

Communication Protocols

Systems interact with each other constantly and through a variety of mechanisms. Nonetheless, communication breakdowns, misunderstandings, and gaps are common experiences for agency staff and families alike. Effective communication is the ingredient common to values, principles, trust, and action. The key to quality services is not the tools that are used, but how information from tools and other sources is shared. The clearest test of interagency consensus is whether it works to communicate the status of both parents and their children because both are affected by abuse, neglect, and substance use disorders. It is important to identify key points in all systems where effective communication can and must take place. Additionally, it is critical to develop clear administrative policies and protocols for the proper exchange of confidential information.

The **Pathways of Communication Templates** on the following pages are designed to help staff move beyond preliminary discussions about communication and toward developing a communication protocol. They are intended to be suggestions, and each community will need to adapt the specific information to its own systems and procedures.

The page immediately following this page is the Overview template. It proposes a model for communication across the systems as a whole. The subsequent three templates provide breakout versions of the Overview template, depicting critical junctures of decision-making and detailed information that are examples of information that may be needed to be communicated across systems. They are **Pathways of Communication Templates for Determining Presence and Immediacy of an Issue, for Determining the Nature and Extent of the Issue, and for Treatment and Case Plans, Monitoring Change, Transitions, and Outcomes**.

The activities that occur within system are listed in the darker colored columns. The bridges between the systems are represented by the three lighter colored columns.

Each of these communication points should be considered and should be adapted to meet State or local needs. The templates provide a mechanism for staff to understand what activities each system is responsible for undertaking. Once these activities are understood, staff can determine who needs to know what, and when. Staff can then create policies and protocols to share information with family members and among staff. The goal of communication should derive from serving the whole family and should reduce administrative burden on workers. Each of the communication bridges should be clearly defined, and the content of the information to be exchanged across bridges must be specified.

Alcohol and Drug Services

Within Alcohol and Drug Services, the key activities include: screening, immediate need triage, diagnosis, multidimensional assessment, treatment plan and services, treatment monitoring and transition planning, recovery management, and outcome monitoring

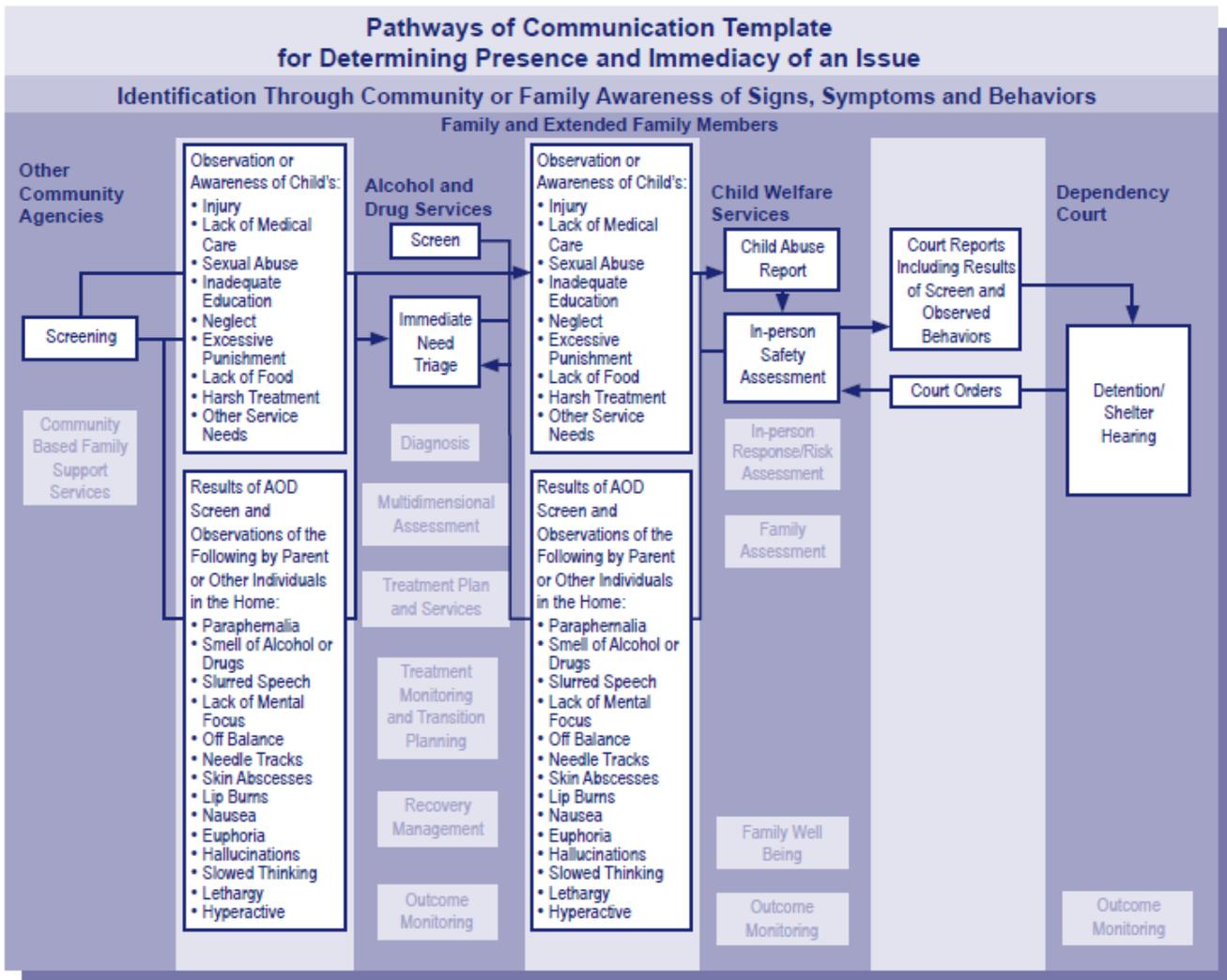
Child Welfare Services

Within Child Welfare Services, the key activities include: child abuse report, in-person safety assessment, in-person response/risk assessment, family assessment, case plan development and services, case plan monitoring, Permanency, Determination, family well being, and outcome monitoring.

Dependency Court

Within Dependency Court, the key activities include detention/shelter hearing, jurisdiction disposition hearings, review hearings, family treatment court hearings, case closures, and outcome monitoring.

Pathways of Communication Templates for Determining Presence and Immediacy of an Issue



Description

The above flowchart entitled, “Pathways of Communication Templates for Determining Presence and Immediacy of an Issue,” provides examples of key activities that staff from community agencies, the alcohol and drug service system, the child welfare service system, and dependency court system are responsible for when determining the presence and immediacy of an issue. The activities by each system are as follows:

Other Community Agencies

Within Other Community Agencies, screening and assessment involves a variety of observations or awareness of children when determining presence and immediacy of an issue. These include: injury, lack of medical care, sexual abuse, inadequate education, neglect, excessive punishment, lack of food, harsh treatment, and other service needs. Also included in the screening are results of the alcohol and other drug screen and observations of the parent and other individuals in the home. These include: paraphernalia, smell or alcohol or drugs, slurred speech, lack of

mental focus, off balance, needle tracks, skin abscesses, lip burns, nausea, euphoria, hallucinations, slowed thinking, lethargy and hyperactive.

Alcohol and Other Services

Within Alcohol and Other Services, screening for children may involve: injury, lack of medical care, sexual abuse, inadequate education, neglect, excessive punishment, lack of food, harsh treatment, and other service needs. Also included in the screening are results of the alcohol and other drug screen and observations of the parent and other individuals in the home. These include: paraphernalia, smell of alcohol or drugs, slurred speech, lack of mental focus, off balance, needle tracks, skin abscesses, lip burns, nausea, euphoria, hallucinations, slowed thinking, lethargy and hyperactive.

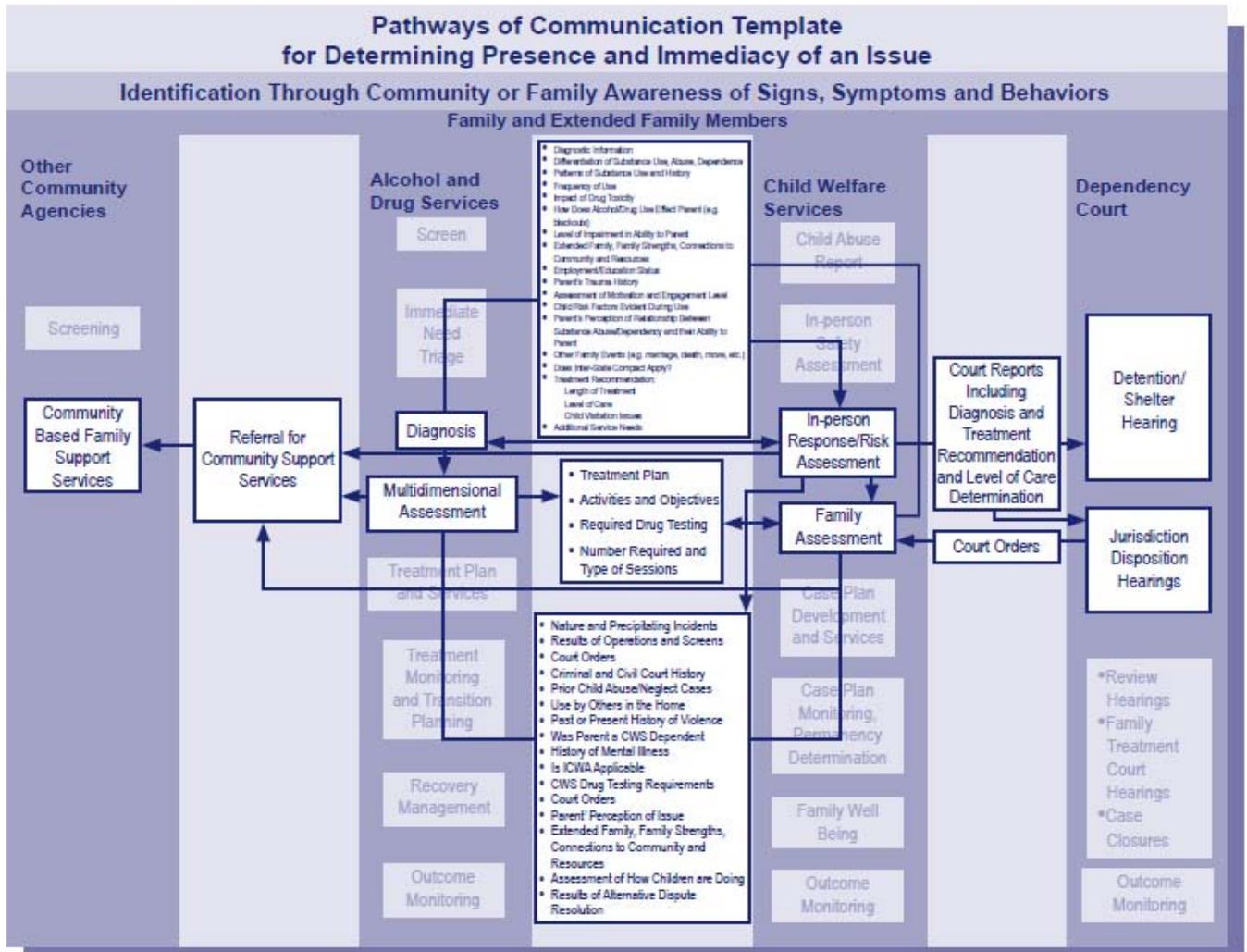
Child Welfare Services

Within Child Welfare Services, screening and assessment involves child abuse reporting, in-person safety assessment, court reports including results of screen and observed behaviors, and court orders.

Dependency Court

Within the Dependency Court, the key activity is the detention/shelter hearing.

Pathways of Communication Templates for Determining the Nature and Extent of the Issue



Description

The above flowchart entitled, “Pathways of Communication Templates for Determining the Nature and Extent of the Issue,” provides examples of key activities that staff from community agencies, the alcohol and drug service system, the child welfare service system, and dependency court system are responsible for when determining the nature and extent of the issue. The activities by each system are as follows:

Other Community Agencies

Within Other Community Agencies, determining the nature and extent of the issue involves providing community based family support services to both the children and their parents referred to by the Alcohol and Drug Services, Child Welfare Services and the Dependency Court.

Alcohol and Other Services

Within Alcohol and Other Services, determining the nature and extent of the issue involves parent diagnosis/assessment and the parent treatment plan. A treatment plan may include activities and objectives, required drug testing, and number of required and type of sessions.

The diagnosis may include: diagnostic information, differentiation of substance use, abuse, and dependency, patterns of substance use and history, frequency of use, impact of drug toxicity, effects of alcohol/drug use on parenting, level of impairment in ability to parent, extended family, family strengths, community connections, employment/education status, trauma history, motivation and engagement level, child risk factors, perception of relationship between substance abuse/dependency and ability to parent, inter-state compact implications, treatment recommendations (length of treatment, level of care, and child visitation issues), and additional service needs.

The multidimensional assessment may include: nature and precipitating incidents, results of operations and screens, court orders, criminal and civil court history, prior child abuse/neglect cases, use by others in the home, past and present history of violence, history of mental illness, the Indian Child Welfare Act implications, drug testing requirements, extended family, family strengths, community connections, assessment of children, and results of alternative dispute resolution.

Child Welfare Services

Within Child Welfare Services, determining the nature and extent of the issue involves child abuse reporting, in-person safety assessment, court reports including results of screen and observed behaviors, and court orders. The court reports may include diagnosis and treatment recommendation and level of care determination.

Dependency Court

Within the Dependency Court, determining the nature and extent of the issue involves detention /shelter hearing and, in some cases, the jurisdiction.

Alcohol and Other Services

Within Alcohol and Drug Services, establishing treatment and case plans, monitoring change, and sharing outcomes involves providing a parent with a treatment plan and services. A treatment plan may include: case plan activities, objectives and service strategies, visitation plan, required drug testing, reunification requirements, and visitation plan, treatment plan activities and objectives, required drug testing, number and type of treatment sessions required, compliance with court orders, progress in meeting, treatment objectives, and parenting responsibilities.

Alcohol and Drug Services will also provide treatment monitoring, transition planning, and recovery management. This may include: compliance with court orders, progress in meeting, treatment objectives, and parenting responsibilities. Progress in meeting case plan objectives, changes in visitation, scheduled meetings with Child Welfare Services workers, child has been moved to a new placement, transfers of case to new workers, and court orders.

Within Alcohol and Drug Services, outcome data is collected, monitored, and shared across systems.

Child Welfare Services

Within Child Welfare Services, establishing treatment and case plans, monitoring change, and sharing outcomes involves case plan development and services, case plan monitoring, permanency determination and family well-being. The information is included in court reports.

Within Child Welfare Services, outcome data is collected, monitored, and shared across systems.

Dependency Court

Within the Dependency Court, establishing treatment and case plans, monitoring change, and sharing outcomes involves review hearings, family treatment court hearings, and case closures.

Within the Dependency Court, outcome data is collected, monitored, and shared across systems.