

Planning Your First Core Leadership Team Meeting

The first meeting of your Core Leadership Team is critical and sets the stage for future expectations. The following questions should be given careful consideration as you begin planning.

1. *Who will be the meeting convener?*

The meeting convener should be a community leader who has the social capital to invite participants from across community providers. While every community is different, some have had success looking to executive directors of local advocacy groups, family leaders, local judges, a pediatrician, executive director of a local mental health provider, etc.

Thinking of your community, identify at least one person who has the social capital, interest, and willingness to be a champion for children’s mental health.

2. *Where will you hold the meeting?*

It is important to consider the meeting space of your core leadership team. It could be a “neutral” location such as a library or a community center. While it may be easiest to host the meeting in the conference room of a participating provider, the wrong location may have a chilling effect on the collaborative nature of the meeting. Ensure that the meeting room feels like a “shared space” and that there’s easy access to water and restrooms and plenty of room to move around. It is best if there are ways to easily facilitate group planning work – dry erase boards or flip charts can be useful, for example.

Thinking of your community, identify at least one possible meeting location that will meet the needs of your participants.

3. *What will the agenda of the first meeting include?*

Your first agenda will set the tone and pace for future meetings. Consider your goals for the first meeting. At a minimum, you are probably looking for shared understanding of the goals of the planning and a demonstrated commitment to come together to develop a clear and comprehensive plan for improving the provision of services for children and families in your community.

First meetings typically share the following components:

Introductions of Members. Group members should be asked to say their names and the constituency they represent (families, mental health providers, juvenile justice, etc.). Many groups ask members to also answer an icebreaker question as a way of building a sense of relationship across group members. Consider questions like, “When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?” or “What was your first paid job?” or “What one word best describes your focus this year?” or even, “What is your favorite movie?” Almost any question can serve to help people get to know each other and begin to build relationships.

Opening Remarks. The convener of the meeting and perhaps one or two other community leaders might open with some brief remarks about why the meeting is important, the purpose of the day’s meeting, and the goals for the day.

Presentation. Consider the best way to “build your case” for developing a system of care initiative in your community. Present the current state of services for children and families in your community. Discuss the types of services available, eligibility criteria, accessibility, duplication, gaps, barriers for children and families, strengths of the current systems, and any data, including outcomes, that might be available.

System of Care Presentation. Provide a presentation of the System of Care model. Describe the values of the systems of care, providing examples of how each value can be operationalized within a community. You might also touch on strategies related to financing, services and supports, leadership, developing community capacity, and developing accountable services with the system of care model. Whenever possible, it is useful to ask a leader from an existing system of care community to co-present and describe how a system of care was developed in his or her community. Allow sufficient time for question and answers from members.

*Discussion of the Mission, Vision, Purpose, and Goals**. Assuming your core group is ready, begin brainstorming the key elements of the mission, vision, purpose, and goals of the group. (Depending on the group, the work of developing the mission, vision, purpose, and goals may need to be spread over several meetings.) The importance of identifying your Leadership Team’s vision of your system of care implementation cannot be overstated. This is a future-thinking concept of how you want your system of care world to look. It should be aspirational and long-term and should motivate every member to act in its direction. [Click here to complete Worksheet 4 “Developing the Vision Statement.”](#)

With the vision in mind, the mission – the connection between where the community is now and where it wants to go in the future – can be established. Mission statements should be simple, direct, clear, and easy to remember. [Click here to complete Worksheet 5 “Developing the Mission.”](#)

To get the best information from your group, consider using an independent facilitator or an interactive method of idea generation like [Liberating Structures](#) to give your meeting a good blend of thinking, sharing, moving, and talking.

Next Steps. It is important that the next steps for your group are clearly identified. Who agreed to do what by when? When is the next meeting? Who will convene it? What will be the agenda for the next meeting? Summarize the action steps from the meeting notes to ensure everyone responsible knows what they are responsible for doing.

Closing Comments. The convener thanks everyone for coming and participating. He or she should state the next meeting date.