



School of Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Nurse-Family Partnership & Child Welfare: A Model of Collaboration

The Nurse-Family Partnership® (NFP) is an evidence-based maternal and early childhood health program that fosters long-term success for first-time moms, their babies, and society. The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) aims to deliver high quality human and health services that improve the safety, independence, and well-being of the people of Colorado. With the enhanced Child Welfare Plan “Keeping Kids Safe and Families Healthy 2.0”, CDHS emphasized the importance of prevention services that support families even before they become part of the Child Welfare system. Based on findings from qualitative research conducted by the University of Colorado, local teams of NFP and Child Protective Services (CPS) through collaborating with one another were able to effectively support high-risk families with services that addressed a broad range of socio-ecological factors that impact their health, stability, and safety.

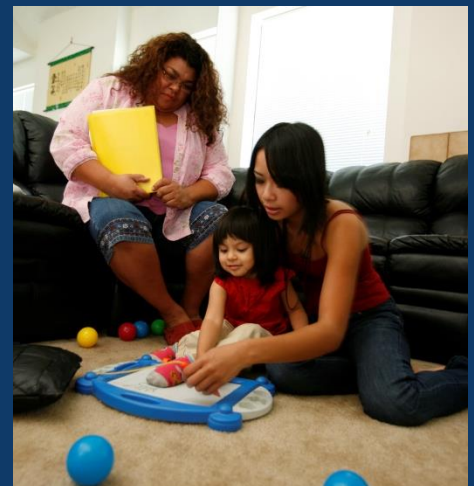
Several factors that helped to build a foundational context for effective organizational collaboration between NFP and CPS were identified through qualitative research, these factors included:

Environment

Having strong **leadership support** of organizational collaboration helped to distil down ideas and desires to collaborate among front-line workers, as well as provided opportunities for workers among the two agencies to develop working relationships.

Having similar goals and objectives and a **philosophical alignment** between NFP and CPS were considered necessary to facilitate organizational collaboration. Such alignment included:

- having a focus on **preventive services** (understanding that there was a need to mitigate potential safety issues before a family penetrated the CPS system),
- being **strengths-based** or strengths-oriented when approaching risk factors with clients, and
- being **client-centered** when providing services, such as including, engaging with, and **partnering with the family**.



Social Dynamics

To enhance organizational collaboration, research showed that workers from both agencies needed to first develop an **understanding of one another's** organizational structure, processes, and scope of work (including roles and responsibilities). Several social dynamics also existed that facilitated effective organizational collaboration between NFP and CPS, including:

- Being aware of one another which helped to foster **relationships** (both personal and professional) and **points of contacts** where workers from both organizations could utilize one another as resources, for example for consultation of grey areas in practice (such as marijuana, intimate partner violence, and mental health),
- Attending mutually-relevant **training and education**, such as how to approach marijuana, relationship-maintenance with clients, and motivational interviewing. Local CPS departments had also offered mandatory reporting training and resources for NFP nurses.
- NFP nurses upheld their responsibilities as **mandatory reporters** and made mandatory reports to CPS when necessary in a timely fashion.
- CPS workers **referred to NFP** when a client was eligible and could benefit from participation in the program.
- Having an open flow of **communication** between CPS and NFP when caseworkers referred clients to the NFP program, when NFP nurses made reports to CPS, and/or when NFP and CPS had a mutual client. Timely **follow-up** between the two agencies in these situations demonstrated effective organizational collaboration.



A Culture of Trust

When working with clients and various service providers, **ethics** and HIPAA concerns inevitably arose among workers from CPS and NFP. To overcome this challenge, CPS and NFP workers ensured that informed consents were signed by clients and shared with partnering agencies to facilitate communication regarding a mutual client.

Honesty and integrity were important traits that were exhibited by workers from both NFP and CPS when collaborating with one another.

In addition, both NFP and CPS workers demonstrated a **level of professionalism** when working with one another, including respecting each other's expertise in their individual domains.

Within both agencies, workers exerted **expertise** in their area of work and demonstrated **cross-cultural competency** when working with clients of diverse backgrounds.

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