

Connecticut DCF Region 4

Practice Model Implementation Efforts: First Draft Communication Plan

Background/Situation Analysis

(What is the background of these efforts and the current situation? How will the changes and/or decisions to be implemented through these efforts impact the DCF and its strategies? What are the anticipated outcomes for implementing these efforts?)

Target Audiences

The Region 6 practice model implementation team subcommittee identified the following audiences for our internal and external communication efforts. Communication methods should be established that effectively reach each of these audiences:

1. Foster parents
2. Adoptive parents
3. Biological parents and extended family
4. Adolescents
5. Cultural and ethnic communities
6. All DCF staff
7. Front line caseworkers
8. The statewide change management committee
9. Other state agencies
10. The media
11. Service providers (contracts and fee-for-service)
12. Faith-based community and civic organizations
13. Education/school system
14. Law enforcement
15. Legal community/courts
16. Medical
17. Legislators
18. Third party payers
19. Foundations and third-party funders
20. Universities and academic institutions

Key Communication Goals and Messages

The Region 6 practice model implementation team identified a range of goals for this communication plan: what we want our target audiences to understand, perceive, feel, and/or do that supports our broader efforts and agency strategy.

For each goal area we also identified key messages that would support the goal, as well as various ways that we will “back up” the messages with more specific data, examples, and activities:

Goal Area A

Target audiences, including DCF senior leadership, perceive that DCF and our staff:

1. Can help
2. Can be trusted
3. Will be inclusive and share power
4. Won't necessarily remove your child/will strengthen your family
5. Will act competently/make decisions well

Key Message: “We don't just remove kids.”

Back Up:

- Clarify and explain DCF's definition of safety and the factors we use to assess risks and make safety-related decisions.
- Describe how the agency is making practice model and other improvements.
- Describe how we're developing our staff and how DCF stands out in this regard.
- Share data about rates of removal and reunification.

Goal Area B

Target audiences understand what child safety is.

Key Message:

Back Up:

Goal Area C

Target audiences understand what other resources are available to families- “what's out there.”

Key Message:

Back Up:

Goal Area D

Target audiences feel that our language is strengths-based, family friendly, and culturally responsive.

Key Message:

Back Up:

Goal Area E

Our *internal* target audiences trust that this effort and these changes will be supported over time, and that staff “won’t be hung out to dry.”

Key Message: “It’s going to be different this time.”

Back Up:

- Clarify our limitations and be realistic about our capacity and what we can accomplish and how soon.
- Describe and follow through on how the agency is gathering and using feedback from customers to make these changes.
- Describe and follow through on how staff development activities are being used to build the required skills and abilities for our practice model.
- Describe and follow through on how we will recognize excellent service and demonstrations of desired practice by staff.
- Describe and follow through on how we will address non-constructive resistors to this effort, through corrective action.

Goal Area F

Target audiences understand how everything we do points to strengthening family engagement.

Key Message:

Back Up:

- Describe and follow through on how we are analyzing our capacity and reallocating our resources towards strengthening family engagement.

Goal Area G

Target audiences understand the time and resources required to fully implement our practice model.

Key Message: “We’re balancing a sense of urgency with a feasible plan.”

Back Up:

- Describe and follow through on how we'll analyze capacity and phase our change plans.
- Within these plans, emphasize and highlight our quick wins and accomplishments.

Goal Area H

DCF staff feels that they are supported and strengthened consistent with how the agency wants to do this with families.

Key Message: "Strengthening DCF and those we serve is a parallel process."

Back Up:

- Launch employee recognition efforts that use parallel language to our practice model precepts.
- Launch more general employee social activities.
- Describe and provide examples for how we "learn from our mistakes."
- Provide examples of consistent and effective supervision, and how DCF is working to strengthen it.
- Again, describe how DCF is investing in staff development and how the agency compares with others in this regard.

Methods of Communication

The Region 6 implementation team generating this list of potential communication methods:

1. Call to action meetings.
2. Daily musings.
3. Public service announcements.
4. Faith-based family days- tables and exhibits.
5. Reaching out to media to do stories on DCF.
6. Billboards and other visible signs in the community.
7. Social media outlets, such as DCF's website and Facebook.

The capacity for DCF to use these methods effectively has not been assessed.

Specific Communication Activities and Initiatives

(What is our action plan for each communication method? Who should deliver the communication in each plan area? How does each action plan align with and reinforce the goals and key messages we seek to impact?)

Barriers to Communication Plan

(What barriers do we anticipate in delivering the communication and how do we plan to overcome these barriers?)

Evaluation and Monitoring

(How will we monitor the effectiveness of our communication efforts? How will we obtain feedback internally and externally to determine how the communication is being received and what impact it's having? How will feedback be used to evaluate and adjust our communication activities? How will we also use feedback from our target audiences to adjust the overall efforts that we're communicating about?)

Points from the 1/24 morning discussion that may also inform the development of this plan:

- The provider subcommittee serves as a liaison to the service providers, and service providers need to be actively implementing changes themselves (audience, method and goals).
- Region 6 may need increased guidance from the statewide change management committee (audience and goals).