STEP FOUR

TEAM DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

A strong family and professional partnership is built on trust, understanding and mutual respect. Although these relationships may grow organically, your quality improvement team will benefit from exploring the essential skills needed to form effective partnerships.

Below are activities you can use within your practice to support families and staff. The learning modules/resources will help participants expand on fundamental skill development in four crucial areas: storytelling, self-awareness and identification, deep listening and respectful conversations and conflict resolution and cultural collaboration.

STORYTELLING:

Family Health Partners are called upon to reflect and report on their personal experiences with access to healthcare and the quality of services. Practice providers and staff working with families have stories to share as well. Learning to tell a personal story in a manner that creates change without embarrassment or over-exposure is a critical skill.

EXERCISE: Storytelling to make a difference

This learning exercise brings to awareness the potential power of a family's story and many ways that listeners might hear it.

SELF-AWARENESS AND IDENTIFICATION:

Understanding and appreciating who we are and how we differ from others makes it easier to work collaboratively without sacrificing one's own unique vantage point.

RESOURCE: **True Colors**

True Colors is a highly regarded, commercially developed tool that is an adaptation of a Myers-Briggs inventory. Users complete a self-inventory tool to identify to which of four color types they belong.

Essential skill development
Self-awareness and identification

Identifying with our personality and the personalities of others provides insights into different motivations, actions and communication approaches. The mutual understanding of our core values and needs offers a solid base to communicate, motivate and achieve common goals with utmost dignity, efficacy and mutual respect. You may want all your team members to learn and share what their true color is. It can help team members work together in ways that take into consideration the diversity of everyone's preferences and styles.

True Colors has been used successfully with many family-professional partnership teams to help them work collaboratively. It offers a universal language that accelerates problem solving, increases trust and reduces conflict.

DEEP LISTENING AND RESPECTFUL CONVERSATIONS:

Improving communication skills around deep listening and respectful conversations allows all perspectives—including diverse and perhaps controversial ones—to be given consideration. Discussions, regardless of the topic sensitivity, should occur respectfully, leading to better working relationships and greater understanding of the perspective of all.

> "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."
>
> Steven R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

Deep listening and respectful conversations

EXERCISES:

Deep listening:

This exercise helps to lower fear and discomfort levels by establishing a sense of safety and trust. It is an explicit practice of bypassing stereotypes and bias by focusing on listening to another person without responding or judging.

Essential skill development

Deep listening and respectful conversations

Understanding difficult conversations:

Situations leading to difficult conversations happen daily. Parents and professionals have strong feelings about many topics, and opinions will differ in large and small ways. This exercise explores the book *Crucial Conversations* and the three ingredients of challenging or difficult conversations.

The feelings conversation:

When expressing themselves, many people tend to use words that are related to feelings but aren't really feelings. Learn how we always have a choice in how and when we express our feelings.

The "What I really want" conversation method:

Reflecting on these simple questions helps to re-focus energies on a productive approach to conversation.

The focused conversation (ORID) technique:

The ORID (Objective, Reflective, Interpretive and Decisional) technique is a form of structured conversation led by a facilitator. The method was developed by the Institute for Cultural Affairs as a means to analyze facts and feelings, to ask about implications and to make decisions intelligently.

RESOURCE: **Technology of Participation (ToP)**®

Technology of Participation (ToP)® is a framework offered by the Institute for Cultural Affairs in the USA, which teaches team members how to collaborate on projects and teaches group facilitators how to effectively lead their teams.

Essential skill development
Conflict resolution

A practice's commitment to quality improvement requires a variety of experiences to generate new ideas that improve patient care. An effective practice will bring together a variety of perspectives, voices and cultures. From this variety, conflict will likely occur.

Conflict can be both positive and negative. Conflict can be positive when it helps open up the discussion of an issue, results in problems being solved or new ideas being generated and releases emotions that have been stored up. It can be negative when it diverts people from dealing with the really important issues, creates feelings of dissatisfaction among the people involved or leads to individuals and groups becoming insular and uncooperative.

Supporting the quality improvement team involves helping members develop skills that will allow them to leverage the beneficial aspects of conflict while still treating each other with mutual respect.

At an individual level, this requires an understanding of one's own worldview (culture) and how it is reflected in one's attitudes and behavior. It requires that people acquire values, principles, areas of knowledge, attributes and skills in order to work in cross-cultural situations in a sensitive and effective manner. These skills are sometimes referred to as cultural competence or intercultural collaboration.

Bringing together a variety of perspectives, voices and cultures leads to differences of opinions and possible conflict. Teams must reflect on their worldviews and develop skills to participate in respectful conversations when opinions differ.

EXERCISES:

Early memories: Reflect on the experiences that have shaped your views of differences. Work to understand the roles of reciprocal relationships to help quality improvement team members empathize with and support people from other cultures and backgrounds.

The brick wall and the gateway: This exercise helps individuals reflect on the experience of respectful conversations and identify best practices. It may also result in a set of meeting guidelines.