

CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES CENTER

FACILITATING PROGRAM COLLABORATION TO BETTER SERVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



The Children & Family Services Center was founded in 2001 by nine nonprofit organizations co-locating to better serve the children and families of Charlotte, NC. The collaboration began by sharing office space and property management. Over time, participating organizations developed shared programs and supportive services. The center’s shared services now include:

- Office space and meeting rooms
- Internet and phone services
- Client services and programs
- Administrative services
- Technology support and replacement programs
- HR and financial services including shared retirement and health benefits

More than 60 collaborative client services have been documented at the center thus far. Most shared programs happen among two or three organizations. Typically, one organization identifies a need and enlists neighbor agencies to fill that need as appropriate. For example, organizations in the center are currently planning to design a shared intake form for clients receiving services. This will enable partner agencies to share client information more easily, enhance the services clients receive, and increase service delivery.

Center staff support programmatic collaborations as requested but encourage agency staff to self-organize. Program staff are experts in client needs and services, so they are best suited to identify new areas for collaborative solutions. Shared programming is one of the key indicators of success at the center.

A range of evaluation methods are used to capture the value these shared services create.

The center also supports shared administration and technology support and upkeep. Tenant organizations participate in planning and funding shared overhead services. Their relationships, based on trust and a history of working well together, have recently led to the successful implementation of shared human resources and finance services.

Key Lesson Learned

- Shared programs develop organically over time because they require trust and awareness across organizational boundaries.
- Program collaboration should not be forced but rather facilitated as requested by participating organizations.
- Evaluate the performance of programs relative to goals, even when goals are difficult to measure.
- Create opportunities for organizations to not only participate in, but also be responsible for the governance and funding of shared overhead services.

Mission: Improving the lives of children and families through an innovative partnership of community resources that promote strong families and advocate for change.

Participants Nine nonprofit organizations, all serving children and families

Annual Budget \$800,000

Structure Independent nonprofit organization

Founded 2001

Website www.childrenfamily.org

Location Charlotte, North Carolina

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