Reforming the family justice system initiative
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Reforming the Family Justice System

Using a Causal Layered Analysis to Develop a Theory of Change

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Who are We?
What are Our Perspectives?
Evolution of the Family Justice System
Why Traditional Approaches Were Not Working
Actors of the System Convene
Seeking New Ways
Causal Layered Analysis
Family Justice System: Litany

Photo credit: Istock http://www.istockphoto.com/photo/difficult-choice-4879520?st=3912863
Family Justice System: Systemic Causes

- “The law is jurisprudence, the language legalese, the system is designed for a win-lose scenario.”
Family Justice System: Worldview
Family Justice System: Metaphor/Myth

Family Justice System: A New Mental Model

Families Thrive

**Values**
- System is based on legal rights, with an adversarial, win-lose approach that is detrimental to children and parents
- The system ignores the impact of toxic stress on children and parents

**Change Values**
- Emphasize community-based resources, with a focus on healthy parents, on strong, healthy relationships between parents, and on children’s needs
- Need to inform decisions and approaches with brain science re impact of toxic stress on children

**Capacity**
- The court system is the default, but courts lack the capacity and expertise for resolving family relationship issues

**Increase Capacity**
- Focus on resources needed to build on the family’s strengths. Provide families with education, tools and resources to maintain healthy relationships, and to resolve disputes
- Empower parents to exercise personal responsibility and self-determination so that they can make choices together for the well-being of their family

**Access**
- The system is expensive and complicated with unequal access to appropriate forms of resolution
- Legal language is a barrier which adds to the fear that parents experience
- There is a need for clarity of language and consistency across all geographic locations

**Improve Access**
- Multiple options, multiple access with consistency across all geographic locations: people get to the right place at the right time for the most appropriate resolution for them

**Focus**
- Parents and system providers focus on legal solutions, not family wellness

**Shift the Focus**
- Children are the lens through which we design the system, with focus on building strong & healthy family

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**Assumptions**
- Chronic conflict leads to toxic stress and negative outcomes for children and parents
- Empowering parents to make early and informed decisions is effective in resolving family problems
- Social, relationship, financial and legal supports help foster stronger, more resilient families
- If parents strengthen their personal health and their parenting relationship, they and their children are happier and healthier
- The public costs associated with unresolved family problems are greater than the costs of supporting families to thrive

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*This is a living document which will be updated as we learn.*

Revised August 25, 2015
Our Observations
What Did We Learn?
What's Next?
Questions?