacles to collaboration**
- **A checklist of collaborative tasks:**
 - Shared funding, shared outcomes, and shared accountability

Four Levels of Collaboration



What are the key issues?



- **Numbers**: How many veterans and children of recent veterans are there in Orange County?
- **Needs**: What services and supports do these families need, given parents' needs and children's ineligibility for most VA services?
- **Networks**: How can we build lasting, effective networks at the local level that respond to the needs of these veterans and their families?

The Numbers



- **Over two million active duty service members were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001**
- **An estimated 40% of them are now veterans separated from service, living in their communities**
- **Approximately 1/3 of those separated veterans are married, over half have children, averaging 2 each**
- **There is no current figure for the total number of children of veterans of recent conflicts or the children of veterans affected by family disorders such as PTSD and substance abuse**
- **As a result, these are “invisible children,” who need services but have no status in the services system**

Best Available Numbers in Orange County



- **131,000 total veterans**
- **Estimated annual increase in veterans coming to OC: 6,500**
- **6,200 children of post 9/11 veterans**
- **Served by the VA for health needs: ?**
- **Total homeless veterans: 16,375 ***
- **Total unemployed veterans: ?**
- **Total veterans attending college: available**

“You can’t coordinate what you can’t count”

*estimate based on USC/OCCF veterans study

The Need



- **Approximately 30-35% of separated veterans exhibit symptoms of PTSD and/or substance abuse**
- **These are problems that affect the entire family, with an impact on children's cognitive learning, emotional stability, behavior, and the likelihood that these children will adopt risky behaviors**
- **These children need early identification and screening, substance abuse prevention services, and mental health services aimed at social and emotional stability**

Eligibility and Access to Services: Why Do We Need to Collaborate?



- **Separated veterans have access to VA services**
- **Approximately 1/3 of them access VA health services; 45% of them receive health services from non-VA sources**
- **Children of veterans are not eligible for services unless their parent is seriously disabled or homeless**
- ***As a result, the VA cannot meet the needs of these families with its own resources***

Why collaborate?



- **Employment agencies serve veterans' families**
 - Issues of child care, child support, health coverage, transportation—all these employment issues affect families
- **Housing agencies serve veterans' families**
 - Are housing units for single veterans—or for families?
 - How is family homelessness defined?
- **Family and children's services agencies serve veterans**
 - The missing box on the form: How many veterans are in our caseload?

Networks of Collaborative Progress



- **The OCVMF collaborative**
- **The OC Community Foundation network of grantees**
- **The USC survey of veteran needs**
- **Multiple resource directories**
- **Increasing federal and philanthropic funding for collaborative projects**
- **Court innovation for veterans and their families**
- **Improvements in data and information systems: evaluation programs moving from head-counting to real outcomes achieved by collaborative innovation**

Two Key Ingredients of Collaboration



- **Accountability for results:**
 - How do we measure what the collaborative achieves that we can't achieve in our own agency?
- **Trust in shared resources and outcomes:**
 - Shifting from competing for resources to writing better proposals because we can show that we're working together
 - ✦ **funding coalitions and collaborative initiatives instead of single-purpose agencies**
 - ✦ **Funding agencies that collect outcomes instead of just counting clients served**

Four Challenges Collaboratives Need to Overcome



- **The tendency to talk about activities rather than clients—“what we did last month” vs how the veterans are doing?**
- **“Projectitis:” defining progress as launching and funding projects rather than looking at the whole system that serves veterans**
 - “Invading Normandy—and digging in on the beach”
- **Missing players: who’s at the table?**
- **Pursuing grants vs “fair share funding”—are veterans and their families receiving priority in other agencies’ caseloads?**
 - \$430 billion in annual federal funding for child-serving programs

A Checklist of Collaborative Tasks



- **Is an inventory of services kept current?**
 - Does it have information about capacity and funding—or just phone numbers?
- **Are referrals to non-veterans' agencies tracked?**
 - “We sent them over” Then what?
- **Are veterans' advocates and providers active in pending health decisions about who gets expanded coverage and for what services?**
 - Covered California: 79 children of veterans enrolled statewide in first enrollment

Collaborative Challenges for OCVMF



- **Accountability for results: Do we want to develop an annual “report card” of key indicators for veterans and their families?**
 - Similar to the Conditions of Children report—a track record compiled over 21 years
 - Not just measuring what we do—measuring whether veterans are doing better
- **Do we want to develop a resources inventory on total funding for veterans programs in the County?**
 - Can we address long-term sustainable funding that goes beyond grant funding? Can the County total its spending for veterans?
- **Will existing grants and coalitions be able to achieve either of these?**

We've Got a Mission...



- **Do we have agreement on how we can measure our progress to know whether we carried out the mission successfully?**
- **Do we know what resources we need—or what resources we have now—to carry out the mission?**
- **If the answers are No—then how can we carry out the mission?**

Resources



- **Slide show available at www.cffutures.org**
- **Other resources available at**
 - <http://www.samhsa.gov/MilitaryFamilies/tacenter/>
 - <http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families/>
 - <http://www.justiceforvets.org/>
 - <http://www.oefoif.va.gov/>
 - <http://iava.org/>
 - <http://navso.org>