



Evaluation Snapshot

Research summaries at a glance

September 2009

Evaluation Snapshot
examines the effect of Georgia Family Connection community collaboration on indicators of child, family, and community well-being in the state.

The Collaborative Member Survey assesses the level of collaborative functioning for five underlying factors:

- **Planning**
- **Leadership**
- **Communication**
- **Family Involvement**
- **Budgeting**

The Collaborative Member Survey offers a unique advantage for measuring collaborative functioning. It measures similarities and differences in perspectives among members of the same collaborative as well as differences in overall responses between collaboratives.

Research Model

Understanding Collaborative Functioning Through the Collaborative Member Survey

Compiled from research by The Theory of Change workgroup

Previous editions of *Evaluation Snapshot* have examined the effect of Georgia Family Connection community collaboration on KIDS COUNT indicators of community well-being. In this edition we take a closer look at collaborative functioning by examining responses from the Collaborative Member Survey, which has been administered annually since 2006 in each Georgia Family Connection collaborative.

The Member Survey measures collaborative functioning, effectiveness, influence, and sustainability. Collaborative functioning refers to the collaborative's capacity to clarify its structure; involve representative, influential community sectors in its work; and develop and implement a comprehensive plan to influence systems change that will benefit the entire community.

The Value of Multiple Member Surveys from Each Collaborative

Understanding differences in collaborative functioning both within and between collaborative organizations brings us a step closer to understanding how Family Connection collaboratives ultimately help to improve the lives of Georgia's children and families.

A unique strength of the Member Survey data is that multiple members from each collaborative participate in the process. Examining multiple perspectives provides a more reliable and valid assessment of collaborative functioning. Each collaborative member is likely to have a slightly different perspective on how the collaborative as a whole is working. We look for responses that are shared among members of the same collaborative. Multiple responses from each collaborative give critical information about how collaboration is really working *within* each collaborative, and how it differs *between* collaboratives:

- **Within collaboratives** we determined how much Member Survey factor scores vary among members of the same collaborative. Then we attempted to explain these differences using characteristics of the individual respondents. For example, do board members and staff members differ in their ratings? Do members who attend most collaborative meetings differ in their ratings from members who attend only a few?
- **Between collaboratives** we investigated whether county and collaborative characteristics affected Member Survey factor scores. For example, are Member Survey scores higher among counties with more tenured

The Theory of Change Workgroup used multilevel confirmatory factor analysis to analyze the:

1. clustering of Member Survey items into factors;
2. level of consistency in responses to Member Survey scales by respondents from the same collaborative;
3. differences between collaboratives in responses to Member Survey scales; and
4. effects of higher Member Survey scores on collaborative effectiveness.

collaborative coordinators, or among counties that have a higher socio-economic status (SES)?

Five Underlying Factors of Collaborative Functioning

The first step in analyzing Member Survey data was to identify survey items that were statistically related to one another, indicating they address a common component of collaborative functioning. Using the statistical technique of factor analysis, we identified five underlying factors of collaborative functioning, including the inclusiveness of planning and decision-making, the quality of collaborative leadership, the level of internal and external communication, the degree of family involvement, and the extent of financial reporting and budgeting.

These factors represent groups of items to which respondents tended to reply in a similar fashion. Higher scores indicate higher collaborative functioning.

Key Findings

All 157 collaborative organizations were required to complete the 56-item Member Survey in 2006. Each collaborative decided which of its members would respond.

Our workgroup conducted analyses for each factor in Table 1. An average of 18 collaborative members, ranging from a low of three to a high of 43, completed the survey statewide.

The findings were statistically significant, even after accounting for other significant factors such as age of the collaborative, county SES, collaborative structure, and individual respondent characteristics. The key findings were:

- Collaboratives that have coordinators with more tenure had higher scores on Planning, Leadership, Communication, Family Involvement, and Budgeting. This finding validates the widely held notion that changing coordinators can be a setback for collaborative functioning. We cannot be sure this is a causal relationship. Instead, it may indicate that collaborative organizations, which are not functioning well, are more likely to replace their coordinators.
- Collaboratives whose respondents attended more meetings had higher levels of Communication.
- Collaboratives located in counties with lower SES had higher scores on Budgeting. This finding implies that these counties collaborate more to effectively manage their limited resources.
- Collaborative board members gave higher ratings of Leadership, Communication, and Budgeting, compared to non-board members.
- Collaborative staff members gave higher ratings of Communication and Budgeting, compared to non-staff members. The communication finding suggests that collaboratives would benefit from special attention to facilitating communication among collaborative members.

Overview of Five Factors from the 2006 Collaborative Member Survey

Factors	# of items	Sample survey items
Planning	4 items	"Many collaborative members are actively involved in developing the community strategic plan."
Leadership	4 items	"Collaborative leaders give sufficient time to their collaborative duties."
Communication	4 items	"There is open communication between collaborative leaders and the coordinator."
Family Involvement	5 items	"The collaborative values the opinions of family members."
Budgeting	5 items	"Collaborative members review the budget regularly."

Note. 5-point response scale: Strongly Disagree / Strongly Agree

Evaluation Snapshot is based on reports from the Georgia Family Connection Partnership Theory of Change Workgroup, a team of researchers from EMSTAR Research and Georgia State University.

Please direct questions or comments to Steve Erickson, Ph.D. at eval@gafcp.org.

Georgia Family Connection Partnership
235 Peachtree Street
Suite 1600
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-527-7394

gafcp.org

Next Step: Testing Effects of Collaborative Functioning on Indicators of Community Well-Being

Our next step for the analysis of Collaborative Member Survey data is to treat the five factors of collaborative functioning as predictors of child, family, and community well-being. Because we want to determine whether outcomes result when collaboratives function effectively, we must ensure that our measures of outcomes follow our measures of collaborative functioning by at least one year.

At the writing of this edition of *Evaluation Snapshot*, the most recent KIDS COUNT data we had were collected in 2006—the same year this survey was first administered. As 2007 KIDS COUNT data become available, we will begin testing effects of the 2006 Member Survey responses, in conjunction with other key data, on the Georgia KIDS COUNT indicators of teen pregnancy, repeat teen births, high-school completion, child abuse and neglect, and low birth-weight. These analyses will investigate which aspects of collaborative functioning have the strongest associations with increased child, family, and community well-being. We will report test results in upcoming editions.