

TIP SHEET



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Partnerships can benefit your initiative in many ways. Involving partners in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of your program helps spread awareness about children's mental health services and supports within your community and increases your initiative's sustainability.

Effective partnerships are usually created first among stakeholders in child-serving agencies, but can extend to a variety of local and state groups that have a stake in community health.



Why Should You Create Partnerships?

A partnership is a relationship between two or more organizations that can have more success by working together. While the goal of partnership formation is the sustainability of your program, collaboration also will strengthen the impact of your social marketing. Community recognition, public image, the opportunity to work with you and your other partners, and the chance to contribute to the issue of children's mental health can be incentives for a like-minded partner. Look for partners that have something to gain from an alliance with your program, as well as the ability to enhance and spread your message.

What Partnerships Can Do

- Integrate and implement the principles, values, and practices of your program within other entities
- Create internal/interagency cohesion
- Build effective relationships with decision-makers
- Build awareness of children's mental health
- Enhance your messages
- Expand and maximize resources
- Strengthen the sustainability of organizations
- Broaden your reach

Who To Approach¹

- Public and private agencies that address the multiple needs of children and families in the welfare system, such as education, juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, and primary health care
- Community-based organizations that provide services and supports to families, such as schools, churches, youth-serving organizations, neighborhood coalitions, hospitals, housing organizations, and local businesses

¹Building and Sustaining Partnerships. (n.d.) Retrieved from www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/administration/partnerships

- Family, youth, and community members who are served by your organization

How to Identify and Involve Local Program Partners

Use this checklist to help you identify partners that could benefit from your organization as well as be beneficial to your efforts.

1. Determine your needs.

- What activities could be done more effectively or enhanced with a partner?
- What are your challenges in achieving your goals and objectives, and where could a partner fill a gap?

2. Make a list of possible partners.

- What agencies, organizations, or individuals have a prominent voice in the community and similar values and messages to your system of care?
- Does the potential partner understand and support your program?

3. Research the organization thoroughly.

- Has the organization been involved with children’s mental health needs or shared resources on the topic in the past?
- Do you know who calls the shots and who would be the best person to reach out to? What is their role and how can you reach them?

4. Identify contacts and existing connections.

- Do you or any of your staff or board members have a contact at the organization who would be willing to introduce your organization to the potential partner’s decision-makers?
- Do you have a clear understanding of the specific audience the organization is trying to reach, and is your program compatible?

5. Begin your outreach with a clear and specific “Ask.”

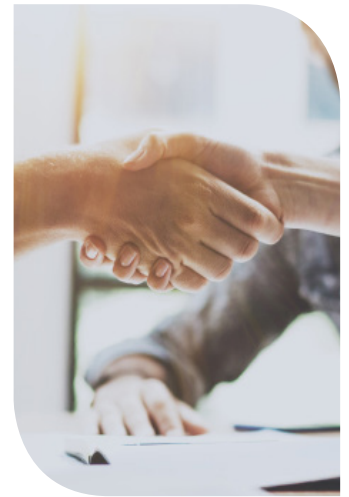
- Is it clear to the potential partner what the benefits are for them?
- What needs does the partner have? How could your program potentially address those needs and benefit the organization?
- Does the potential partner understand what you want them to do?

6. Follow up and come to an agreement.

- What does the partner want in return? Decide how your program can create a mutually beneficial relationship.
- What are the expectations of the partnership?
- What will the partnership look like 60 days, 90 days, and a year from the day you begin?
- Does the potential partner have an established audience and communication channels that you can tap into (e.g., newsletter, social media, blog, etc.)?

Potential partners will ask, “What’s in it for me?” Here are a few easy ways to work together and share credit:

- Co-sign letters to other stakeholders and key industry players.
- Lead sessions or give speeches together at conferences and events.
- Include both organizations’ logos on promotional collateral, digital marketing resources (e.g., email newsletters), event signage, press releases, and reports.
- Promote the partnership on your website and at events, as appropriate.



Nurturing Your Partnerships

Building trust takes time. Start by following through on what you have said you will do. Keeping the lines of communication open, informing your partner how resources are being used, sharing feedback from community members and other stakeholders, and demonstrating impact will increase trust. Express gratitude to the partner by sending thank-you notes and keeping them informed of your organization’s noteworthy accomplishments.

Resources

- **Webinar:** [Comprehensive School Mental Health: A Partnership Among Families, Schools, and Communities](#)
- **Report:** [State-Community Partnerships for Expanding the System of Care Approach \(PDF\)](#)
- **Report:** [Building and Sustaining Child Welfare Partnerships \(PDF\)](#)
- **Tip sheet:** [Involving Families in Social Marketing \(PDF\)](#)
- **Tip sheet:** [Involving Youth in Social Marketing \(PDF\)](#)