**The Community Problem**

Families experiencing homelessness are often involved in a number of service systems that operate in silos with limited cross-service knowledge and communication (Donlon et al., 2014). As a result, the burden of navigating housing, education, health, and other services is placed on families, who already face complex homelessness-related stressors (Haber & Toro, 2004). In the City of Chicago, several gaps in services caused by Chicago’s fragmented systems exist. For example, some children are unable to start school or child-care because of outdated vaccine records, and homeless shelters operating under different policies and procedures.

**The Community Solution: Systems Integration**

An effort to identify and remedy service gaps for homeless families was spearheaded in 2008 by stakeholders from two homelessness and behavioral health service agencies—Heartland Health Outreach (HHO) and Beacon Therapeutic. These organizations are implementing a Systems Integration (SI) approach to increase collaboration across service systems and reduce barriers to access among families (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2010). The SI effort has involved creating a diverse coalition of stakeholders, and implementing five types of interventions to enhance communication and collaboration across systems.

**The SI Coalition**

- Non-profit and Governmental Agencies
  - Social Services
  - Charities
  - Universities
  - Police Departments
  - Department of Family & Support Services
  - Housing & Cash Assistance
  - Supportive Housing Agencies
  - Child Care and Development
  - Public Schools
  - Community Health Centers
  - Circuit Courts
  - Women’s Shelters
  - Shelters
  - Consultation Firms
  - Children’s Mental Health Specialists
  - Funding Foundations

**Interventions**

- Cross-system Initiatives
- Cross-agency Training
- Co-located Services
- Systems Integration
- Client Advocacy

**The SI Coalition Members**

- Kevin
- Lisa
- John
- Carl
- Sue
- Bill
- Lee
- Paul
- Helen
- Julia
- Sonya
- Ali
- Alex

**Questions SNA can Answer**

1. Which coalition members know each other?
2. Is there one central agency that everyone knows about but that particular agency is less familiar with the surrounding agencies?
3. How did coalition members meet?
4. How well do coalition members understand the roles of the other members?
5. What systems are regularly communicating & about what?
6. Which systems are not communicating or infrequently communicating?
7. Highlight members of the coalition who are possibly being over-burdening or under-utilized.
8. Has the SI work created more communication & stronger bonds between organizations?
9. Which agencies have the most connections to other agencies? Are these relationships one-way or two-way path of services?
10. How do communication patterns change over time or after a SI intervention?
11. Where do introductions between possible collaborators need to be made?

**Benefits and Drawbacks of SNA**

**Benefits**

- SNA can track change in the network over time.
- SNA can compare networks before and after a system integration intervention.
- SNA can measure directional relationships (monetary or emotional support, communication or collaboration).
- SNA can measure and compare magnitude of relationships (frequency, quantity, or importance).
- There are no minimum or maximum sample sizes.
- Relationships can be measured between 2 people or 2000 people.
- Network maps are interactive and user-friendly when giving presentations or reading a report.

**Drawbacks**

- Maps and figures cannot explain the context of the network.
- Data collection and data analysis can be time-consuming.
- The data are only as reliable as your respondents responses.
- Data cannot be generalized to other similar populations.

**References**


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