



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

How AOK Networks Improve Child and Family Outcomes

AOK Networks Mission: All Our Kids Early Childhood Networks are community-based collaborations that promote healthy pregnancies and the positive growth and development of all children birth to five and their parents/caregivers by assuring a well-coordinated, easily-accessible, equitable and just system of services and supports that engages parents as partners in making the system work for them.

CORE SETS OF PRINCIPLES: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | FAMILY SUPPORT | SYSTEM BUILDING

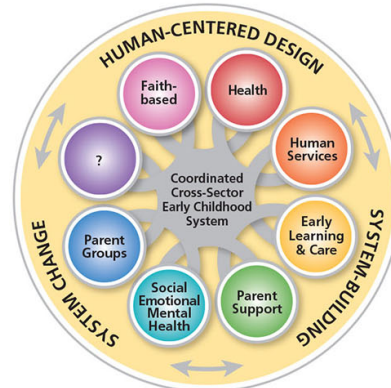
BUILD NETWORK CAPACITY



AOK Network partners work together to build their collaborative capacity to continuously improve the service delivery system by focusing on four core areas:

- Shared agenda and goals
- Collaborative leadership & engagement
- Continuous learning & adaptive action
- Network governance

TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE THE LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM



AOK Networks use a three-prong approach to address system issues and continuously improve the service delivery system.

Human-Centered Design

- Engage those who are experiencing the problem in solving the problem

System-Building

- Early identification
- Public information & education
- Information & referral
- Service needs & utilization
- Workforce training & development
- Local & state policy

System Change

- Engage diverse stakeholders
- Assess for system barriers
- Design and implement strategies that target system root causes
- Learn and adapt for results

SO THAT SYSTEM OUTCOMES ARE IMPROVED

- Access to quality services
- Coordination of efforts
- Equitable and just system
- Parents as partners in making the system work for them

AND MORE CHILDREN ARE POSITIVELY IMPACTED

- Babies are born healthy
- Young children are safe, healthy, and developing positively
- Children are kindergarten ready



AOK Networks Mission: AOK Networks are community-based collaborations that promote healthy pregnancies and the positive growth and development of all children birth to five and their parents/caregivers by assuring a well-coordinated, easily-accessible, equitable and just system of services and supports that engages parents as partners in making the system work for them.

Principles: To carry out their mission, AOK Networks (1) strengthen their capacity as a Network, (2) enhance coordination of cross-sector service delivery, and (3) improve the system of services and supports so it works for families. AOK Networks work with 3 sets of principles to guide their efforts in each of these areas.

(1) Community Engagement

The following principles help AOK Network partners increase their capacity to work well together.

- People support what they create.
- People act most responsibly when they care.
- Conversation is the way humans have always thought together. In conversation we discover shared meanings.
- To change the conversation change who is in the conversation.
- Expect leadership to come from anywhere.
- Focusing on what's working gives us energy and creativity. Ask what's possible, not what's wrong.
- The wisdom resides within us.
- Everything is a failure in the middle. Change occurs in cycles.
- Learning is the only way we become smarter about what we do.
- Meaningful work is a powerful human motivator.
- Humans can handle anything as long as we're together.
- Generosity, forgiveness, and love, these are the most important elements in a community.

Source: Margaret Wheatley and Nancy Margulies

(2) Family Support

The following principles help service providers respect and honor parents/caregivers' inherent strengths, wisdom, and capacity to care for their families. These principles help communities improve the overall quality of service delivery.

- Staff and families work together in relationships based upon equality and respect.
- Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members – adults, youth, and children.
- Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
- Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
- Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.

Source: Free to Grow

(3) System Building

These system building principles guide AOK Network partners in building a comprehensive system of services and supports that increases families' satisfaction with the system while improving service access, coordination, and equity.

Proactive: The system promotes the growth and well being of all young children.

Holistic: The system is comprehensive and addresses the full range of a young child's developmental needs.

Inclusive: The system integrates all community services for pregnant women, young children, and their parents/caregivers.

Strength-based: The system builds upon the strengths of families.

Culturally sensitive: The system is respectful and sensitive to the diverse needs of families.

User-friendly: The system is voluntary as well as easy to access and use.

Family involved: Families are involved in the development of the system.

Coordinated: Services are aligned and connected so that families can easily access services across typical service domains.

Outcomes-based: The system improves child and family outcomes.

Cooperative: Development of the system is a cooperative, community effort.

Source: Unknown

Network Capacity Building: AOK Network partners work together to build their collaborative capacity to continuously improve the service delivery system by focusing on:

- **Shared Agenda and Goals:** Having a shared understanding of the AOK Networks' mission and system improvement approach as well as the Network's local, cross-sector goals and initiatives that support that mission
- **Collaborative Leadership and Engagement:** Taking individual and organizational responsibility for carrying out the Network's shared agenda
- **Continuous Learning and Adaptive Action:** Engaging in a dynamic, iterative assessment, planning, action process that strengthens the impact and sustainability of the Network and its system improvement efforts regardless of changing conditions
- **Network Governance:** Establishing Network functions, structures, and processes that enhance the Network's capacity to collaborate and build the system of services and supports

System Improvement: AOK Networks use three approaches to address the system issues that get in the way of all babies, young children, and their families reaching critical outcomes.

System Building: AOK Networks seek to build a more coherent, cross-sector system of services and supports by establishing and/or improving six essential system components:

- **Early Identification:** Ensuring screenings and assessments take place for prenatal and postpartum parents (e.g., perinatal depression) and young children (e.g., developmental screening) so that needs can be identified early.
- **Public Information and Education:** Sharing information with providers, families, and the general public about the importance of the early years and parents' essential role, the work of the AOK Network, and local early childhood problems.
- **Information and Referral:** Increasing family, provider, and community knowledge of and connection to available services and resources by implementing a system wide referral process that includes a feedback loop.
- **Service Needs and Utilization:** Monitoring service availability, needs, and use to assure there are adequate services to meet the families' needs.
- **Workforce Training and Development:** Promoting the use of family support principles and assuring the early childhood system has the knowledge and skill to address locally targeted child and family problems.
- **State and Local Policy:** Addressing local and state level policy issues through information sharing, education, and advocacy.

Human-Centered Design: Engaging the people who are experiencing the problem in solving the problem means parents and providers are critical partners in creating a better service delivery system.

Systems Change: System change efforts seek to permanently change how the system functions and behaves by targeting powerful system leverage points that can transform the system. AOK Networks do this by:

- Engaging diverse stakeholders to understand system problems
- Designing and implementing strategies that target system root causes,
- Continuously learning what is and is not working, and
- Adapting efforts until the desired results are achieved.

All of these approaches are embedded in a broader process of **Continuous Improvement and Adaptive Action** to achieve desired results.

System Outcomes: By working together to continuously improve the local service delivery system, AOK Networks are able to improve system outcomes that lead to more positive outcomes for children and families.

- **Access to Quality Services:** More families have reasonable and affordable access to an array of quality services and resources that promotes their children's development and meets their families' needs.
- **Coordination of Efforts:** More families experience a coordinated cross-sector system of services and supports that is holistic, aligned, and easier to navigate.
- **Equitable and Just System:** More families experience an equitable system that assures all families have a fair opportunity to receive what they need to be successful.
- **Parents as Partners in Making the System Work for Them:** More parents are welcomed, respected, valued, and engaged as leaders in their families and in their communities.

Child Impacts

- Babies are born healthy
- Young children are safe, healthy, and developing positively
- Children enter kindergarten ready

See the AOK Networks Developmental Pathway for specific outcomes related to these impacts.