

**Module 7:  
A Coordinated Multi-System Approach to  
Better Serve Children and Families Affected  
by Substance Use & Co-Occurring Disorders**

***Child Welfare Training Toolkit***



National Center on  
Substance Abuse  
and Child Welfare

# Acknowledgement

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National Center on  
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# Learning Objectives

After completing this training,  
child welfare workers will:

- Discuss characteristics and elements of effective collaboration and differentiate between what this entails at both the systems- and practice-level
- Recognize how differences in values, beliefs, and perceptions in cross-system partnerships affect coordinated service delivery
- Understand the scope of confidentiality regulations including HIPAA, 42 CFR Part 2, and information sharing
- Implement systems-level efforts and practice-level strategies to promote effective communication and coordination within cross-system partnerships



Why Systems Need to Do Better for Families

# A Coordinated Multi-System Approach Requires a Paradigm Shift

*A permanent shift in doing business that relies on relationships across systems and within the community to secure needed resources to achieve better results and outcomes for all children, parents, and families.*

# What Is Collaboration?



Understanding differences

Shared decision-making

Mutual outcomes

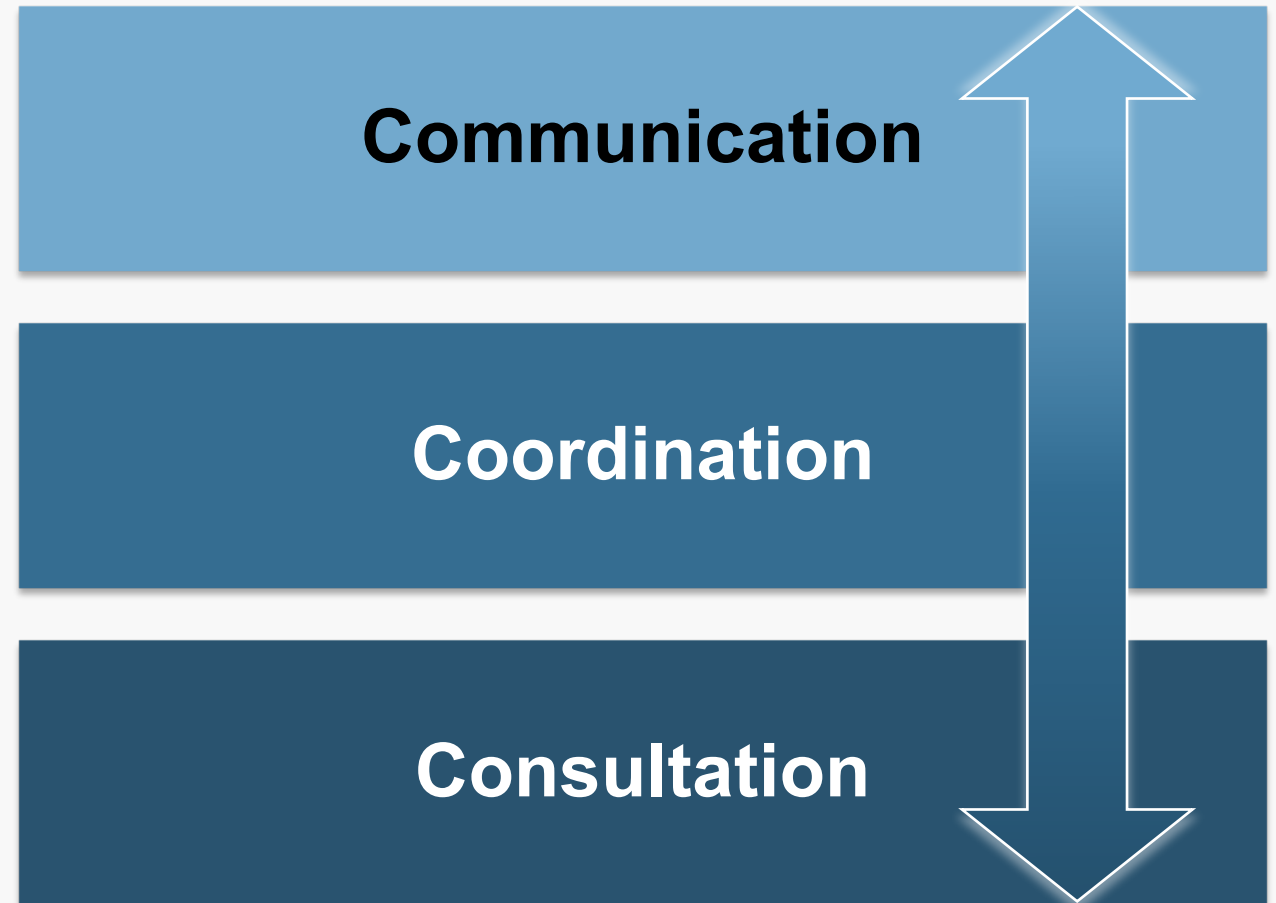
Joint accountability

Prioritizing needs of families





# Elements of Effective Collaboration



# Levels of Collaboration

## Systems-Level

Collaboration between agencies to exchange information, access resources, and develop joint policies and outcomes.



Collaboration between providers to coordinate parent and family treatment and case planning.

## Practice-Level



# What Makes or Breaks Collaborative Partnerships?

Pair and Share Discussion

- What are some characteristics of successful collaborative partnerships (system-level and/or practice-level)?
- What are some common reasons why collaborative partnerships fail (systems-level and/or practice-level)?

Pair and Share Discussion Questions



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# Common Barriers to Collaborative Partnerships

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Misalignment of Mission and Values

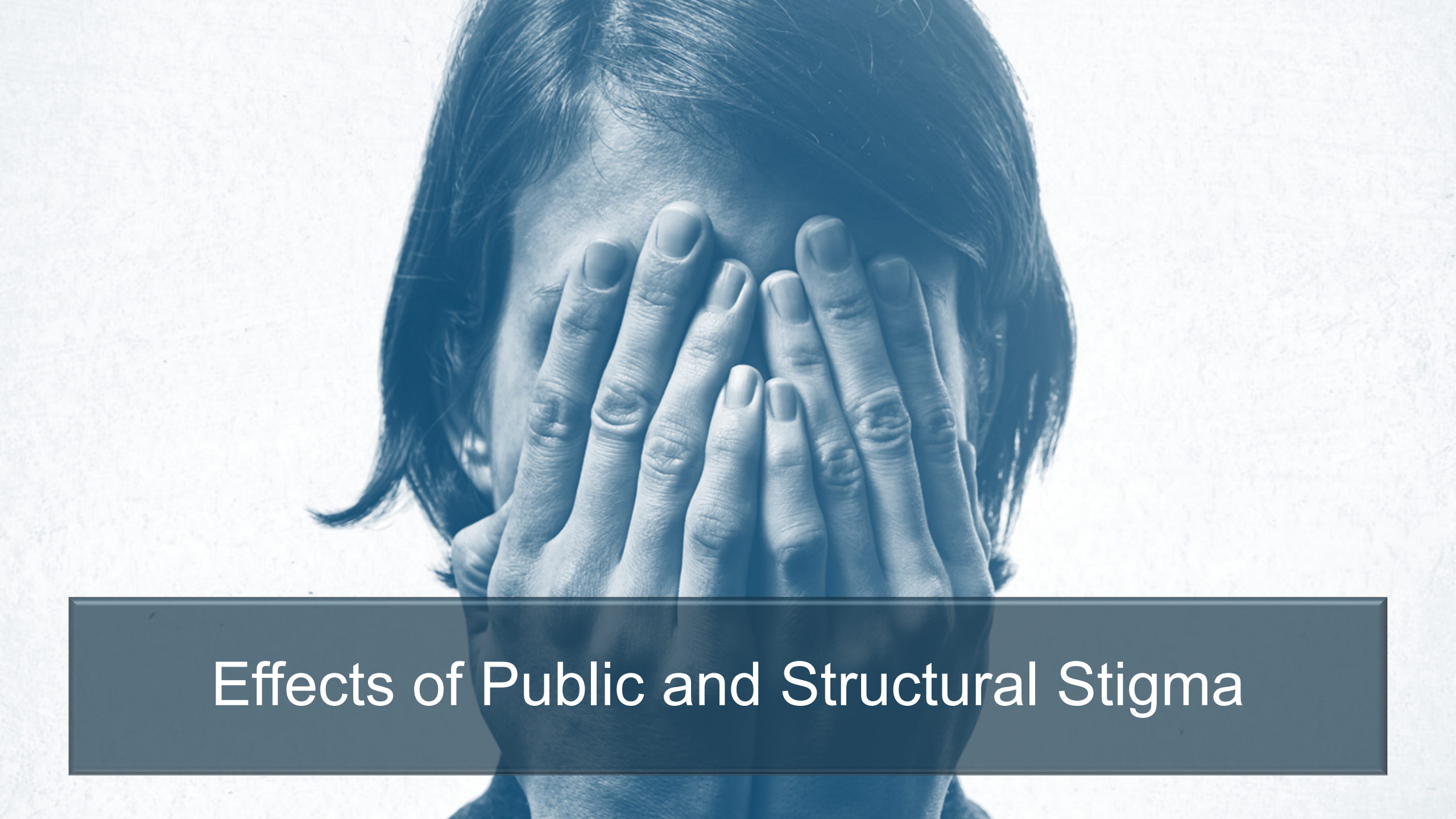
# Communication and Data Sharing

## Confidentiality Regulations

HIPAA

42 CFR Part 2

## Systems-Level Mistrust



# Effects of Public and Structural Stigma





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# Practice-Level Tips & Strategies for Building Collaborative Partnerships

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# Benefits to Building Trust Between Systems

Greater commitment or buy-in

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Increased productivity and cohesion

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Improved quality of services

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Enhanced engagement and service retention

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# Strategies to Support Cohesion

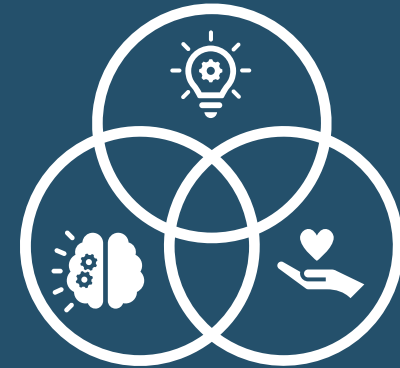
Ask questions and remain teachable



Engage in open and honest discussions

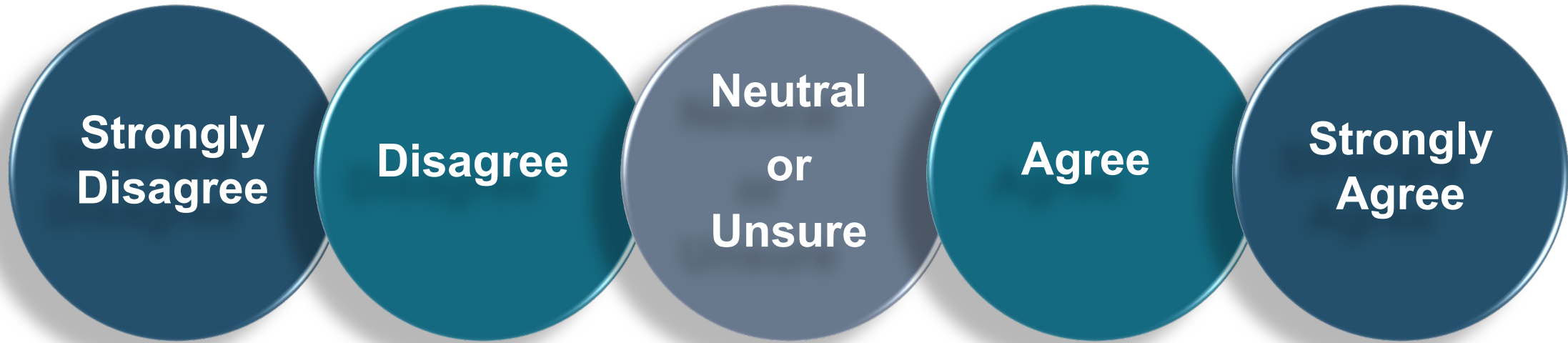


Identify differences in values and beliefs



Staying Open-Minded

# Large Group Values Discussion



- A parent's return to use should result in a child's removal or a change in the case plan goal if reunification efforts are in place.
- A parent with a co-occurring mental disorder must first receive mental health treatment before substance use disorder treatment can work.
- Negative drug tests are the best indicator of a parent's progress in recovery from a substance use disorder.





CHANGE

Moving the Needle from Stigma to Inclusivity

# When Substance Use Disorders Are Treated as a Disease...



Parents are placed into SUD treatment only after receiving a clinical diagnosis and appropriate level-of-care recommendation

Only qualified SUD professionals make treatment recommendations and judges, caseworkers, and attorneys support the clinical treatment recommendation

Only medical professionals help parents make decisions about medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)

MOUD is allowed and supported throughout the case, and not considered a deterrent for case closure

Parents are referred to quality treatment providers that use evidence-based interventions and practices



# Additional Benefits of This Change



## Professionals understand:

- The components of quality SUD/mental health treatment
- The importance of early identification and timely access
- Their role in supporting, engaging, and retaining parents in treatment and services

## Professionals value:

- Engagement of parents and families as active partners in their treatment and service planning
- Use of person-first, non-stigmatizing language
- Use of peer support models and services
- That treatment works and recovery is possible



# Why the Language We Use Matters

**Instead of...**

**Try...**

Addict/Drug Abuser

Person/Parent with a substance use disorder



Clean/Dirty Drug Screen

Screen tested negative or positive for substances



Former Addict

Person in recovery



Drug Addicted Baby

Infant with prenatal substance exposure



Hard-to-Place Kids

Children affected by trauma



Foster Child

Child in-care or out-of-home placement



# Stigma Reduction: Moving Towards Inclusivity

Pair and Share Discussion

- Discuss ways in which stigma and bias can affect critical decision-making in child welfare, treatment, and the courts.
- What steps could you or your agency take to help mitigate stigma and bias?

Pair and Share Discussion Questions

# Importance of Cross-Training

Develops a mutual understanding of systems-level structure and processes

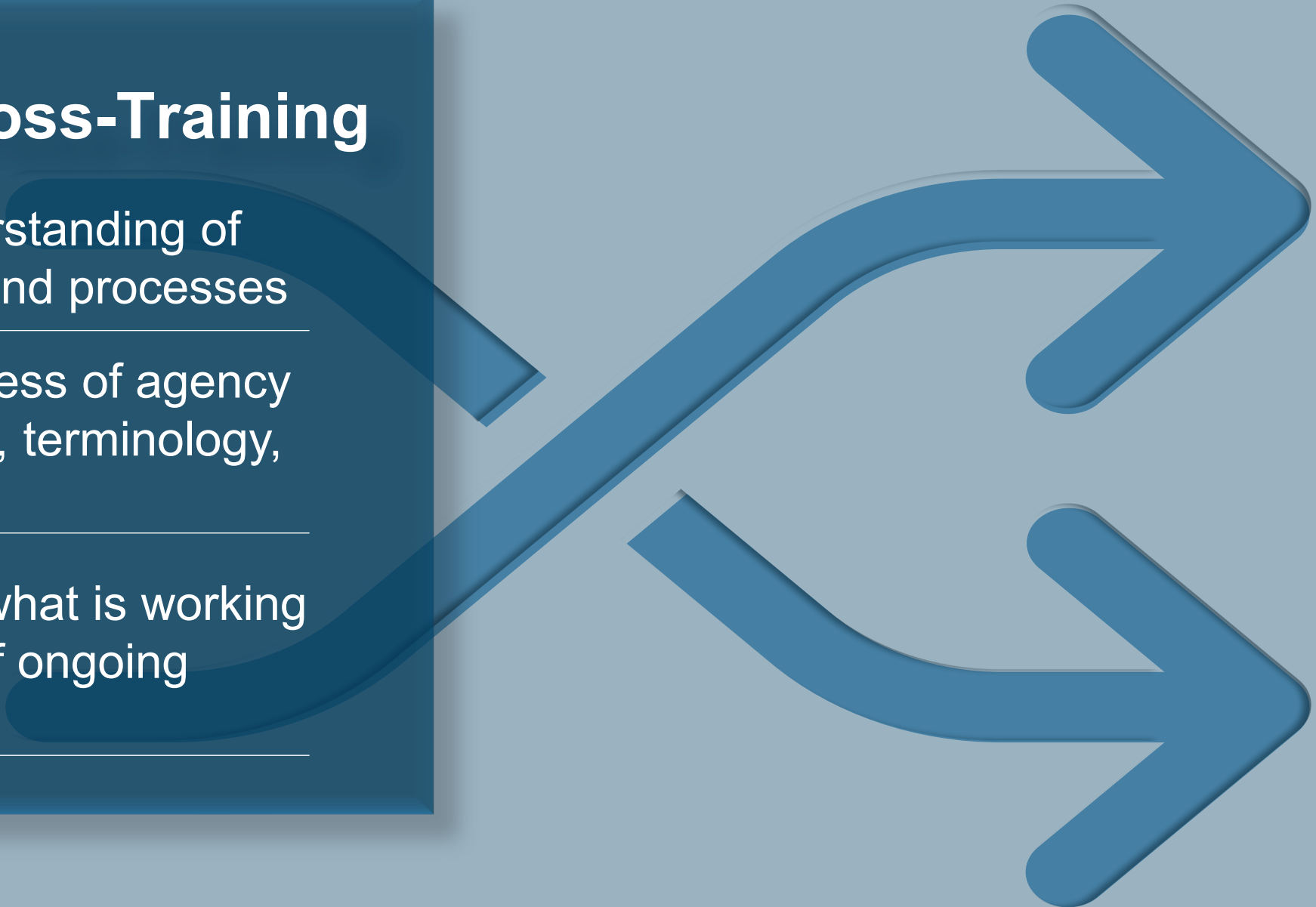
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Provides greater awareness of agency roles and responsibilities, terminology, and practices

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Initiates discussions on what is working well and areas in need of ongoing improvement

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# Cross-Training Priorities & Needs

Small Group Discussion



- What are common misunderstandings or misperceptions about child welfare policies and practices?
- What are common misunderstandings or misperceptions about SUD treatment policies and practices?
- Has your onboarding/ongoing workforce training included opportunities for cross-system training?
  - For those who answered yes, please share details about these cross-system learning opportunities including any key lessons or takeaways.
  - For those who answered no, what are some cross-system topic areas that would support a greater understanding for improved collaborative capacity?

## Small Group Discussion Questions

# Information Needed From Child Welfare



Reason for referral  
and current drug and  
alcohol concerns



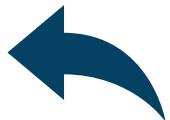
Screening and  
assessment results  
and case plan



Household composition  
and any children  
previously removed



Status of children and  
visitation plan  
(including any changes  
in placement or  
visitation and  
permanency goal)



History of child  
welfare involvement



Family strengths/  
protective factors



Confirmation of  
release of  
information signed



Drug and alcohol  
history, if known



Name and contact  
information of the  
child welfare worker

# Information Needed From Treatment Providers



Quality of engagement  
and progress in treatment



Level of participation



Appointment attendance



Treatment  
recommendations



Return to use episodes  
or treatment withdraw



Drug testing results



Discharge plan and  
aftercare  
recommendations



Timeframe for completion  
of treatment

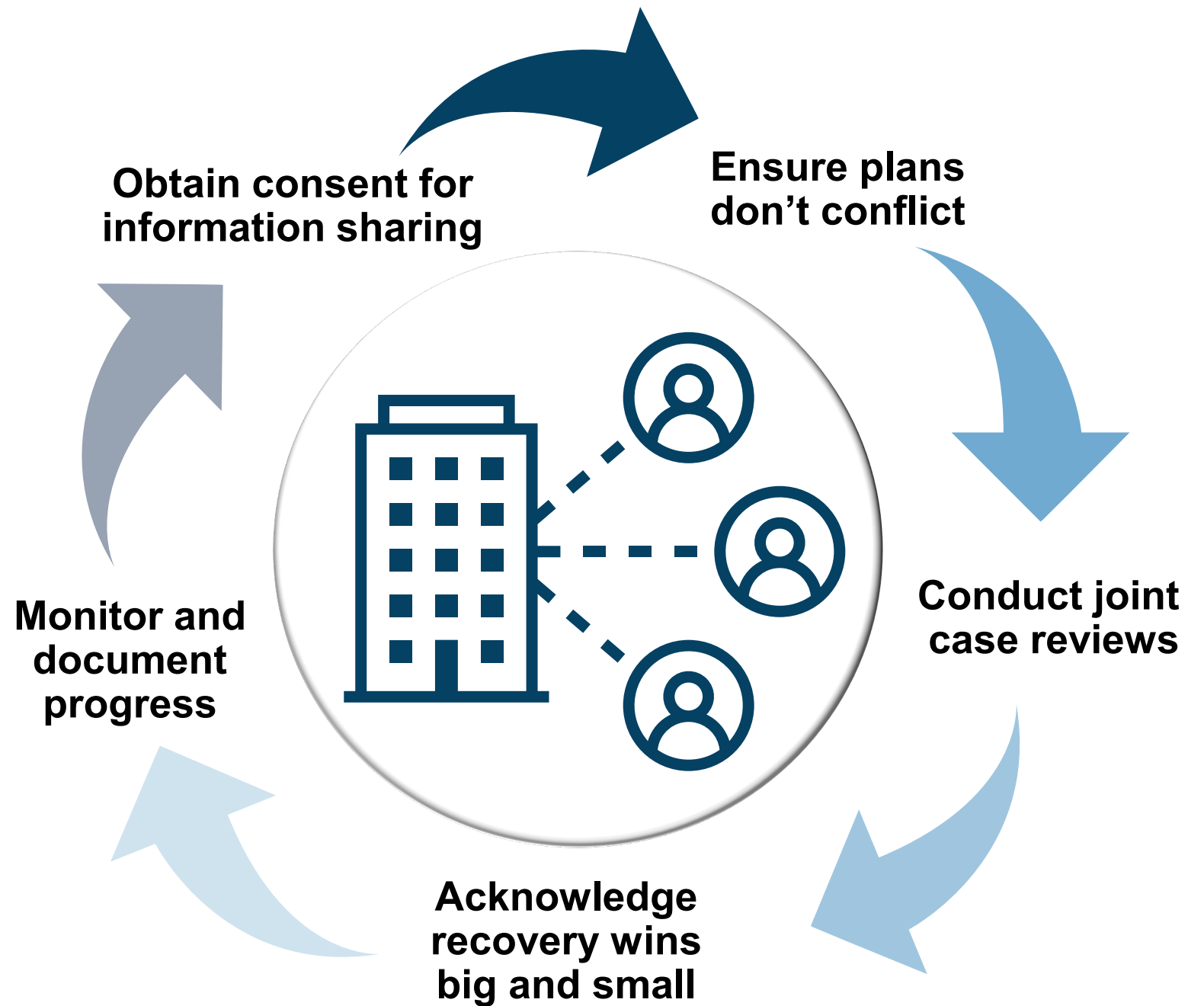
# Efficient Cross-System Communication

Small Group Discussion

- In your experience, what have been the most common barriers to efficient cross-system communication?
- Do your multi-system collaborative partnerships have clear administrative policies and protocols for the proper exchange of confidential information? If yes, what do these policies and protocols entail?
  - What type of information is included on your agency's release of information (ROI) forms?
  - Are ROI forms 42 CFR Part 2 compliant? If not, how has this affected the exchange of information with SUD treatment providers?

## Small Group Discussion Questions

# Strategies for Collaborative Case Planning





# Tips for Effective Joint Case Reviews



Start the review by discussing what is happening with the children



Working your way to what is happening with the parents and larger family unit

Focus discussions on desired behavioral change



Monitor progress with equal attention to what has been working well and areas of needed improvement



Use a court report or review template that incorporates child and parent information



Come prepared and plan to use time efficiently



A Reminder About Measuring Progress

# Additional Tips for Measuring Progress

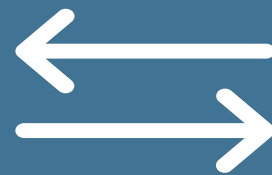
Progress or lack of progress—  
regardless,  
**document it**



Lack of progress is usually an  
indicator that something is not  
working—**explore it**



When something is not working,  
**change it**







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# Systems-Level Strategies for Building Collaborative Partnerships

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# Additional Tools for Implementing Collaborative Practice

A group of people are gathered around a table in a meeting room, looking at various documents and papers. The scene is brightly lit, likely from a window on the left. The people are dressed in professional or business-casual attire. The focus is on their hands and the documents they are examining.

Data Inventory

Drop-Off  
Analysis

System  
Walk-Through

Communication  
Protocols

Collaborative  
Capacity  
Instrument

# Examples of Data Inventory Questions



What data do partners currently collect?



Where is the data stored?



Who can access the data?



What essential data are missing or difficult to access?

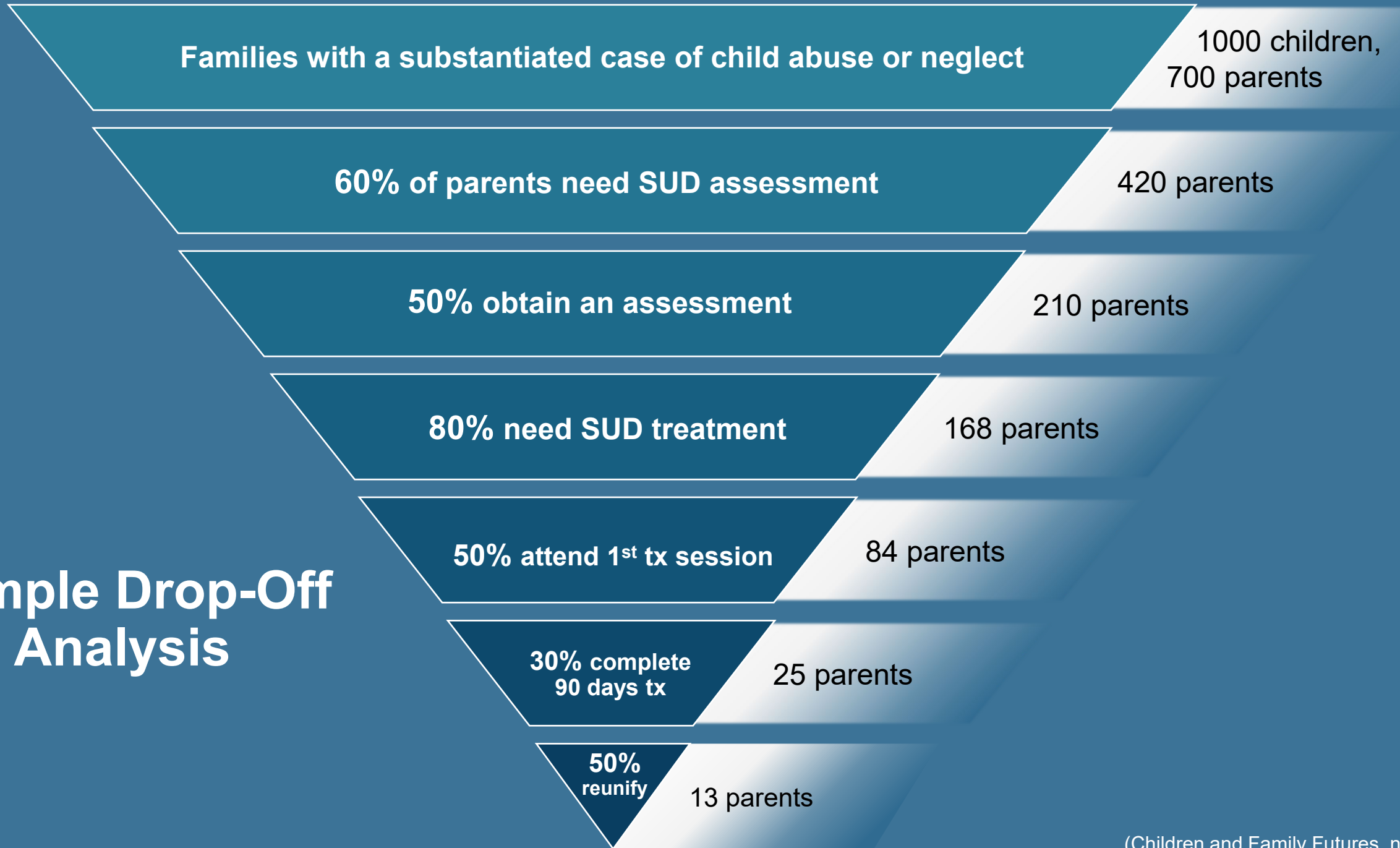


How is data shared between agencies?



What data is not shared between agencies?

# Sample Drop-Off Analysis



# Equitable and Timely Access to Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services

Small Group Discussion & Action Planning



**Substance use and its effects on child and family safety is not always evident from the initial CA/N report.**

- What array of tools does your agency use to support early identification of parental substance use and co-occurring disorders?
- Has your agency implemented universal screening using a validated tool?

**Does your agency have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with local treatment providers to guarantee priority access to substance use/co-occurring assessment and treatment services?**

- For those who answered yes, how does this work and have you observed any improvements to equitable and timely access?
- For those who answered no, what is your current referral practice and on average how long are parents waiting from date of referral to intake for assessment and treatment services?

**Do families affected by substance use or co-occurring disorders receive a more intensive service delivery compared to other child welfare-involved families with no history of substance use or co-occurring disorders (e.g., in-home family preservation vs family reunification services)?**

- Does your agency currently offer evidence-based programs or interventions to meet the specific needs of families affected by substance use or co-occurring disorders?
- If yes, how are families identified and engaged for these evidence-based programs or interventions?
- And what steps does your agency take to ensure equitable access and utilization including monitoring for disparities within these evidence-based programs or interventions?

**Small Group Discussion Questions**

# Establishing Communication Pathways and Information Sharing Protocols

- Client consent form
- System-level data to monitor effectiveness

Access to client level information



Monitor SUD treatment and case plans

Who, what, when

Data Sharing Agreement



Share with discretion and accordance with established rules

# Key Shared Outcomes for Families

**Recovery**

**Remain at Home**

**Reunification**

**Repeat Maltreatment**

**Re-Entry**



Equitable outcomes in all 5 Rs with data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and other key demographic indicators

# An Important Reminder About the 'Why' Behind Our Collaborative Partnerships

Increased engagement and retention of  
parents in service delivery

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Fewer children removed from parental custody

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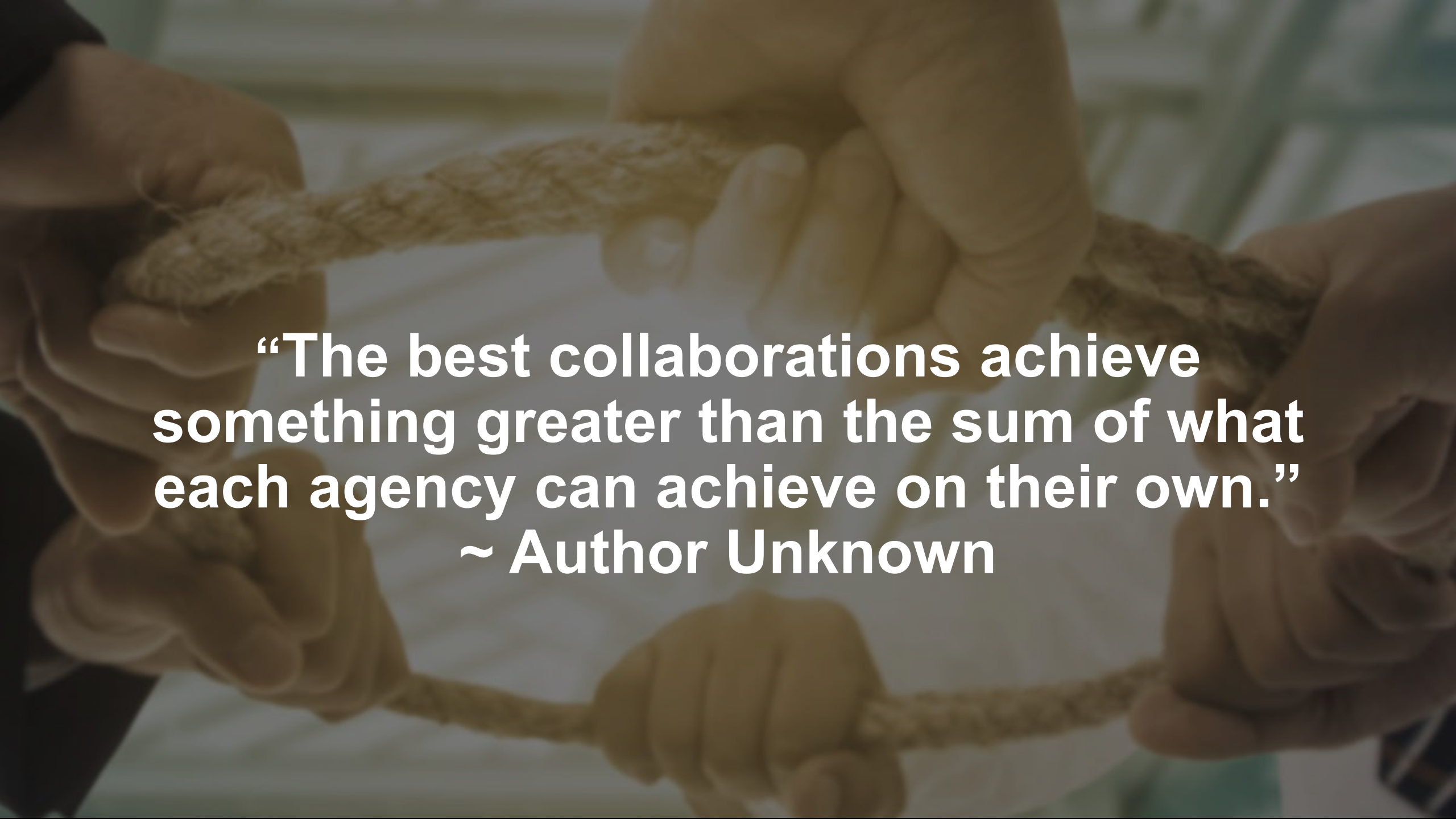
Increased family reunification post-removal

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Fewer children re-entering the child welfare  
system and out-of-home care

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A close-up photograph of several hands of different skin tones holding a thick, light-colored rope in a circular arrangement. The hands are positioned around the rope, with some gripping it more firmly than others. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color. The overall mood is one of unity and teamwork.

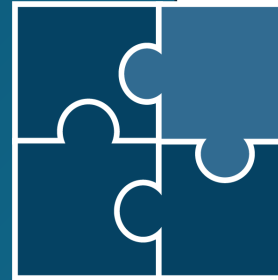
**“The best collaborations achieve something greater than the sum of what each agency can achieve on their own.”  
~ Author Unknown**

# Contact

## Contact the NCSACW TTA Program

Connect with programs that are developing tools and implementing practices and protocols to support their collaborative

Training and technical assistance to support collaboration and systems change



## National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare



<https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/>



[ncsacw@cffutures.org](mailto:ncsacw@cffutures.org)



Toll-Free @ 1-866-493-2758

# References

# References, 1 of 2

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# References, 2 of 2

- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. (2021). *Building collaborative capacity series. Module 3: How to develop cross-systems teams and implement collaborative practice*. Administration for Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. <https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/files/collaborative-capacity-module-3.pdf>
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- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2023). *Substance abuse confidentiality regulations*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/laws-regulations/confidentiality-regulations-faqs>

# Resources

# Resources, 1 of 3

- Children and Family Futures: [Comprehensive Framework to Improve Outcomes for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders and Child Welfare Involvement](#) (2021)
- Children and Family Futures: [Drop-off Analysis](#) (n.d.)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *Building Collaborative Capacity Series: How to Develop Cross-Systems Teams and Implement Collaborative Practice—[Module 1: Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Developing the Structure of Collaborative Teams to Serve Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *Building Collaborative Capacity Series: How to Develop Cross-Systems Teams and Implement Collaborative Practice—[Module 2: Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Addressing Values and Developing Shared Principles and Trust in Collaborative Teams](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *Building Collaborative Capacity Series: How to Develop Cross-Systems Teams and Implement Collaborative Practice—[Module 3: Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Establishing Practice-Level Communication Pathways and Information-Sharing Protocols](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *Building Collaborative Capacity Series: How to Develop Cross-Systems Teams and Implement Collaborative Practice—[Module 4: Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Establishing Administrative-Level Data Sharing to Monitor and Evaluate Program Success](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *Building Collaborative Capacity Series: How to Develop Cross-Systems Teams and Implement Collaborative Practice—[Module 5: Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Developing Screening Protocols to Identify Parental Substance Use Disorders and Related Child and Family Needs](#)* (2022)

# Resources, 2 of 3

- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *Building Collaborative Capacity Series: How to Develop Cross-Systems Teams and Implement Collaborative Practice—[Module 6: Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Establishing Comprehensive Assessment Procedures and Promoting Family Engagement into Services](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *Building Collaborative Capacity Series: How to Develop Cross-Systems Teams and Implement Collaborative Practice—[Module 7: Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Developing and Monitoring Joint Case Plans and Promoting Treatment Retention and Positive Family Outcomes](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *[Child Welfare & Planning for Safety: A Collaborative Approach for Families with Parental Substance Use Disorders and Child Welfare Involvement](#)* (2023)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *[Child Welfare Timeline for Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Other Partners Technical Assistance Brief](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *[Disproportionalities and Disparities in Child Welfare](#)*—A Supplement to *[Understanding Substance Use Disorders, Treatment, and Family Recovery: A Guide for Child Welfare Professionals](#)* (2021)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *[Disrupting Stigma: How Understanding, Empathy, and Connection Can Improve Outcomes for Families Affected by Substance Use and Mental Disorders](#)* (2021)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *[Engaging Parents and Youths with Lived Experience: Strengthening Collaborative Policy and Practice Initiatives for Families with Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *[Key Considerations for Applying an Equity Lens to Collaborative Practice](#)* (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: *[Practice-Level Strategies to Create Systems-Level Change: Relationships](#)* (2022)

# Resources, 3 of 3

- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Practice-Level Strategies to Create Systems-Level Change: Resources](#) (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Practice-Level Strategies to Create Systems-Level Change: Results](#) (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Successful Collaboration: Top Down or Bottom Up? Both Webinar](#) (2022)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Sustainability Planning Toolkit - Five Steps to Build a Sustainability Plan for Systems Change](#) (2020)
- National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [The Use of Peers and Recovery Specialists in Child Welfare Settings](#) (2018)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: [A Collaborative Approach to the Treatment of Pregnant Women with Opioid Use](#) (2016)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: [Facilitating Cross-System Collaboration: A Primer on Child Welfare, Alcohol and Other Drug Services, and Courts](#) (2012)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology: [Disclosure of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records: Does Part 2 Apply to Me?](#) (2018)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology: [Disclosure of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records: How Do I Exchange Part 2 Data?](#) (2018)