Building Successful University-Community Human Service Agency Collaborations

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Applied developmental scholars are very likely to need to collaborate with community agencies "to understand and promote development in individuals and families" and "to evaluate the human and economic cost and benefits of intervention programs designed to optimize development..." (Fisher et al., 1993, p. 1). Such study and education must be conducted, in part, in real-world contexts, such as "families, schools, child development centers, departments of human service, social welfare agencies, correctional facilities, senior centers, health facilities, the media, policymaking units, governmental agencies, and private corporations" (Fisher et al., 1993, p. 7). Activities might include research, program evaluation, and field placements as well as serving as consultants and on advisory boards. The need for scientists and students to collaborate with such service agencies is especially acute for scholars who are trained in disciplines, departments, or programs that emphasize research skills and basic scientific knowledge at the relative exclusion of applied content and settings, particularly human service agencies.

Such university-community collaborations not only help to provide an important context for applied developmental training and research, they also can contribute directly to the welfare of children, youth, and families. The total of federal and state dollars for services to children and families is far greater than the amount available for research. Currently, at least two themes dominate requests for funding of demonstration service programs: 1) **Comprehensiveness**, which usually means case-managed collaboration among agencies providing services for different needs and problems; and 2) **Accountability**, which usually means program evaluation. For example, several federally-funded, multi-sited, comprehensive intervention projects with substantial evaluations have recently been implemented, including the Comprehensive Child Development Program of the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families and the Infant Health and Development Program of the Center for Disease Control. These and countless other smaller programs require collaboration among academics and service professionals for the purpose of developing, assessing, and improving preventive and remedial services for children, youth, and families. Therefore, much is to be gained if these university-community collaborations operate smoothly and productively.

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But such a smoothly operating and productive collaboration is by no means assured, especially when it involves professionals trained in different disciplines with different methods and values and who have different professional purposes and standards of performance. Collaborations require talented and competent contributors who work together with mutual trust and respect toward a common goal (Friend & Cook, 1992; Vandercook, York, & Sullivan, 1993), sacrificing in the process considerable independence, personal control, and personal recognition. These requirements are often antithetical to the way we train researchers, for example, who typically are taught to work independently, to maintain control over every aspect of the research enterprise, and to achieve within a profession that rewards individual productivity and contribution. The service professions are often not ideally suited for collaborations either, especially collaborations with researchers, because the primary responsibility of a service provider is to provide services, not to generate data for a researcher. If the research consists of a program evaluation, the outcome of the research may constitute the financial life or death of the program or agency and the job of the service professional, not simply a publication on a vita.

What follows, then, is an outline of the typical barriers to successful university-community human service agency collaborations and some guidelines on how to overcome them, primarily aimed at students and academics about to embark on a university-community collaboration (see also Friend & Cook, 1992; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; Vandercook et al., 1993). For convenience, we have lumped researchers together on the one hand and service professionals on the other. We acknowledge that our generalities about these two groups are overdrawn, and notable exceptions exist within each. As Mordock (1993) has cogently pointed out, for example, some service professionals have a better grasp of research literatures and relevant methodologies than many researchers, especially those service professionals likely to be reading this chapter. Also, these thoughts derive from our experience as an administrator of professional services (CJG) and as a researcher (RBM), not from objectively collected data on representative samples, and we ask the reader to share our recognition of the limitations of this approach.

Barriers to Successful Collaborations

Attitudes. One of the biggest problems can be the attitudes about each other that the two parties bring to the joint enterprise. For example, some researchers view themselves as being substantially more knowledgeable than service providers about the problem and its treatment, and this attitude may be perceived as arrogance by service professionals.

Actually, researchers and service professionals are often knowledgeable about different things. While the researcher may have broad-based research knowledge about a problem in general (e.g., drug addiction, intelligence), the service professional is likely to know more about the particular problems of the clients served by that agency, types of services and approaches that are feasible and those that are not, and ways of dealing with the legal, policy, and political constraints of the "system" (Groark & McCall, 1993). Of course, both types of knowledge are likely needed for a successful project.

For their part, service professionals may display an attitude of distrust toward researchers. Some believe, for example, that researchers are exceedingly self-centered, interested in a collaboration almost exclusively for their personal professional gain (e.g., publications), not very knowledgeable about applied issues and applied research, and likely to give the agency little in return for its cooperation (e.g., Mordock, 1993). Sometimes these attitudes are based on actual experience or the experience of a colleague, but sometimes they are rooted in stereotype and rank prejudice. Ironically, a few service professionals can be just as self-centered, but in other ways. Some, for example, simply want to maintain rigid personal control over the activities of the agency, the staff, and the clients, even at the expense of best practices and innovations.

Groark and McCall (1993) have written about the problems created by these attitudes of superiority and distrust (see also Mordock, 1993), which can be especially acute when the researcher's purpose is to evaluate the process and outcome of the agency's service program. Most professionals of any type would prefer not to be evaluated, directly or indirectly, by others, especially those they do not trust. The tension is exacerbated if the evaluation is imposed on the service agency by a funder, especially if the evaluation is initiated long after the program is up and running, which establishes a "we-they" rather than an "us" type of relationship. Also, some funders and program evaluators display an attitude that reveals that the evaluation constitutes a "report card" on the program, rather than adopting the more cooperative purpose of contributing to "program development and improvement."

Typically, these divergent attitudes reflect different values, purposes, and reward structures for these two professional groups. Substantial progress can be made if both parties view themselves as bringing complementary and necessary knowledge and skills to a partnership that is a sincere collaboration with mutual responsibilities, benefits, and respect aimed at a common goal of improving the services. The purpose of program evaluation, for example, is not to produce a report card on the services delivered but to contribute to program development and more effective services. Ideally, both parties should have their interests served by the collaboration.

Purposes. The purpose of most agencies is to improve the welfare of a client group by delivering certain services and obtaining and maintaining the funding necessary to do so. This is a serious business, sometimes literally life and death for both clients and agency. The case loads and psychological demand on personnel are often high, and the salaries and gratitude of clients and society are typically low. In contrast, a few service professionals perceive most research to be irrelevant and self-serving (Mordock, 1993), the researcher is not likely to lose his or her job if the project does not go well, and the academic is probably better paid but with less apparent social responsibility. Occasionally, these allegations are accurate, especially if the researcher is studying a basic process, the conclusions of the research have little implication or value for the agency's program, and the primary purpose of the "collaboration" is for the agency to provide subjects for the scientist's research.

Successful collaborative projects are ones that do not interfere with the primary purpose and procedures of a service agency but instead hold the promise of contributing in a meaningful way to improving the services and the outcome for clients. At the same time, the results must satisfy the researcher's need to publish and contribute to general knowledge. It is not easy to satisfy both criteria.

Stakeholders. What an agency can and cannot do in a project often depends not only on its primary purpose but on its stakeholders--individuals or institutions to whom the administration and staff of the agency are responsible (Groark & McCall, 1993). Other than themselves and funders, academics have few stakeholders, and their relationship with funders is often formal, distant, and impersonal. It's likely to be much different in most agencies --- there are many more stakeholders of several different types and the agency has a much more personal or political relationship with them.

One type of agency stakeholder, for example, is funders. Many agencies, even specific programs, are funded by several sources, and large agencies with several programs may have literally dozens of funders, typically city or county agencies and local foundations. This means that funding is based not only on the quality of the program but on the values and interpersonal relationships of agency and funding administrators. These uncertain personal factors can be crucial to the existence of an agency, most of which are financially fragile, live year-to-year if not month-to-month (i.e., county and state funding may be year-by-year), and constantly need to recruit funds for survival.

Most agencies have boards of directors, stakeholders who are often influential in the agencies' financial and political well being. They may be staunch advocates for the agency or people of power and influence who are not necessarily thoroughly committed to the agency, and while some boards are merely advisory, others have legal responsibility and authority over the agency and its staff. These individuals may be even further removed from the agency's program, but nevertheless very powerful on stage and behind the scenes.

Other stakeholders may include policymakers and the media, both groups being capable of influencing the operations and funding of the agency and the public perception of it. Policymakers (and funders) may dictate the types of programs they will fund, sometimes having sociopolitical ideals and cost savings as criteria. An agency may implement a program to serve these goals even if the program is not very effective. Mordock (1993), for example, has pointed out that a variety of programs for handicapped children have been adopted primarily because they save costs, appeal to democratic ideals, or are considered to be the legal rights of such clients. Similarly, some home-based crisis intervention programs designed to prevent foster care placements are implemented, not because of their effectiveness (some types of children do better in foster care), but because they save money and appeal to the noble ideology of saving the family (Mordock, 1993).

Collectively, these stakeholders may wield substantial public and private, dependable and capricious, valid and invalid, knowledgeable and naive influence, and the agency must accommodate and contend with it. Researchers accustomed to justifying projects and procedures only in terms of their scientific merit will find the personal preferences and biases of stakeholders, some of whom display a "don't-confuse-me-with-the-facts" attitude, an alien criterion at best. For example, an agency director may insist that particular questions cannot be asked or options discussed with clients because a board member or funder would find it objectionable, regardless of the validity or reasonableness of that viewpoint. For example, abortion may not be an option that can be presented to pregnant teenagers served by a private agency who happens to have one or more staunch right-to-lifers on their board of directors. Alternatively, questions about depression and suicide cannot be assessed in an evaluation of a program for teenage mothers, even though minimizing depression is a major program goal, because a lawyer on the board fears that such questions could be alleged to contribute to an actual suicide and constitute the basis of a law suit against the agency. No evidence may exist that such questioning could have this effect, but courts decide such matters in the absence of such evidence, and the lawyer is appropriately performing his or her duty as a board member.

Regulations. Agencies must comply with a variety of legal and policy standards, regulations, licensing requirements, guidelines, directives, and "best practices," which may limit the agency's ability to alter the nature of services, staff-client ratios, staff qualifications, labor practices (e.g., breaks, lunch hours), certain features of the physical environment, space allocations, safety provisions, client rights, and other procedures to accommodate to an experimental project, a new program, or even the evaluation of an existing program (Groark & McCall, 1993).

In addition to formal regulations, agencies are often ethically bound to serve all eligible clients with their best practices, and "best practice" may be based on the belief and conviction of the agency administrator, the service professionals, or the funder, not on what has been empirically documented in the research literature to be effective. Therefore, it may be very difficult for an agency to create comparison groups; omit or decrease services, even untested or innovative services, to some individuals; or randomly assign individuals to one or another approach, especially when they intuitively believe (but have no evidence) that one method is better than the other. It is not just a question of professional ethics, because the agency's reputation of implementing best practices is critical to their future funding, and agencies are often visited by regulators and required to submit reports documenting services, clients, and procedures. It may be hard to justify certain experimental practices to such regulators.

For example, in the process of planning a program evaluation of a home-visiting service to severely financially and emotionally stressed parents of infants at extreme medical and psychological risk, the researcher wanted case workers to make a few global ratings of the mothers' coping ability and mental stability. The agency director refused, because she feared that the court system could subpoena such evaluations and use them as a basis for removing the child from the mother's care. She had witnessed such proceedings on several occasions and found the court's decision frequently to be at odds with her judgments as a mental health professional. As a result, she lacked confidence that the court system would use such ratings wisely --- it was her professional judgment that many families who were having difficulty coping and in which the parent was mentally unstable did not deserve to have their child removed. While the researcher may have felt this was unreasonable on the part of the director, that it was unlikely that the courts would attempt to subpoena the records, and that it might be impossible for the court to obtain them under a doctor-patient privacy argument, the agency director perceived herself to be doing her job as a mental health professional and as a support and protective service for these families.

Resources. In addition to scarce financial resources, the greatest asset of an agency is its personnel. Good people are difficult to find and to hold, given the salaries, case loads, psychological demands, and working conditions of many agencies. To ask service providers to spend five additional minutes with each client (i.e., 5 min. x 30 clients equals 2.5 extra hours per week) to ask a few extra questions may appear a trivial request to the scientist but unreasonably burdensome to an overloaded service provider. Furthermore, a major task of the provider is to keep the client in the service, and probing questions about depression, alcohol and drug use, family violence, and other problem or illegal behavior necessary for research and even program evaluation may alienate the client and defeat the provider's first goal.

Also, the backgrounds of service providers may vary substantially. Many staff are extensively trained and experienced in the services they provide, but human service agencies also employ college graduates without special training in human services as well as professionals from other disciplines (e.g., law, business, education) who have been disillusioned with their chosen careers. These people are likely to be the academic's "research assistants," and unlike homogeneously trained graduate students, they bring different perspectives, values, and skills to the enterprise.

Service professionals and their staff members tend to rely on a different knowledge base than do researchers. Veteran service professionals often speak and act on the basis of their experience with clients, whereas the academic may be rooted in knowledge from a research literature. The conclusions from these two knowledge bases may be, or appear to be, very different. Teachers, for example, may readily attribute hyperactivity, attention deficit disorders, and behavioral control problems to prenatal cocaine exposure whereas scientists find only inclusive and contradictory evidence that prenatal drug exposure per se produces these consequences. Many service programs claim to improve parent-child relations, mental health, and intellectual development, while the scientist may observe that no evidence exists to support claims that such interventions are likely to be effective in this way.

A classic, but extreme, example propagated by Glen Doman (1964, 1979) was that exposure to flashcards containing words or numbers could create genius-level reading and math ability in young children. More commonly and subtly, researchers may find service provider claims -- for example, that experience with arts and crafts produces better problem-solving skills in children or that free play alone will improve the intelligence of low-income children -- to be unsupported by, or at odds with, the research literature. The service professional argues that he or she "sees it in the clinic or center every day," while the researcher counters that no serious scientific evidence exists that such interventions have, or are likely to have, such effects.

The imperfect laboratory. Not surprisingly, these and other factors make a service agency a very imperfect laboratory relative to the textbook ideal. Treatments may not be rigidly applied in the same way to each client, assessments may be casually administered in nonstandard ways or omitted entirely by caseworkers, whole treatment programs and practices may change in mid-study, personnel may turnover, regulations may be revised, and discipline-wide innovations may be implemented in the middle of a project. Moreover, comparison groups are difficult to create, clients are often unpredictable and irresponsible, and research protocol can be abandoned in the face of client, agency, or staff crises or episodic time constraints.

Such circumstances are simply the facts of professional life when conducting research in ecologically valid contexts and not necessarily the result of poor professionalism or irresponsible service administrators and staff. Researchers working in applied contexts simply must accommodate to most of these circumstances and accept the "best obtainable," rather than an "ideal," standard for their work. A failure to appreciate these limitations is often expressed by lab researchers who criticize their colleagues who work in applied settings (e.g., educational or social work researchers) because they do not follow ideal research practices. Actually, applied research often requires more creativity, intellectual resourcefulness, and skill --- not less --- and it is irresponsible for scientists accustomed to total control in the lab to disparage those who must work in circumstances in which most of the control resides with others.

Guidelines for Successful Collaborations

Successful collaborations are possible in this environment, but they take work and must be true collaborations. While some collaborations are between a single researcher and a single agency, a recent major theme in services is an emphasis on comprehensive case-managed services and their evaluation, which may require dozens of academics, administrators, and human service agencies.

Attitudes. It helps if researchers come to the enterprise with respect for the agency and its personnel as well as for its purpose and procedures (Friend & Cook, 1992). Similarly, it helps if the agency values and appreciates the skills which the researcher brings to the collaboration and desires the information that might be generated from the collaborative project. Of course, such respect must be merited by both parties, but each party should come to the collaboration with an attitude and an expectancy that this will be fulfilled.

This attitude can be expressed in several ways. For example, the researcher might come to the agency expecting to develop a project collaboratively, rather than simply looking for an agency and clients (i.e., subjects) for a predetermined research project. To illustrate, one program evaluator assigned by the funding agency to evaluate the process and outcome of three community collaborations, attended as an observer more than 30 meetings of these collaboratives before proposing specific assessments and procedures. He then gave the collaboratives a right-of-refusal on all assessment instruments and specific items on questionnaires, including their wording. While this ran the risk of extreme censorship or disparities between the three collaboratives in what they would permit, the researcher felt that without their involvement, cooperation, and endorsement, the entire evaluation would be impossible to implement or of dubious validity. As a result of having spent substantial time with each collaborative before this review process, the collaboratives had come to trust the researcher and substantially fewer changes in the assessment instruments were requested than might have been the case.

Project selection. Specific projects should be selected for possible collaborative activities only if they have the potential of providing the agency with valuable information. The project must be mutually beneficial for agency and researcher. Simple access to client subjects for research is not mutually beneficial.

Sometimes it helps for the researcher to approach an agency indicating the desire to study a broad general topic, and then to explore with agency administrators their interest in specific questions that a collaborative project might address. Mutual benefit and collaboration are more likely to be achieved if the agency is a contributing partner from the beginning to the purpose and procedures of a project.

In the case of program evaluation, the project is typically preselected, with the program evaluator sometimes arriving on the scene after the intervention is established and perhaps in progress. While the design of the evaluation is primarily the responsibility of the researcher, a great many decisions must be made about the nature and procedure of the evaluation, and these should be done cooperatively with the agency (and perhaps the funder). Specifically, the first step is typically to listen to the agency describe the nature of the program and the behavioral outcomes the agency thinks the program can achieve. Some goals are more necessary or likely to be achieved than other goals, and the level of effort (e.g., need for periodic assessments, comparison groups) and intrusiveness of the procedures (e.g., assessments) required to answer some questions is much greater than to answer other questions. Structuring these choices for the agency and working together to select options is one way to demonstrate a cooperative style and to build trust and confidence. Another major decision that should be made cooperatively is to determine the nature, extent, and precision of the information to be obtained relative to the cost in terms of finances, personnel time, and intrusiveness. Psychologists, for example, prefer to observe actual behavior, to distrust personal reports, to devise large batteries of assessments for a great many different behavioral dimensions, and to insist on one or more comparison groups. While this may be the ideal, at least from a psychological perspective, it may constitute much more precision and detail than can be afforded or needed. Some veteran program evaluators believe that consumer satisfaction surveys composed of both specific ratings and open-ended comments provide 90% of what the agency and funder need to know, albeit with somewhat less precision, detail, and certainty. Again, such decisions should be made cooperatively.

A liaison person. Cooperation is often facilitated if the researcher employees a project director or liaison person who is familiar with the service agency, its practices, and the constraints under which it operates. A former social worker, nurse, or educator, depending upon the agency, might be hired as the project director or coordinator responsible for developing the cooperative linkages and implementing the project. Such individuals may be more readily trusted by service agencies, and their knowledge may help avoid proposing procedures that would be difficult or unreasonable. Such a liaison person can also help researchers and service professionals speak a common language. The words "research," "evaluation," "data," and "control group" can mean very different things to a service provider than to a researcher.

Partners. Some projects require the expertise of many research and service partners, not just one of each. Who is selected to participate in such a large collaborative team is crucial to the smoothness with which it functions and the quality of its products. The team, and therefore the collaborative project, will be only as strong and successful as each individual partner. A good team needs a balance of expertise (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992), perhaps including people with research knowledge, content knowledge, service techniques, administrative and management experience, and influence with funders and gatekeepers. But they must also have several personal characteristics, including loyalty and commitment to the common goal and a willingness to compromise and share control, responsibility, and credit. Ideally, each of the partners should be selected because they have these attributes, but typically not all the people who have the necessary expertise will have the desired personal characteristics.

Even if the team is excellent going into the collaboration, a team spirit of mutual respect, responsibility, ownership, and belonging must be developed (Abrams & Frantz, 1991). This may take some educating of individual players of what each member of the team can and will contribute. Also, the more each member actually works and contributes to the project, the more ownership, investment, and responsibility that individual will feel and the more dependent the other individuals will be on that person's participation. This mutual dependency results in team spirit, belongingness, loyalty, and shared responsibilities for the successes and failures of the program. Further, each member is likely to become an ambassador for the program, advertising its virtues and contributing to its visibility, fundability, expansion, influence, and contribution. Researchers must remember that service programs are successful as much because of their public relations and personal relationships with funders and policymakers than as a result of scientifically documented behavioral benefits.

Common mission. There must be a common mission and purpose (Friend & Cook, 1992). The team players should meet regularly and frequently as a group to develop the mission of the research as a group with complete participation and agreement. Developing a solid mission includes discussions about group values and vision. The process alone provides for a better awareness of the issues and the direction of the collaboration, and in large collaborative projects it may help to have a written mission statement. In the future, this mission statement should be used as a touchstone to guide the team back on track.

Communication. Communication is critical, especially in large projects. All activities should be communicated to all players, and communication should be regularly scheduled, accurate, cordial, and professional. The process of communication must give participants a signal that it's okay to disagree and to use the resolution of conflicts as a means of moving forward (Groark & McCall, 1993). While academics are accustomed to open, piercing, and public disagreement and criticism, service professionals typically are not. Criticism is often best voiced as questions, suggestions, or alternatives, and in private. But if disagreements are not faced head on and immediately, problems will not be solved and may fester, jeopardizing the collaboration.

Proactive nature. Collaborations work better if they are proactive, that is, deliberate attempts to work together toward a common outcome that is selected by the group, rather than if they are reactive, that is, are created to solve a crisis. To many researchers, all research is proactive, in the sense that it is investigator initiated and created, it is funded predominantly by grant programs that operate continuously through the year, and it is conducted without the need to cooperate with other people or agencies. In contrast, much of a service professional's life may be crisis oriented. Funding mechanisms are often one-shot offerings that typically allow very little time to prepare an application (e.g., as little as 2-3 weeks is not uncommon). And funding mechanisms are often very short term, for example, year-to-year, so that it is not uncommon to be notified that a source of current funding will be drastically cut or eliminated in a few weeks. Also, much public policy is generated in response to a crisis, and policymakers call for immediate action --- which often must be implemented by service professionals who may or may not be prepared to do so.

Proactive collaborations work better because the partners have voluntarily agreed to participate, and they are freer to craft the project according to their own desires. As in any collaboration, partners should frequently discuss how the work is progressing and trust each other enough to be open and honest about the process. They should agree on what decisions will be made by the group, subgroups, and by individuals, and the group cannot be dominated by one sector (i.e., researchers, service professionals, policymakers) or a few individuals. Rights and responsibilities of partners should be clearly defined and agreed upon. The critical characteristic of partners is that they be effective liaisons to their organizations and to the other collaborators.

A potential liability of proactive collaborations is that they can become mere discussion groups characterized by contemplation and mutual education, rather than action (assuming action is their primary purpose). Academics are especially prone to want to discuss, debate, and quibble rather than act, especially if no deadline exists for some product. Occasionally, service professionals can also fail to act, especially if the partners who volunteered for the collaborative do not have the authority, clout, resources, or skills to move ideas into practice.

Leadership. The quality of leadership is often determined by style, experience, and competence. It is the combination of these characteristics that grants a leader "legitimacy" from other partners (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). Good leaders of collaborations are able to motivate players while they manage. They perceive and make sure the group sees all sides of an issue, and they help identify common ground and alternative solutions.

A good leader must be fair. A leader may have a strong commitment to a certain goal or approach, but this must not be imposed overtly or covertly on the group. Even if the lack of neutrality is only perceived and not based in reality, it may be just as damaging to the collaboration. This is one reason why it may be preferable to have a neutral leader whose only role is to support the collaboration, not to be a vested partner, because he or she is more likely to be perceived as unbiased with respect to the demands of participating collaborators.

Another way to avoid the perception of conflict of interest is to establish co-leaders who complement the assets and interests of each other. For example, one leader who is an academic and a conceptualizer may complement the skills of a program professional who is goal and task oriented. Either one alone may not be totally effective, but working together they might make a powerful leadership team. In a sense, they must perform and model as leaders the same collaboration they seek to promote in the partners.

Carried to the extreme, all team members might share leadership responsibilities. Through formal assignment of responsibilities or rotation of typical responsibilities, a more solid sense of ownership of the collaboration and its effort can be developed. This approach requires and promotes group problem solving and communication among members. Shared leadership comes about naturally in a collaborative that has co-chairs, competent staff support, and active members who are asked to be responsible for certain agenda items.

Monitoring progress. The collaborative process must go smoothly if there is to be a successful product. Therefore, the process needs to be monitored continuously. Are all the partners satisfied with their roles, the performance of others, and progress toward short- and long-term goals? Have relationships in the collaboration developed and matured so that compromise, give-and-take, openness, assertiveness and deference, trust, respect, and cooperation come easily? Does the group readily tackle new issues, tasks, and even new projects? Is the collaboration attaining the milestones and outcomes for which it was established?

Conclusion

Collaborations are useful, sometimes necessary, when the required expertise for a project is so diverse and demanding that it outstrips the ability of a single person or agency to perform and when resources, authority, and responsibility needed to conduct the project are disbursed among individuals or groups. As knowledge, research and professional skills, and services become more specialized, the need for collaborations will increase. Collaborations work best when the partners can achieve something together that they could not attain alone, whether it is financial resources, access to client groups, expertise, the opportunity to be involved in a project, or make a contribution to society. When those circumstances are present, the collaboration is most likely to be successful and to contribute to the welfare of children, youth, and families.

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Footnote

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