

Systems Alignment of Multi-Sector Agencies to Address Child Maltreatment in St. Louis

Melissa Jonson-Reid & Yolanda West

Systems for Action Webinar | October 25, 2023

- Parents and Children Together St. Louis (PACT-STL) & Research Study Overview
- Successes
- Barriers
- Lessons Learned
- Discussion/Reflection by Yolanda West



PACT-STL
Parents & Children Together ST. LOUIS

PACT-STL Goals:

- Prevent child maltreatment
- Reduce entry into the public child welfare system
- Enhance the overall well-being outcomes of children and families

Research Study Focus:

- Leverage an existing child maltreatment prevention network
- Build system capacity
- Implement parent empowerment and family focused public health strategies

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Systems for Action Research

Partner agencies and evaluation representatives (now part of the RWJ research team were part of the initial planning), but the implementation grant had very little funds for evaluation.

Our Systems for Action grant has allowed for a much more rigorous design with both formative and summative evaluation components.

Research Team:

Melissa Jonson-Reid and Trish Kohl, PIs

Caren Bacon Project Coordinator

Substantive advisory group from pediatrics, psychiatry, organizational leadership and economics

Jessica Price, Asst Coord., and our wonderful PhD student RAs

PACT-STL Implementation Activities



Systems Engagement

- Community Cafés
- Community Café Working Groups
- PACT-STL Collaborative

Parent Engagement

- Parent Advisory Council
- Parent Cafés
- Parent Mentor Program
- Incredible Years
- Vitality Cafés

Racial Equity Work

- Building Racial Equity Training
- Building Racial Equity Training Follow-Up TA
- CLAS Training

Successes

Growth of Parent Cafés

Parent cafés are focused on five risk and protective factors – parenting and child development.

- Expanded offerings through partner agencies
 - December 2020 – 2021: VCR began hosting Parent Cafés
 - 2022-2023: VCR + 1 partner agency offering Parent Cafés
 - 2023-2024: VCR + 3 partner agencies offering Parent Cafés
- Expanded Parent Café offerings
 - December 2020: VCR hosted one café per month
 - 2021: VCR expanded to two cafés per month
 - 2023: VCR changed to offering one complete café series in a month per quarter and one café per month
 - Nearly 400 unique participants have been served and average satisfaction and learning scores are above 3.0 on an 4.0 scale

Growth of Vitality Cafés

Vitality cafes are focused on the well being of the parent and topics include

- Environmental Vitality
 - Financial Vitality
 - Mental Vitality
 - Physical Vitality
 - Social Vitality
 - Spiritual Vitality
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- Expanded Vitality Café offerings
 - September 2022: VCR began hosting one Vitality Café per month
 - October 2022: VCR expanded to two Vitality Cafés per month
 - 1 café focused on parents
 - 1 café focused on males/dads
 - About 80 unique participants have been served and satisfaction scores average above a 4 on a 5 point scale
 - November 2023: will begin offering 3 Vitality Cafés per month
 - 1 café focused on parents
 - 2 cafés focused on males/dads

- Retention of core group of Café participants
 - 11 participants completed two or more Café series in year 4 (2022-2023)
 - 20 participants regularly attend VCR Cafés
 - These participants play an important role in recruiting participants
 - These participants often serve as table host during Cafés
- Expanded engagements with Cafés
 - Engagements with Cafés more than doubled from year 3 (2021-2022) to year 4 (2022-2023)
- Recruitment of new participants
 - Partner agencies: 28% of new participants completed a series year 4 (2022-2023)

Parent Engagement beyond activities

- **Advisory role**
 - **Parent Advisory Council**
 - Assisted with planning PACT-STL activities (e.g., selection of parenting program, yearly planning)
 - Assisted with identifying solutions to program/evaluation barriers (e.g., low series completers)
 - **Community Café/Community Café Working Group participants**
 - Assisted with the development of the revised Know Your Rights brochure
 - Assisted with the development of the public awareness campaign
- **Leadership role**
 - **Parent and Vitality Cafés**
 - 71% of trained Vitality Café hosts are parents
 - Parents serve as table hosts during Parent and Vitality Cafés
 - Parents have gone from parent advocates to staff members as Family Mentors
 - Family mentors serve as navigators and coaches for families at risk or reported for alleged maltreatment

Launching of Incredible Years

- PACT STL included an effort to train regional agencies to build capacity in evidence-based parenting offerings.
- Collaborative and Parent Advisory selected Incredible Years
- Hosted Incredible Years curriculum training (13 individuals from 6 agencies)
- Offered and expanded Incredible Years programming
 - Spring/Summer 2023: VCR hosted 1st Incredible Years program
 - Fall 2023: VCR hosting 2nd Incredible Years program & Partner Agency hosting 1st Incredible Years program focused on Spanish speaking participants

- Two waves of group model building hosted with Collaborative
- Key facilitators and barriers to collaboration
 - Wave I: Resources, relationships, motivation, collaboration infrastructure
 - Wave II: Adaptability & creativity, technology, innovative staffing, engaging activities, effective use of funds, shared values, technology limitations, staff shortages & turnover, funding limitations, low in-person engagement
- Four stories of PACT-STL collaboration
 - Increased engagement with the Collaborative
 - Increased availability of funding to support collaboration, with delayed ability to utilize funds – largely related to COVID
 - Increased engagement in racial equity work
 - Ongoing staff and leadership turnover – related to COVID but ongoing

- Wave I Takeaway: The Collaborative should invest in increasing transparency and accountability, investing in upstream activities such as data and partnerships, and decreasing competition among agencies.
- Wave II Takeaway: Engagements with the collaborative increased over time for community members, public health and social service sectors. Many of the same barriers remained between waves, but expressions of appreciation for the Collaborative grew over time.



Barriers



PACT-STL was able to pivot to virtual during COVID for collaborative and parent activities.

- PACT-STL participants (both parents and agency staff) have expressed a low interest in returning to in-person programming and meetings post COVID pandemic
 - Parent participants decided they did not want to return to in-person activities
 - Collaborative members decided to return to one in-person meeting per year
- Discussions about in-person versus virtual programming has raised the question: Should depth of parent and member engagement be prioritized over quantity of parents and members attending?

COVID: Staff Turnover & Open Positions

- Even post-COVID PACT-STL and partner agencies are experiencing staff turnover and open positions
- Healthcare agencies have not returned to the PACT-STL Collaborative post COVID pandemic
- Partner agencies are staying engaged with the PACT-STL Collaborative but are sending new/different representatives. This limits the ability to capture perspectives on changes in collaboration.

CD's Organizational Capacity

Our focus was preventing maltreatment but also preventing recurrent maltreatment and entry into foster care among families with prior Children's Division experience:

- Children's Division has low organizational capacity (e.g., staffing) to partner with PACT-STL
- Children's Division has been unable to fulfill outstanding data request
 - PACT-STL evaluation team staff have conducted email and phone outreach
 - PACT-STL evaluation team staff have participated in virtual meetings
- Regional Children's Division office unable to support original implementation of the Family Mentor Program (FMP) as proposed
 - VCR staff have remained committed to building and maintaining a relationship with CD regional office staff through transitions
 - VCR staff have proposed a new approach to FMP to accommodate current CD regional office capacity
 - VCR hosting office hours at CD regional office for on-sight referrals instead of CD staff making paper referrals to VCR

Participant interviews are an important part of the outcomes study:

- Virtual research study recruitment is time intensive and yields a small number of consent meetings
- Virtual events: Participants need to leave immediately following the event
- Phone call outreach: Participants often do not answer their phone for unknown numbers, many numbers are out of service or incorrect
- Virtual appointments: High no show rate



Lessons Learned



- Mixed methods approach is critical for complicated interventions
- Despite effort, collaboration, creativity, and parent input, PACT-STL has struggled to overcome challenges related to not seeing parents in person (e.g., recruitment, consent)
- Providing value in Collaborative participation keeps the Collaborative strong despite turnover in individual positions
- The healthcare sector appears harder to keep engaged post-COVID
- Importance of investing in parent leadership development, making the project stronger and increases impact and sustainability

Discussant: Yolanda West

Director, PACT-STL



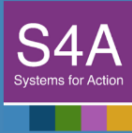
Questions?

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Upcoming S4A Call for Proposals

The CFP seeks ways of **helping medical, social and public health systems work together to dismantle systemic racism.**

Anticipated CFP release date is **mid-December.**

Applicants may apply for one of **two available funding categories:**

- Developmental Studies (a pilot study)
- Impact Studies (must have completed a pilot study of the proposed approach)

Includes **two-stage proposal process:** brief proposal deadline is mid-February 2024; invitation for full proposal is late-March 2024; final proposals are due mid-May 2024.

Research-in-Progress Webinars

November 1 - 12 pm ET

[Using Global Budgets and Multi-Sector Teams to Align Systems in Vermont](#)

Adam Atherly, PhD | Virginia Commonwealth University

November 29 - 12 pm ET

[Tribal Care Coordination Dashboard Project: Coeur Adolescent Support Team \(CAST\) Referrals](#)

Elva "Cookie" Allan, MPA, MURP | Coeur d'Alene Tribe