Systems Integration: Pursuing the “Holy Grail” of Public Policy

Toronto, Canada
October 2007
Overview
Discussion Topics

- **Background Information**
  - Why are we interested in this topic once again?
  - What is happening around the United States?

- **Service Integration 101**
  - What do we expect?
  - Why the current interest?

- **Challenges**
  - What challenges have been identified?
  - How can these challenges be overcome?
Background
Framework for Research, Analysis, and Technical Assistance

- Since 2002, we have been participating in an umbrella project involving several partners that encompasses:
  - A legal analysis of what is possible under current federal law.
  - An operational analysis focusing on sites pursuing service integration.
  - A technical and methodological analysis of accountability and evaluation issues.
- We have adopted an iterative process whereby research and analysis informs technical assistance and technical assistance informs research and analysis.
Iterative Process Components

- Welfare Peer Assistance Network (WELPAN)
- Intensive on-site work in Midwest states
- NGA Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovation
- National “lighthouse” site visits and meetings
- Brainstorming meetings with policy analysts, evaluation researchers, and state and local practitioners
- Other analysts and researchers at the local, state, national, and international levels
What states are doing it?

- Arizona
- Michigan
- Pennsylvania
- Hawaii
- Utah
- Wisconsin
What counties are doing it?

- Oregon: Coos and Jackson Counties
- New Jersey: Atlantic County
- Georgia: Bibb County
- California: San Mateo County
- Ohio: Montgomery County
- Colorado: Mesa and El Paso Counties
What localities are doing it?

- Hampton City, Virginia
- Louisville, Kentucky
- Seattle (White Center), Washington
Key Observations

- Overall belief that systems integration has the potential for improving outcomes for target populations.
- Bottom-up, locally-driven strategies are germinating all over the country.
- Innovation benefits from—and often requires—technical assistance and information about “lessons learned” from other sites.
- More evidence is needed to test the hypothesis that systems integration leads to improved participant outcomes.
- Systems integration is easier said than done.
It is easier said than done.

- Service integration is:
  - not extensive. Even in “successful projects,” none had fully developed intended service linkages.
  - an evolutionary process. It takes time to organize and implement, to attain legitimacy in the eyes of service providers, and to develop working relationships among participating agencies.
  - facilitated and inhibited by numerous factors, but no single factor is instrumental in benefiting or impeding a majority of projects.

- There is no one best services integration method for providing client services.
Who said that?

- From “An Evaluation of Services Integration Projects” completed for...
- U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social and Rehabilitation Services in...
- 1972.
Systems Integration 101
What is systems integration?

- No single definition.
- Other labels include “service integration” and “cross-systems innovation.”
- Common goal: to simplify and streamline access to and coordination of a broad, often complex array of services in order to improve outcomes for a specific population (e.g., children and families, children aging out of foster care, ex-offenders).
- Requires a shift in program management focus from delivering discrete services to a more holistic approach.
“Typical” Service Delivery System Attributes

- The system is too fragmented, leaving those clients with multiple issues vulnerable.
- The goals of individual programs are too limited.
- The services are often provided “in an inefficient, duplicative, and bureaucratically confusing manner to those who have the need.”
- The services tend to be lacking in accountability and to be self-perpetuating regardless of effectiveness.
- The service system is not sufficiently attentive to the long-term needs of clients.
Selected Attributes of Interest

- Families have:
  - Access to a broad range of services and supports
  - Ability to engage the system at different levels of intensity

- Families have access to individualized service plans that:
  - Accommodate multiple issues simultaneously
  - Respond to changing circumstances
Selected Attributes of Interest (continued)

- The focus is on achieving overall goals for individuals and families rather than those of a particular program.
- Public programs are viewed as one part of an overall system designed to support achievement of individual, family, and community goals.
Current interest is driven by opportunity...

- Natural progression of reforms since the 1980s.
- There has been a fundamental shift in how policy challenges are framed at the state and local level.
- This shift is reflected in evolving program purposes and emerging institutional cultures.
Evolving Program Purposes

- Income Support
  - Job Placement
    - Work Support
      - Family Support
        - Community Support
          - Prevention
## Emerging Institutional Cultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Attributes</th>
<th>Emerging Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on benefits</td>
<td>Focus on behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited purpose</td>
<td>Multiple goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous agency</td>
<td>Collaborative agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous staff</td>
<td>Teams/collaborative staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule oriented</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited target populations</td>
<td>Broader target populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term focus</td>
<td>Long-term focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process oriented</td>
<td>Outcome oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Static operations</td>
<td>Dynamic operations</td>
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...but also by necessity.

- Various populations have multi-faceted needs that individual programs are not designed to address.
- Concurrently, the ability to access flexible resources has diminished.
- The Deficit Reduction Act is requiring a re-examination of current practices.
- Effectiveness is more often being measured by outcomes rather than inputs or outputs.
Challenges
A Few Minor Challenges!

1) Not starting in the “right place.”
2) Confusing the means with the end.
3) Not having a alternative framework for thinking about integration.
4) Failing to appreciate the institutional implications of proposed changes.
5) Thinking about service integration as an event and not a process.
Not Starting in the Right Place

- Focusing on implementation of tactics rather than on:
  - A specific population.
  - A set of goals related to that population tied to measurable outcomes.
A Conceptual Framework for Service Integration

- Improved Outcomes for Target Populations
- Policy
- Administration
- Practice
- Realigned Governance Structure
- Service Co-location
- Blended/Braided Funding
- Cross-Program Planning & Management
- Common Outcome Measures
- Integrated IT Systems
- Coordinated Intake
- Integrated Case Management
- Realigned Job Functions
- Focus on Family as Client
- Build on Natural Supports
- Services Provided in the Community
Confusing the Means with the End

“Importing a solution” by picking from a list of tactics such as:
  - Co-location
  - Realigning governance structures
  - Consolidating intake
  - Consolidating job functions
  - Blending or braiding funding
  - Hiring a service liaison or “broker”
Not Having a Framework for Thinking About Systems Integration

- Institutional Similarity
- Relationship Intensity
Institutional Similarity Continuum

- Routinized – benefits-issuing; rule-driven; bureaucratic
- Mixed – contained elements of both routinized and non-routinized
- Nonroutinized – people changing, discretion-focused, professional models
### Institutional Similarity Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST CULTURAL TYPE</th>
<th>SECOND CULTURAL TYPE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Routinized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routinized</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonroutinized</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationship Intensity Continuum

Communication
  ⊣
  Cooperation
  ⊣
  Coordination
  ⊣
  Collaboration
  ⊣
  Convergence
  ⊣
  Consolidation

Level 1
Level 2
Level 3
# Relationship Intensity Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTIONAL SIMILARITY “A”</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;/2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routinized/Routinized</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed/Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonroutinized/Nonroutinized</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Institutional Similarity-Relationship Intensity Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITY INDEX</th>
<th>CULTURAL TYPES</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Routinized</td>
<td>A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonroutinized</td>
<td>A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>Routinized</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Routinized</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonroutinized</td>
<td>C2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes
- **Routinized** communication implies a structured and predictable interaction.
- **Mixed** communication involves a blend of routinized and nonroutinized elements.
- **Nonroutinized** communication is characterized by less structured and more spontaneous elements.
Failing to Appreciate Institutional Implications

- Concentrating efforts on modifications to practice protocols, administrative systems and policies.
- Neglecting differences in leadership style, organizational culture, and institutional systems.
Think of an iceberg.

Above the waterline are things we can easily see: practice, administration, policy.

However, there are other important factors below the waterline: leadership, organizational systems, and organizational culture.

Below the waterline factors are often overlooked when designing and carrying out these innovations.
A Conceptual Framework for Systems Integration

- Effective Organizational Systems
- Effective Leadership
- Empowering Organizational Culture
- Improved Outcomes for Target Population

Environmental Factors:
- Political Landscape & Priorities
- State & Local Fiscal Situation
- Federal Mandates & Priorities
- Demographic & Social Trends
- Partner Initiatives
A Conceptual Framework for Service Integration

Effective Leadership
- Necessary political support is aligned
- Community/stakeholder input is truly valued & used appropriately
- Power is effectively shared
- Improved Outcomes for Target Populations

Effective Organizational Systems
- Performance management drives strategy
- Program planning & accountability are outcome-oriented
- Staff & managers display growing skill & competence
- Training is responsive, relevant & ongoing
- Human resource management is responsive & flexible
- Financial management is flexible & accountable
- Contracting system is efficient & incents desired performance
- IT technical environment is conducive to innovation
- Authorizing environment is accurately assessed
- Organizational environment is accurately assessed
- Strengths & weaknesses of existing systems are accurately assessed
- Power is effectively shared
- Community/stakeholder input is truly valued & used appropriately
- Necessary political support is aligned

Empowering Organizational Culture
- Staff are committed to a shared organizational vision
- A set of beliefs/principles guide decision-making
- Staff know what is expected of them
- Staff understand their leadership role in producing outcomes
- Staff feel empowered, engaged & listened to
- Creativity is valued & risk-taking is supported
- Achievement is expected
- Continuous improvement is expected
- Organizational learning is valued

Policy, Administration, Practice
- Services Provided in the Community
- Integrated Case Management
- Coordinated Intake
- Integrated IT Systems
- Cross Program Planning & Management
- Blended/Braided Funding
- Service Co-location
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Focus on Family as Client
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Thinking of Service Integration as an Event, Not a Way of Doing Business

- Limiting flexibility within the implementation process.
- Failing to adjust to changing circumstances.
- Employing a “once and done” mind-set.
Systems Integration Life Cycle

1) Assess Situation
2) Develop Vision
3) Do a Line-of-Sight Exercise
4) Develop a Plan
5) Implement the Plan
6) Manage to Outcomes
How can identified challenges be overcome?
Central Questions

- What is to be accomplished and for whom?
- What tactics and strategies will lead you to the desired outcomes?
- Is there a good fit between the tactics and strategies chosen “above the water line” and the institutional milieu “below the water line”?
- What strategy is needed to bring these two into correspondence?
Four Critical Steps

1) Start with the ends rather than the means.
2) Replace tactical solutions with strategic thinking.
   - Begin with the participant’s perspective.
   - Follow with the institutional perspective.
3) Determine feasibility (understand the systems you are blending together).
4) Assess and adjust as you go.
Step 1: Focus on the ends rather than the means.

- Start with the population of interest.
- Determine what you want to accomplish for this population.
- Articulate a vision for change.
Step 2: Do a “Line-of-Sight” Exercise!

- Develop the story from the participant’s perspective
  - What will the system look like?
  - How will it be qualitatively different from what they experience now?

- Test your theory of change
  - Will your proposed strategies lead to your desired outcomes?
Outcome-Sequence Chart

- A linear, graphical depiction of the relationship between events and activities in a participant’s experience with the integrated system and defined benchmarks that need to be reached in order to achieve the intended outcomes.
Questions for Consideration

- For each event, interaction, and decision point, consider:
  - Why are you pursuing this particular strategy?
  - How will it contribute to the intended outcomes?

- For the sequence of events:
  - What are the critical junctures?
  - What needs to happen to move down the sequence?
  - Are there gaps in your logic/line of sight?

- What do you need to measure to make sure you are progressing? What are your benchmarks?
“Before” Strategic Thinking

- Economic security of families increased
- Child safety and well-being improved
- Children do better in school

Integrated Service Plan
Families participate in development of plan
Families have access to all needed services
Staff conducts SSP meetings with families
Families have easier access to agency
Families’ needs addressed more quickly
Service delivery systems improved
Families empowered to take charge
Economic security of families increased
Child safety and well-being impacted
Children do better in school

“After” Strategic Thinking

Inputs/Activities – Process Outputs – Intermediate Outcomes – End Outcomes

- SSP model developed
- Workers have access to integrated data reporting
- Families call one number
- Families have easier access to agency
Add the Institutional Perspective

- Consider what changes are needed in institutional practice, administration and policy to support the transformation in the participant’s experience.
Step 3: Consider whether the proposal is realistic; appreciate your institutional cultures!

- Do you have the pieces in place—leadership, empowered organizational culture, and dynamic organizational systems—to support taking these actions?
- What changes do you need to make before going forward?
Step 4: Assess and adjust as you go!
Benchmarks

- Inputs/Activities—expected to lead to outcomes but are not, in and of themselves, what we hope to achieve.
- Process Outputs—immediate benchmarks.
- Intermediate Outcomes—typically measures of participant behavior or circumstances.
- End Outcomes—long-term consequences or conditions in the target population that you desire.
Thinking Critically About the Model: Process Benchmarks

- Saturation
- Misdirection
- Drift
- Leakage
- Dosage
Thinking Critically About the Model: Operational Benchmarks

- Efficiency
- Comprehensiveness
- Individualized treatment
- Family coverage
- Family involvement
- Satisfaction
How do we know if systems integration really makes a difference?

The Conundrum

The more successful the effort to integrate (and many agencies/communities are very enthusiastic about their progress on this front), the less successful the ability to apply traditional evaluation strategies. As a result, very little rigorous evaluation has occurred.
Problematic Attributes of Systems Integration Models

- Research designs are complicated by questions about:
  - Which populations are served or targeted?
  - Which service technologies are ‘integrated’?
  - What are the program boundaries?
  - What are appropriate time frames for client outcomes and for when integration is implemented?
  - What are the agreed upon outcomes?
Questions, Comments, Final Thoughts
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