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Collaboration, integration and change in children's services: Critical issues and key ingredients

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Abstract

Background

Government and state policy, irrespective of jurisdiction, increasingly require and indeed specify the nature of collaboration with regard to the delivery of child welfare services for maltreated children. The rationale for collaboration appears obvious in as much as it is aimed at promoting multidisciplinary practice in order to meet the needs of the vulnerable child. However, collaboration, whilst a useful and motivating concept, is in reality far from straightforward and contains complexities and ambiguities.

Aim

The aim of this paper is to explore these complexities and ambiguities to provide an overview of key developmental frameworks relevant to the creation and maintenance of

strategic high-level multiagency partnerships.

Commentary

The authors begin by exploring the characteristic features of different levels of multiagency collaboration that is communication, co-operation, co-ordination, coalition, and integration. As the emphasis in a variety of jurisdictions in the Western world is on the highest levels of collaboration namely coalition and service integration this is the focus of the paper. The authors synthesize the main literature in the field to consider the critical elements for effective collaborative endeavors at this level including predisposing factors, mandate, leadership, machinery, process, and outcomes. The paper concludes by recognizing that the drive towards integrated services is occurring in a climate of continuing change. The need to identify the impact of such an environment when managing multiagency partnerships is explored using five steps to change.

R sum /Resumen

French- and Spanish-language abstracts not available at time of publication.



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Keywords

Collaboration; Integration; Partnership; Children's services

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