

The Community Engagement Team
Outreach through leadership development and coordinated community effort

Overview

Need: Although Cambridge is a resource-rich community, agency outreach efforts do not reach and engage all those who need them:

- Due to language and cultural barriers, families often are not able to comprehend and then navigate the human service system in order to find beneficial services;
- Professional agency staff often are not from the diverse minority populations most in need of services. As a result, staff are not always able to successfully do outreach or communicate with these populations.

Vision:

Cambridge embraces all families, provides the support they need to thrive, and encourages families to participate in shaping community life.

Mission:

The Community Engagement Team (CET), a multi-agency collaborative, reaches out to underserved Cambridge families and connects them to community events and resources, develops community leaders, and supports agencies in working with a diverse community.

Goals:

- I. Cambridge families will be aware of and connected to services and activities that help them thrive and participate in community life.
- II. New grassroots leaders will help shape community life to benefit underserved communities.
- III. Cambridge agencies will be effective in reaching out to diverse populations and providing them with the support they need to thrive.
- IV. CET will be seen as a valuable resource that helps shape priorities and policies.

Model:

In order to achieve the above goals, the community engagement model includes two complementary driving forces.

- **Leadership development:** The community engagement model presupposes that outreach is about leadership development. Once we share information with a family we expect them to share it with others. We have a responsibility to build and support leadership in the families we serve and the communities we work with and are a part of. Learning goes both ways that is from us to families and families to us. CET's multi-cultural outreach workers are community members. They provide agencies with feedback on culturally appropriate practices and assist agencies with outreach to underserved Cambridge families. The results of these efforts have provided CET with a wealth of information about best community engagement and outreach practices.
- **Outreach as a coordinated community effort:** Another aspect of the community engagement model is thinking about outreach as a coordinated community effort. The programs and organizations involved in CET have made a commitment to not only build leadership capacity in the community, but also to coordinate our efforts. Coordination includes cross agency hiring, training, supervision, and grant writing.

Activities:

- **Community Engagement Team membership:** Provide opportunities for programs to network, collaborate, learn from, and share best outreach practices. CET working groups include the Networking Event Planning Team, Supervisory Team, and American Born Black Outreach Team (ABBOT). 67 Cambridge programs participated in CET last year.
- **Outreach Workers:** Hire and train 9 community members (African American, Bangladeshi, Brazilian, Dominican, Ethiopian, Haitian, Somali, and Nepali) as outreach workers to reach out to and engage underserved families in early childhood activities and services. Set up parenting workshops in native language and/or in English, as appropriate. 335 families attended CET Outreach Worker parenting workshops in FY'11 and 31 small local businesses posted flyers given to them by the outreach workers.
- **Networking Events:** Increase Cambridge programs' knowledge of immigrant and minority communities. Networking Events are held 3 times per year in an effort to share best community engagement practices and to encourage programs to adjust their practices to become more welcoming to diverse communities.
- **American Born Black Outreach Team:** Form a partnership with African-American families that have young children in the city of Cambridge in order to help them connect to resources and services.
- **Technical Assistance:** Provide technical assistance to programs interested in receiving support in reaching out to underserved families and in learning specific information about cultural beliefs and barriers that might affect potential clients' access to programming.
- **Products and materials:** Develop products to help programs engage with underserved families and help them access services, such as a cultural competence inventory, pocket resource card, easy-English glossary of terms that appear on various kinds of registration and intake forms.

Performance Measures	FY'11
1. Number of providers and community members attending citywide networking events.	114
2. Number of hard-to-reach families outreach workers inform about parenting and other early literacy event who also attend those events.	662
3. Percentage of networking participants that report that their knowledge of outreach practices increased.	98.5%

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