

UPSTREAM

Strengthening Children and Families through
Prevention and Intervention Strategies:

A Court and Community-Based Approach

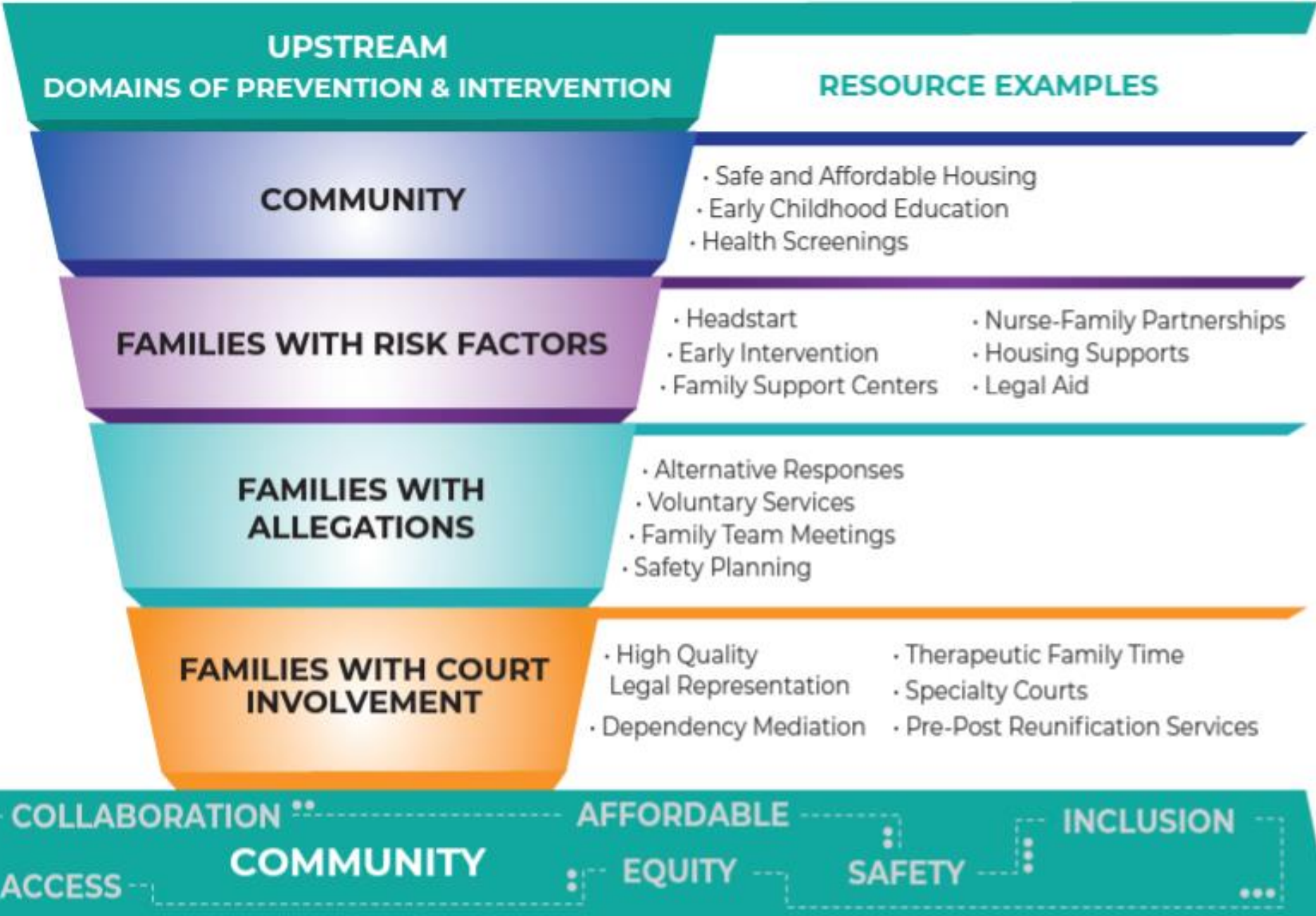




Upstream Overview

Community-Based Approach

- Leverages court resources, judicial leadership, and child welfare agency partnerships
- To enhance community collaboration
- Through state and local coordination, community mapping, and action planning





Massachusetts
2020



Indiana
2021



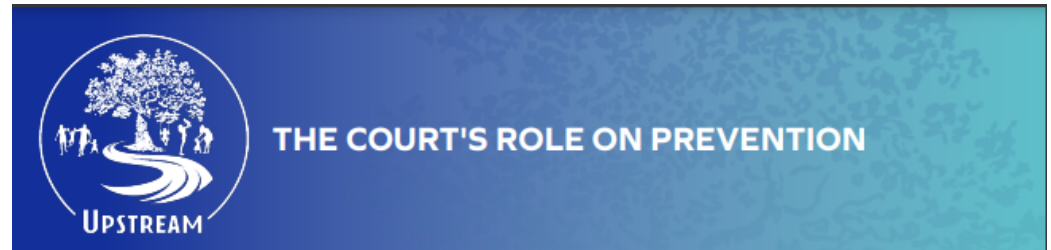
Kentucky
2022



Nebraska
2023

The Court's Role in Prevention

- Shifts reactive practices to proactive strategies
- Courts support prevention of maltreatment through community partnerships
- Courts support prevention of removal through best practices in the courtroom
- Courts support prevention of future maltreatment through ensuring access to a continuum of effective services in the community



The Purpose of Upstream

Upstream is a community-based approach that leverages judicial resources, court leadership, child welfare agency partnership, and state, local and, community stakeholder engagement to collaboratively develop a plan of action that aims to strengthen communities, prevent child maltreatment and out-of-home

placement, reduce court involvement, and support safe and healthy families. The Upstream framework is grounded in a prevention mindset with the ultimate goal of providing every family the community-based supports they need to have safe and healthy outcomes.

Upstream shifts reactive practices to proactive strategies

In most communities, the child welfare system, including the courts, operates in a reactive state. Only after an incident of maltreatment are resources provided to focus on the needs of the family. Too often, the actions of the system worsen the situation, sometimes causing further stress, trauma, and burden in an already challenging situation. Additionally, family-serving agencies are often siloed, striving to fulfill all families' needs themselves and lacking awareness of support services available in their community. Upstream begins to remedy the current reactive state by identifying opportunities to support families before court involvement is required through engaging community partners in a **structured mapping process**. The result is a **collaborative action plan** where the entire community, including the court, assumes responsibility for the health and safety of families.

Courts support prevention of maltreatment through community partnerships

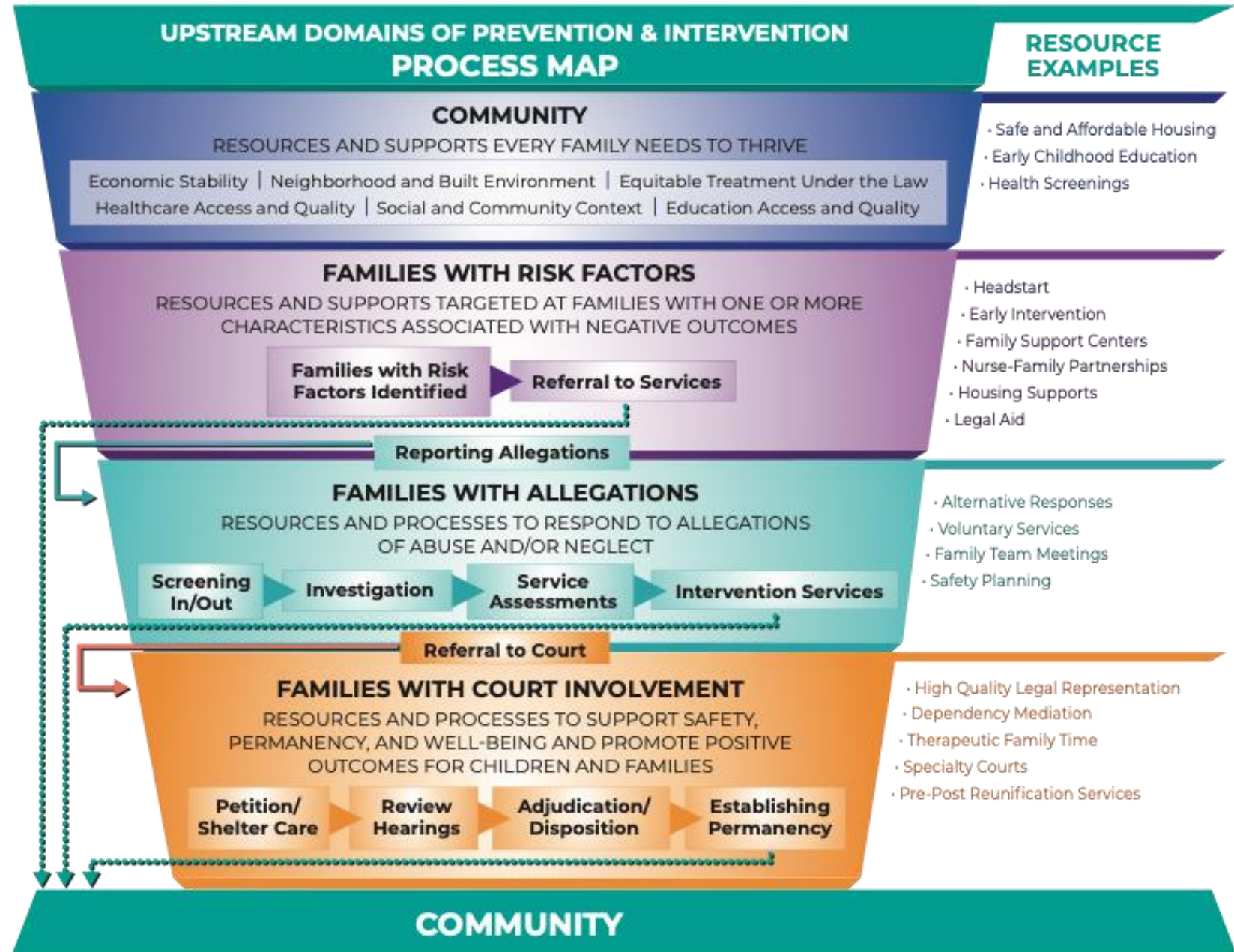
Much has been said about the convening power of judges, and while that is the case in many communities, judges also have a unique and vital role at the table as a community partner. Judges who oversee child welfare cases see traumatized

children and families every day. They also routinely observe missed opportunities where families could have received help earlier, where necessary services are not available or accessible, and where resources are overwhelmed or strained. As such, judges have valuable insight into the strengths and needs of communities, what supports a family's success, and what causes further harm. These perspectives are critical to supporting a prevention mindset throughout communities. Judges are looked to as important conveners in Upstream, but also have the opportunity to contribute as stakeholders.

The positional power that judges leverage to convene stakeholders around the table comes at a cost if the judge does not also fully engage as a member of the collaborative. A true community collaboration only exists where there are shared interests, mutual benefits, and the sharing of power. A judge must acknowledge the positional power they have and how the community's perceptions of that power may impact collaboration. The concept of power sharing is inherently challenging for a court, but in the community, judges can begin to build trusting relationships that lead to effective collaboration through inviting community members to the table, listening to their needs and solutions, and welcoming new and different perspectives.

Upstream Domains

Family-centered focus which identifies domains of prevention and intervention where strategies can be used to support safe and healthy families.



UPSTREAM DOMAINS OF PREVENTION & INTERVENTION

PROCESS MAP

RESOURCE EXAMPLES

COMMUNITY

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS EVERY FAMILY NEEDS TO THRIVE

Economic Stability

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Equitable Treatment Under the Law

Healthcare Access and Quality

Social and Community Context

Education Access and Quality

- Safe and Affordable Housing
- Early Childhood Education
- Health Screenings

FAMILIES WITH RISK FACTORS

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS TARGETED AT FAMILIES WITH ONE OR MORE CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Families with Risk Factors Identified

Referral to Services

- Headstart
- Early Intervention
- Family Support Centers
- Nurse-Family Partnerships
- Housing Supports
- Legal Aid

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS

CHILD WELFARE

FAMILIES WITH ALLEGATIONS

RESOURCES AND PROCESSES TO RESPOND TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT

Screening In/Out

Investigation

Service Assessments

Intervention Services

JUVENILE JUSTICE

YOUTH WITH ALLEGATIONS

RESOURCES AND PROCESSES TO RESPOND TO ALLEGATIONS OF DELINQUENCY

Diversion

Prosecution

Juvenile Court Intake

- Alternative Responses
- Voluntary Services
- Family Team Meetings
- Safety Planning

REFERRAL TO COURT

FAMILIES WITH COURT INVOLVEMENT

RESOURCES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT SAFETY, PERMANENCY, AND WELLBEING AND PROMOTE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Petition/ Shelter Care

Adjudication/ Disposition

Review Hearings

Establishing Permanency

YOUTH WITH COURT INVOLVEMENT

RESOURCES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT REHABILITATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Diversion

Adjudication

Disposition

Reentry

- High Quality Legal Representation
- Dependency Mediation
- Therapeutic Family Time
- Specialty Courts
- Pre-Post Reunification Services

COMMUNITY



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Through an increased understanding of the Social Determinants of Health, judges and court leaders can be more aware of how social context affects families and are able to have a more comprehensive picture of the barriers and limitations to resources and supports that court-involved families experience.

The Constitution of the World Health Organization defines health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."¹ While access to quality medical care is critical to good health, medical care itself accounts for only 10-20% of health outcomes for populations.² The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are of more influence, impacting 80-90% of health outcomes.³

The SDOH is a place-based framework that extends beyond individual health behaviors to the social, physical, and environmental factors⁴ that can have a causal role in health outcomes.⁵

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines the SDOH as the conditions in the environment where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health functioning and quality of life outcomes and risks. The Social Determinants are the non-medical conditions that impact physical, mental, and social well-being.⁶

Identifying and understanding the direct and indirect impact of the SDOH on outcomes helps communities select strategies that create conditions where individuals, children, and families thrive.

Social Determinants of Health Domains⁷

Economic Stability
The connection between financial resources and health, including key issues such as employment, income, expenses, and debt.

Education Access and Quality
The connection between learning and development and health and well-being, with a focus on literacy, language, early childhood education, and higher education.

Healthcare Access and Quality
The connection between people's access to and understanding of health services and their health, including key issues such as access to primary care, health insurance coverage, and health literacy.

Neighborhood and Built Environment
The connection between where a person lives and their health and well-being, with a focus on quality and availability of housing, access to transportation, water quality, and neighborhoods free of violence.

Food Security
Physical, social, and economic access to adequate and healthy food.⁸



RISK FACTORS

Characteristics that may increase the likelihood of experiencing a negative event.



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Characteristics associated with lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce the impact of a risk factor.



Social Determinants of Health

- Access to healthcare
- Education
- Social/Community Context
- Economic Stability
- Neighborhood
- Impact physical health, mental health, and well-being

Supporting Equity for Children and Families

- Examine data for disparate outcomes
- Integrate voices of families with diverse backgrounds and experiences in all aspects of Upstream
- Infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion through all Upstream work
- Align with existing efforts and partners



SUPPORTING EQUITY

FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Disparate Outcomes for Children and Families in the Child Welfare System

For decades, disparities have been identified at every decision-making point in the child welfare system from initial reports, acceptance of reports for investigation, substantiation of maltreatment, entries into foster care, and exits from care. Black families are overrepresented in reports of suspected maltreatment and are subjected to child protective services investigations at higher rates than other families. Further, Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native children are at greater risk than other children of being confirmed for maltreatment and placed in out-of-home care.¹

Black and Native American children are much less likely to reunify with their parents than white children.² Native American and Alaska Native children are 2.7 times more likely than White children to ever experience the termination of both parents'

rights, and African American children are 2.4 times more likely than White children to experience the termination of parental rights. These differences vary dramatically across the states due to local practices, norms, and resources.³

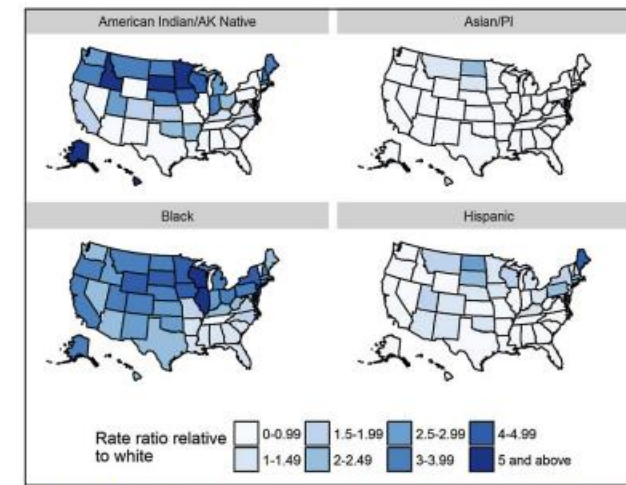


Figure 1. Inequality in Cumulative Prevalence of Termination of Both Parents' Rights by Race/Ethnicity Relative to White Children, 2000-2016 Synthetic Cohort.



THE VALUE OF INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

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Upstream Values Engaging Individuals with Lived Experience

Upstream recommends including individuals with lived experience on planning teams, mapping workshops, and implementation teams. Individuals with lived experience may include parents, children, kinship providers, and foster parents. Families touched by child welfare and court systems have a unique insight into the resources and supports needed to create thriving families. People who have been involved in these systems know what it feels like to move through a system, to be scrutinized, and to be expected to comply with others' requirements. They know what helped them and what would have helped them. Because of this, families should be engaged throughout the entire process as partners to co-create systems improvements.

Every community has a range of agencies, organizations, and systems tasked with providing the resources and supports families need to thrive.

Too often, the effectiveness of these entities is limited by inequitable service availability and accessibility, lack of coordination and collaboration, and inadequate community engagement. This results in missed opportunities to identify and address risk factors before child welfare or court involvement. Including individuals with lived experience throughout the Upstream process

provides the opportunity to identify and address those missed opportunities and enriches the collaborative process.

Critical Role of Individuals with Lived Experience

Individuals with lived experience play a critical role in system improvement efforts. Their personal experiences provide a tangible glimpse of how community resources and system processes interface. Incorporating their perspectives throughout systems improvement efforts enables communities to effectively design processes and deliver services that best meet the actual needs of children and families.

Meaningfully including individuals with lived experience also fosters the larger community's endorsement of changes and innovations. Solutions informed by individuals with lived experience are more likely to be implemented and sustained.

Acknowledging Challenges for Engagement


System professionals demonstrate a deep commitment to creating communities where all families thrive when they invite recipients of system services to the table. The willingness of system actors to include those with lived experience

The Value of Including Individuals with Lived Experience

- Critical role of individuals with lived experience
- Acknowledging challenges for engagement
- Strategies for meaningful engagement

Using Data to Map Community Resources, Strengths, and Challenges: Data in Context

- Data is a tool to understand community context
- Data alone never tells the whole story, behind all the numbers are real people living in real communities
- Data points for the Upstream mapping workshop



DATA IN CONTEXT
USING DATA TO MAP COMMUNITY RESOURCES, STRENGTHS, AND CHALLENGES

Upstream provides a framework by which to convene diverse stakeholders to develop a comprehensive landscape of communities. A fundamental part of Upstream is community mapping. Community mapping requires that stakeholders assess their resources, strengths, challenges, and limitations with the goal of identifying actionable community-driven strategies.

Data is a tool to understand community context. Data can come from a variety of sources, including federal and state government agencies, courts, and community-based service providers. Qualitative data from individual and community focus groups, surveys, and subjective observations can provide insight to quantitative data and further context to understand the community. When viewing, discussing, and interpreting data as a group, communities can identify areas where more information is needed, test assumptions, identify bright spots, and note challenges.

When viewing and interpreting data, it is important to remember that the data alone never tell the whole story. Behind all of the numbers are real people living in real communities with real experiences to lend meaning to the data.

As communities view and interpret data, they should consider several questions:

- ▶ Who should be at the table and who is missing?
- ▶ What assumptions do I come with about the community?
- ▶ What hypothesis do I have about what the data is telling me?
- ▶ How does the information change if it is disaggregated by race/ethnicity?
- ▶ What additional information do I need to test that hypothesis?
- ▶ What are the systemic issues that might be contributing to the outcomes identified in the data?
- ▶ What relationship might this data have to what I have heard, lived, or observed?
- ▶ What is happening socially and economically in the community that may impact this information?

Data Points for the Upstream Mapping Workshop

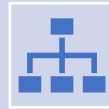
A critical piece of the Upstream Mapping Workshop is presenting data to the group to paint a picture of the community compared to national and state conditions. The table below offers several suggestions of data points to consider including in the Mapping Workshop presentation. Many of these sources offer the opportunity to disaggregate the data by demographic variables, such as race/ethnicity, gender, or age. Consider the following questions when deciding which data points to include:

- ▶ Are there recent data available (i.e., within the last five years)?
- ▶ Are there data available at multiple levels (i.e., national, state, and local)?
- ▶ Are the data able to be disaggregated by demographics such as race, gender, or age?
- ▶ Is the subject of the data an issue that of importance to the community?
- ▶ Are there initiatives already in place to address the topic?
- ▶ Have related resources recently been added or eliminated?
- ▶ How does this data help to define bright spots and challenges?

The following table offers several examples of data points that are publicly available online and their sources. This is absolutely not an exhaustive list. The local community may also have important data points available that are not included on this list, so it is important to work with the Local Planning Committee to determine what sources exist and how to access the information.

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Upstream Phases



State Leadership Planning, Coordination, and Capacity Building



Training Facilitators to Conduct Local Mapping Workshops



Local Planning and Collaboration, Local Mapping Workshops, Action Planning, and Implementation



Objectives of Mapping Workshop

- Identify resources and gaps in practices, protocols, and programs in each domain
- Discuss how children and families enter and move from one domain to the next to develop a process map
- Collectively agree on the priorities for changes
- Engage stakeholders and elevate community voice
- Develop an action plan to improve system and service-level responses
- Implement tenants of action plan and measure impact on outcomes



Upstream Report Structure

- Missouri Plan for Upstream
- Overview of Upstream
- Resources and opportunities across the domains
- Description of relevant processes
- Action plans for identified priorities
- Next steps and recommendations

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