

Collaboration at the Community Campus

A Report Prepared by the Carsey Institute
for
Foundation for Seacoast Health

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Executive Summary

The Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire was contracted by the Foundation for Seacoast Health to carry out research on the collaboration model being developed at the Community Campus. This research assesses the degree to which collaboration has occurred at the Community Campus and attempts to identify goals of staff members for the future of the Campus.

The research team completed in-depth interviews with 51 staff members at the Community Campus and surveyed all staff members. 79 completed surveys were returned. Data were collected in the spring and summer of 2007. The analysis of the interviews and surveys is the basis for this report.

The major findings of the research are:

- The perception among staff is that there is a substantial amount of collaboration that occurs among agencies at the Community Campus. On a scale of 1-10, the average for all staff who completed the survey is 5.8 on the 10-point scale, indicating a moderately high perceived level of collaboration. There is some noteworthy variability in this perception, which is related to agency size, among other things.
- Co-location of agencies at the CC is perceived to have many advantages, and it could be argued that co-location greatly enhances collaboration.
- Co-location does not automatically increase knowledge and understanding across agencies. Some staff at the Campus feel that they do not know enough about what other agencies are doing.
- Many appreciate the high quality of the physical facility in addition to the benefits of co-location. The building is attractive, the grounds are serene and pleasant, the space provides for common areas like the cafeteria, vital for networking.
- The Foundation functions as both a landlord and as an administrative leader for the coordination of efforts among agencies. These dual roles are challenging and create tensions among agencies and between agencies and the Foundation.
- Many of the Campus workers are committed to and supportive of efforts to collaborate, and collaboration is seen by many as an important benefit for the families and children who come to the Campus.

- On the other hand, there are staff who question the ability of collaboration to work given the constraints imposed by resources, especially staff time, and competing agency missions. If efforts to advance collaboration are to be effective, additional resources and processes will be required.
- Much of the collaboration that now exists is informal and results from the networking that occurs as staff carry out their work. The networking is facilitated by co-location and common areas at the Campus.
- Collaboration, though valued, is not an articulated goal of any one agency. At this point when collaboration occurs, it tends to be sporadic, programmatic, and driven by staff initiative as opposed to regular, multi-faceted and supported by a structured process.

Five major recommendations are suggested by the interview and survey data:

- Decide whether it is in the best interests of the member agencies and the families served by the CC to move forward with a collaborative system, supported at all levels. Without this, the following recommendations are moot.
- Develop a shared vision for formalizing collaboration at the administrative level, paying careful attention to the value-add associated with collaboration
- Develop a formal plan for collaboration, articulating the shared vision, and setting benchmarks and outcomes.
- Incorporate ideas from parents and community members for the formalized collaboration plan
- Present the plan to all staff with the goal of soliciting staff buy-in – how will this help staff meet the needs of families and children better?

Specific steps that could be adopted as part of the collaboration plan include:

- Create a common reception area for clients.
- Have a campus-wide orientation for new staff; ongoing.
- Hire a staff person (or a team) whose position is defined as enhancing collaboration at the campus.
- Hold occasional campus-wide events

- Develop a budget for collaboration-oriented activities: marketing and PR, security personnel, an interactive web site, etc.
- Consider investing in campus-wide communication systems that facilitate collaboration by creating time efficiencies.
- Develop incentives for collaborating

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BACKGROUND

Based on the theme that “it takes a village to raise a child,” Jacqueline Kraemer (1993) describes collaboration as it pertains to family support and education efforts as “...the process of combining and coordinating financial, human, and administrative resources and activities to deliver more comprehensive, coherent, and humane services to children and families.” There are a number of paths organizations might take to becoming collaborations. Visionary leaders, an emergent source of funds, a community-level crisis, or a legislative mandate are just a few (1993). Despite these varied beginnings, the vision to operate as a collaborative effort is not immediately apparent or embraced, nor should it always be. This was the case when the Foundation for Seacoast Health, the founder and overseer of the Community Campus (CC), was established six years ago.

Born from a surplus of funds resulting from the purchase of Portsmouth Hospital by a for-profit organization, the Foundation for Seacoast Health was faced with a large responsibility to attract a number of non-profit agencies to co-locate at a shared campus, to help the agencies adapt to their new environment, and to help coordinate their offerings in the spirit of this new model. Amidst the slew of logistic and operational challenges in the first few years, developing ways of coordinating care and services was largely put on hold, even if this was viewed as an opportunity offered through the co-location of like-minded agencies. Now, at a point when member agencies of the CC have had time to work out the logistical and operational kinks and have grown accustomed to a multi-agency co-located effort, there is an opportunity to take stock of what the model has grown to embody and also to determine if there is an alternative, more progressive path that might be in its greater interest to explore based on its mission and goals. This research assesses the degree to which collaboration has occurred at the Community Campus and attempts to identify goals of staff members for the future of the Campus.

METHODOLOGY

Because the agencies across the CC are comprised of many employees with different functions ranging from direct care to administrative and who have been with their respective agencies for varying lengths of time, a multi-method approach was used for this research. In-depth interviews were conducted with select staff members from each agency while all staff members throughout the CC were asked to complete a survey. The purpose of the interviews and surveys was to gather information on staff members’ experiences with and perceptions of collaboration.

The first step in selecting staff members for interviews was to consult a list of all staff by position/title at each agency. After arriving at a proportionate number of staff members per agency, the research team contacted each agencies’ Executive Director (unless the staff consisted of just one or two employees) to determine who would be appropriate for discussing collaboration. This step was not intended to bias response, rather it was meant to take into consideration whether or not particular staff would have any experiences with or perceptions of collaboration given their function and length of

time at the Campus. Fifty-one interviews were conducted; proportions varied based on agency size (e.g., 13 staff members from Families First and 5 from PEEP). After completing interviews with an agency, a packet of surveys for all employees at that agency was given to an administrative staff member for distribution to all staff. If response rates were low for a particular agency, they were contacted and provided with additional surveys and urged to remind staff to complete the surveys. The final response rate to the survey was 51% (79 completed surveys).

EVIDENCE FROM THE SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

The data presentation is divided into several sections, addressing:

- The extent of collaboration, as perceived by staff at Community Campus agencies
- The perceived benefits of collaboration
- Examples of collaboration
- The commitment to further work to develop a collaborative model
- Perceived obstacles to collaboration
- Other perceptions about positive aspects and tensions at the Campus

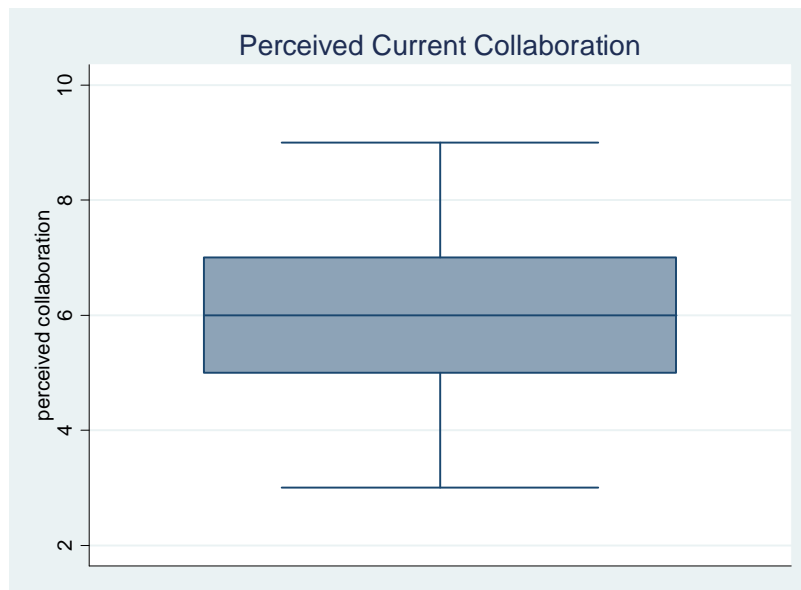
In each section, data are presented from both surveys and interviews. The findings from each source of data are very consistent.

The Extent of Collaboration, as Perceived by Community Campus Staff

The first question posed on the survey is “Please rate the extent to which collaboration *currently occurs* among CC agencies, on a scale of 1 (no collaboration) to 10 (extensive collaboration).” The average for all staff who completed the survey is 5.8 on the 10-point scale, indicating a moderately high perceived level of collaboration. The average provides only a partial picture of the perceived collaboration; it is also important to note that the responses to the question range from a low of 3 to a high of 9; the variability in responses is represented graphically in the plot in Figure 1.¹ The average in Figure 1 is the median, very close to the mean in this case (6 vs. 5.8), and the middle half of all responses fall between 5 and 7. In summary, staff at the CC perceive that there is a moderate amount of collaboration in place, although there is some noteworthy variability in this perception.

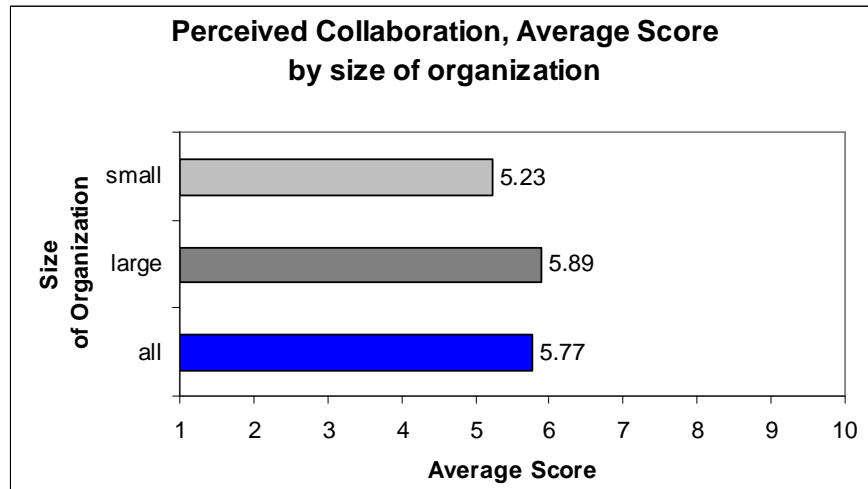
¹ Figure 1 is a “box plot.” A box plot is a graphic display of a variable. The line in the middle of the box is the average, or median, score. The box includes the middle 50% of the scores or cases. The lines extending from the box represent the range of scores. A dot outside the lines is an “outlier” -- a case that lies outside the range of the rest of the distribution of scores.

Figure 1



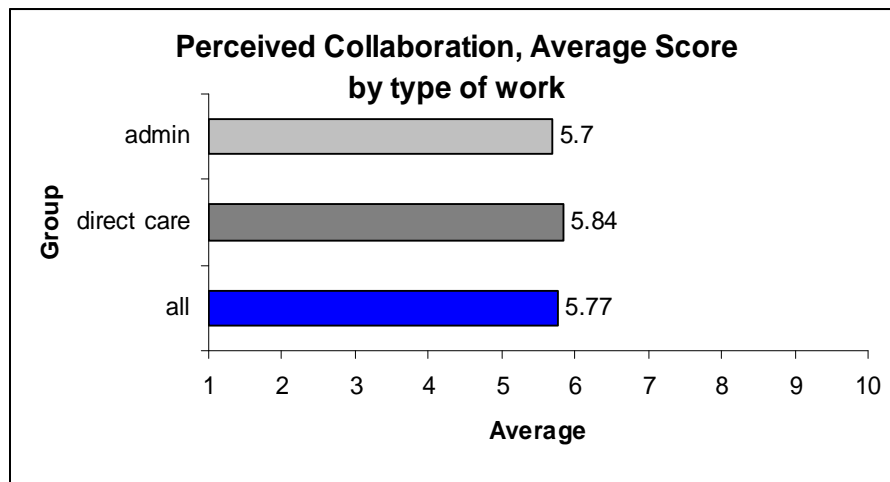
What accounts for the variations in perceptions about collaboration? We looked at several other factors to try to answer this question. We examined responses across the individual agencies at the CC, and there are indeed variations. We cannot present these directly, since some of the agencies are small and confidentiality might be compromised if we were to present the data by individual agency. To try to summarize this, we divided the agencies into two groups by size; those below 10 staff are considered “small” and those with 10 or more staff are considered “large.” The average for each group is presented in Figure 2. There is a slight difference between the large and small agencies; small agency staff perceive slightly less collaboration than staff in the larger agencies. There is overlap between the size of the agencies and whether their missions are more general or more specific as well, so the slight variation may be a function of mission rather than size per se. That is, an agency with a very specific mission like Bonnie CLAC may have less need and opportunity for collaboration than an agency with a more general mission like Families First. The important point is that there is some variation but that it is only slight.

Figure 2



A second possible factor that may be linked to perceptions of collaboration is the work role of the staff person. We asked whether the respondent's position was primarily administrative or direct care. Figure 3 shows that there is very little difference in perceptions of collaboration between these two groups. The averages are 5.7 and 5.8.

Figure 3



Another possibility we examined is whether or not those with more experience at the CC perceive greater collaboration. We correlated the perception of collaboration with the length of time at the CC and found there to be a slight negative correlation (-.27); those who have been at CC longer actually perceive *less* collaboration than those who have been there a shorter amount of time. This might be due to a higher expectation for collaboration among those who have been at the Campus longer.

Finally, Table 1 shows the extent of interaction with each agency at the Campus, as perceived by staff. Respondents were asked “How often do you work with each of the following agencies...?” on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 3 (often). The data in the figure are the averages for each agency. To the extent that interaction is an important element of collaboration, the data indicate that there is substantial interaction but also substantial variation across agencies. This is understandable given the variations in size, mission, and the need for client confidentiality.

Table 1

Average Scores, “How often do you work with each of the following agencies...?” (1=never 2=occasionally 3=often)	
Seacoast Outright	1.22
Child Advocacy Center	1.46
Bonnie CLAC	1.54
Steppingstones	1.62
Infolink	1.71
New Heights	1.82
PEEP	2.14
Headstart	2.15
Community Child Care Center	2.24
Families First	2.48

In addition to perceptions about the extent of collaboration, on the survey we asked about specific aspects of collaboration and the perceived effectiveness of various mechanisms now in place at the Campus that might promote collaboration. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3 and described below.

Table 2

Perceptions about aspects of collaboration (item 5 on survey)		
	Mean	N
a. An important part of my job is to work with staff at other Community Campus agencies	3.4	78
b. I identify mostly with my own agency rather than the Community Campus as a whole	3.6	78
c. There are established mechanisms in place for agencies to interact with each other	2.9	78
d. I refer to the Community Campus handbook	2.1	77
e. It is important to expand on the collaboration among Community Campus agencies	4.1	78

1=strongly disagree 5=strongly agree

high score indicates greater agreement with statement


The data in Table 2 show some interesting contradictions. For instance, when asked about the use of the Campus handbook, a potentially useful document for campus-wide information, procedures, and inter-agency relations, the majority of staff do not use it; the low mean of 2.1 reflects the fact that almost three-quarters of survey respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement. The handbook may be a very useful and necessary document, but it is not widely used for reference. The respondents also report that mechanisms for interaction do not widely exist; the mean on this item is only 2.9. So, one mechanism that does exist (the handbook) is not used, and the perception is that there is a deficit of mechanisms for interaction. A written document is not an effective mechanism for interaction, according to these perceptions.

While the majority of respondents believe that an important part of their job is to work with staff of other agencies (average of 3.4; over half agree with the statement), the majority identify with their own agency rather than the Campus as a whole (average 3.6; 70% agree with the statement). Despite this apparent inconsistency, it is impressive and encouraging that the mean on the item about expansion of collaboration is quite high, 4.1; over three-quarters believe in the importance of more collaboration. We return to this finding in the next section.

An assessment of more specific mechanisms for collaboration is provided by the data in Table 3. We asked about the effectiveness of eight different mechanisms already in place at the Campus, ranging from the handbook to the cafeteria. These are ranked in order of effectiveness in the Table; co-location is perceived as the most effective (not surprising), and the handbook the least effective. Taken as a whole, the list suggests that mechanisms promoting actual interaction, or face time, are seen as more effective than publications and on-line resources like the blog and web site. Co-location has allowed for important

physical settings like the cafeteria where frequent interaction takes place, and it allows for meetings and informal networking – seen as effective for facilitating collaboration.

Table 3

Effectiveness of mechanisms already in place (item 6 on survey)				
		Mean	N	% don't know
More effective  Less effective	Co-location at the Community Campus	1.4	66	13%
	Common cafeteria	1.8	75	5
	Monthly directors' meetings	1.9	53	33
	Hallway work (informal networking)	1.9	71	9
	Bulletin boards	2.1	55	11
	“Campus Insider” (the internal blog)	2.3	44	30
	Community Campus website	2.5	54	31
	Community Campus handbook	2.7	50	36

1=very effective 4=very ineffective; low score = more effective

It is interesting to note that staff members are relatively unfamiliar with the three mechanisms with the lowest effectiveness scores: the blog, website, and handbook. The only other item with which some staff are unfamiliar is directors' meetings, and this is predictable since only one segment of the entire CC staff attends these.

In summary, many of the staff members who completed the survey perceive that there is some degree of collaboration in the current model at the CC. There are variations in this perception, however, both between and within agencies. Those in larger agencies tend to experience slightly more collaboration than those in smaller agencies. Staff members who have been with their agency longer tend to perceive less collaboration than their newer counterparts. The identification with individual agencies is stronger than the identification with the Campus as a whole, although there is importance placed on working with staff in other agencies. Finally, there is a wide range in the assessment of how effective the current mechanisms are for facilitating collaboration.

The Perceived Benefits of Collaboration

Part of the premise for developing collaboration at the CC is the belief that it benefits families and clients that come to the Campus for services. We decided to ask about this explicitly in the research. In the interviews, we asked about the perceived benefits of collaborating for the families and children the interviewees work with as well as from a staff member standpoint.

Indeed, a large majority of interviewees thought there were benefits to collaborating. The themes that emerged from their answers include that collaboration makes accessing services easier for families, that there are professional development opportunities for staff

that ultimately benefit families and children through higher quality services, and that each agency's offerings are enhanced by having a vast array of resources available to them.

Access to services. Not only does the co-location of services at the CC benefit families because they can travel less, it also ensures that their needs are met because agencies refer and can make the right contacts on behalf of families.

- *I think it absolutely makes lives easier; I've seen it through direct service work that I do; you cannot provide anything in a vacuum; you can provide medical care and prescription, but they may not have money to pay for it – by collaborating with other agencies helps you keep your focus but also helps patients' meet their needs – it helps you do your work.*

Professional development opportunities. While there was some mention of shared trainings among different agencies, there were multiple examples of leveraging one another for professional insights and knowledge that would be harder to come by if the agencies were not co-located but also if the social networks, connections and trust did not exist.

- *We may ask PEEP since[it is] so close by – “what if you had a kid with x, y and z” we share families all over the building; when we have releases [we] try to provide better services and not duplicate services.*
- *We've definitely used each other for resources; if [we] have a special needs child we might go talk to PEEP; or if need child proofing may need to talk to CCCC because they have all [the] licensing rules so they can help us with that; Child Advocacy Center [is here] if [a child] was abused it would be easier for child to go there for interview; have had staff who work at one agency for awhile but want to switch jobs and this is a good place to move around for employment.*

Enhancing own services. Each agency at the CC has a special mission and unique goals, but by working together, some staff members have experienced sizeable benefits regarding what their agency is able to offer as a member agency of the CC:

- *Being able to access other agencies...doubles our possibilities.*
- *Someone from Families First will do screenings and then will bring them down here – great because a big goal is to get kids dental – what she does in building works very well – if they were offsite somewhere she may not do that because her job is to focus on schools but because [of co-location] with other programs, [we] have been at the forefront with collaboration in state.*
- *If everyone can come to the table and everyone is talking about their perspective then the child totally benefits; we can come up with ideas based on professional disagreement; someone will say ‘This can't happen in the afternoon for this reason’, so sometimes ideas stem from when we don't see eye to eye. We then*

feel confident saying we've thought of this from six different angles and this is the best possible plan for child.

Interviewees cite many ways in which collaboration is beneficial to their work and for the families who come to the campus. In this sense, collaboration is seen as a desirable feature of Campus work.

Examples of Collaboration

To add depth to the extent and benefits of collaboration that occurs at the CC, we asked both survey respondents and interviewees for specific examples.

On the survey we asked: "Can you provide a specific example of how collaboration has helped a family served by your agency?" A few examples are illustrative of the range and depth of responses:

- *We have many children who use at least three of our agencies. One child I know of came to PEEP for preschool followed on to Community Child Care and frequently used Families First for support. The family was thrilled with all the programs being in one building.*
- *I have worked extensively with staff at Headstart and Families First in order to provide needed services to individuals who would not be able to benefit much from any individual program without the additional support/service from other programs. We have held many joint meetings with clients who have multiple needs.*
- *Collaboration has resulted in a client receiving support from a client in another program to assist with driver's license test studying.*
- *Some of our younger staff here @ New Heights have taken on after hours/part time work with Families First. Through this work they have gotten to know the families of some of our kids and we have gained valuable information about the family dynamics, which has helped us better serve our kids.*
- *We are often able to refer families to other agencies that they knew nothing about (state programs, welfare programs, etc.)*
- *Everyday families participating in a FF program get to use all the campus facilities. Many of them are clients of other agencies and see themselves coming to "one agency", the CC.*
- *We have members who need multiple resources that we've been able to refer to Infolink, Families First, and Bonnie CLAC for more comprehensive care.*

- *We have had families of ours without a doctor or dentist, I walk them down to Families to help give them a starting point to the medical attention they need.*
- *We have been able to build circles of support around families- when communication is open and there is a shared vision, families get the best service.*

The in-depth interviews provide more evidence about the types of collaboration that currently occur, and these data allow us to see patterns that the survey responses do not. When interviewees were asked for examples of collaboration they experienced or observed, a number of themes emerged. These include variation in the amount and extent of collaboration across agencies, an emphasis on programmatic as opposed to administrative collaboration, and varying degrees of formalized processes.

Variation across Agencies. There were substantial differences in the amount of experiences with collaboration shared by interviewees according to their agency. Some felt that they were already deeply enmeshed in collaborative processes with agencies at the CC...

- *We've contracted with other agencies here for programming: using their staff for child care and children services; we have collaborated with other agencies for doing parenting programs for parents of teens; we have used facilitators from other agencies and space. Some of our parenting education people go up there and present to families. We provide childcare here for parents getting GED or ESOL programs; we provide space for Bonnie CLAC when they do budgeting course, and we provide space for them to have budget class here and do childcare for them so families can attend.*

...while others noted minimal experiences:

- *A moderate amount of collaboration exists; certainly not none; agencies are aware of each other but not a strong collaborative approach; all the directors meet regularly for tenants meeting and some interplay.*

After reviewing the data collected from the interviews, there are multiple explanations for this variation. The obvious explanation is that some agencies have more coherent and complementary missions than others. This has nothing to do with commitment to clients or value of collaboration. The other less obvious explanation is that there is no top-down structured system to foster collaboration. In its absence, the collaboration that does occur ranges in the degree of formality, results from staff initiative and resources...

- *We've made an effort to get to know Stepping Stones people so we chat with them. That comes from within –the teachers take initiative.*

...and is mostly programmatic as opposed to administrative. It is likely that without administrative collaboration, programmatic collaboration will continue to happen on

occasion and rather informally because the former is an indication of leadership and structure, which would certainly impact the latter. Very few interviewees shared any experiences with administrative collaboration with the exception of mentioning tenants meetings, as offered below.

- *I think that's [administrative collaboration] happening; I used to periodically go to tenants meetings and that works really well, and they were trying to develop a campus-wide policies on things – kind of a formalized structured ways of collaborating.*

Varying Degrees of Formality. Because staff initiative and resources play a large role in realizing collaborative opportunities, there is a range within agencies (newer staff, unfamiliar with other agencies may be less likely) and across agencies (some staff may be stretched thinner). There is also variation in the extent of the formality of the collaborative processes. While mostly informal...

- *My clients will often talk to me about their whole life; it will come up that they need services here, so a very informal type of referral is going on.*

...there are some examples of restructuring and formalizing processes to meet families' needs:

- *We have redefined and restructured so services meet the needs of the family – finding what people need and restructuring accordingly, for instance the “medication assistance program”.*

There are certainly benefits to more and less formality. More formality of collaborative processes may give staff more resources for identifying opportunities and making them happen, whereas less formal processes allow for a certain degree of flexibility, as seen in the following example:

- *There is formal collaboration but also times when an emergency comes up and agencies in the building pull together to help a family out; part of collaboration is being formal and informal, which is the benefit of being all in same building.*

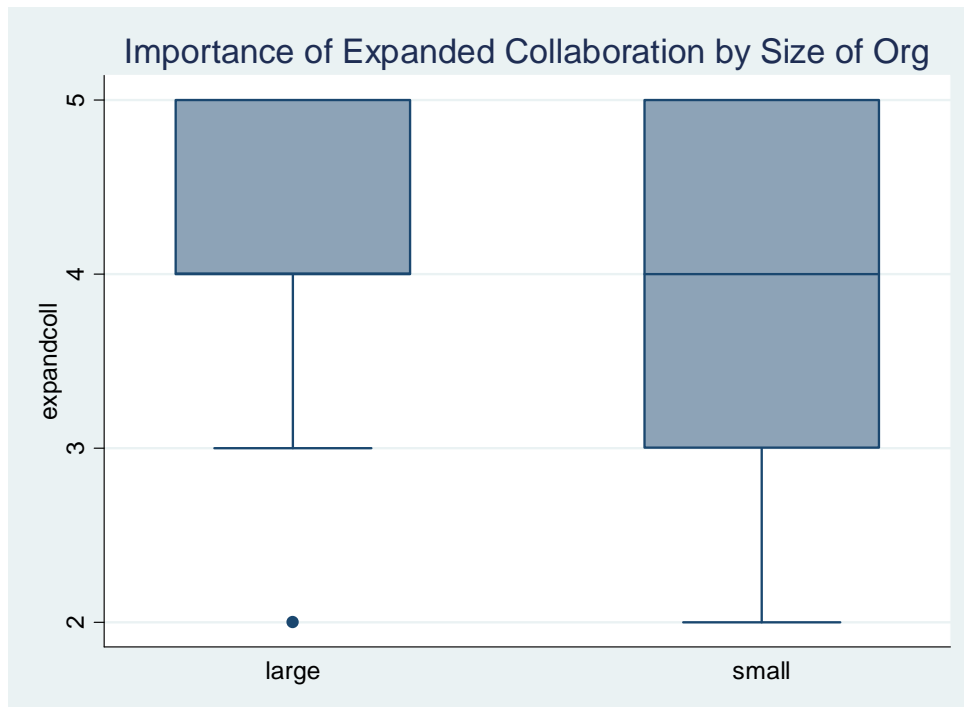
The examples show that collaboration varies across agencies; that it is mostly informal, although there are some more formal processes emerging; and that it is seen as more programmatic than administrative. That is, collaboration occurs in the process of each agency carrying out its mission rather than as a result of a formal collaboration plan that has been developed and implemented at the administrative level.

Further Efforts for Collaboration: Views about the Future

As summarized above, when we asked on the survey about the importance of expanding collaboration at the CC, the vast majority of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The mean on the item is the highest in the list reported in

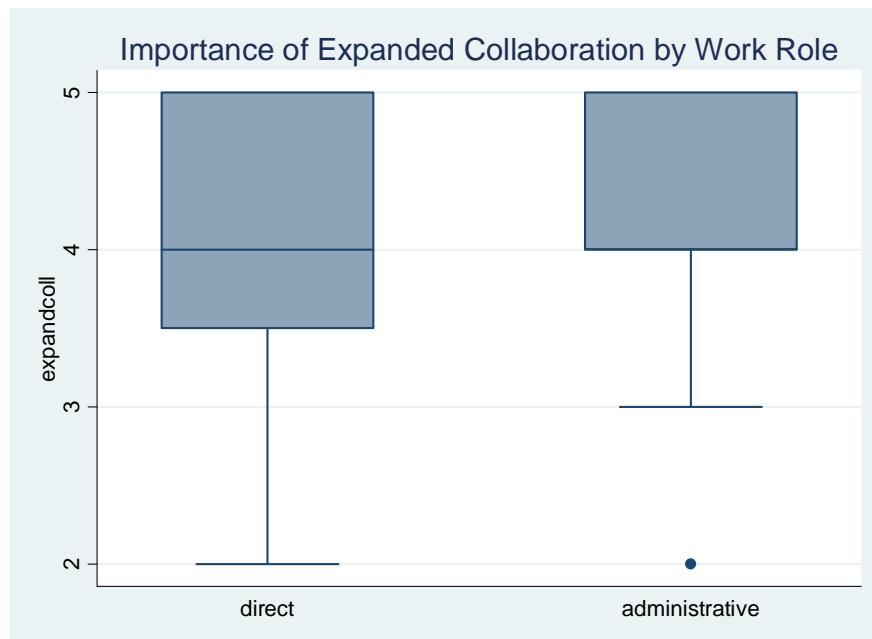
Table 2. There is evidence here of broad support for efforts to collaborate. When we compare this variable with the size of the organization, we find an interesting and important difference, despite the broad support for expanded collaboration. Figure 4 shows the distribution by size of organization; both groups place the same emphasis on expanded collaboration, on average (the average is, in this case, the median) are the same, however, there is greater variability in the responses from small organizations; more staff from smaller organizations are hesitant about expanded collaboration. There is an exception to this pattern in the one outlier among the large organizations (dot on the graph); there is greater agreement among those from larger organizations except for one respondent. We return to this finding when we discuss obstacles to collaboration, but in brief it is likely that those from small organizations feel that their size constrains them from further collaboration – who would be responsible for this in a small organization of 1-4 staff? Alternatively, the interviews brought to light the fact that hesitancy about greater collaboration is sometimes a result of staff feeling that their agencies already collaborate fully, so more collaboration is simply not necessary; it is already happening.

Figure 4



A similar pattern occurs when we look at the work role – whether the respondent’s position is administrative or direct care (see Figure 5). Although both groups are supportive of expanded collaboration, there is a wider range of responses among direct care workers, more of whom have skepticism about expansion. One interpretation is that direct care workers are more likely to see collaboration as the responsibility of administrators; more about this later. There is an exception to this generalization in the one administrator who is an “outlier” on the graph, someone who is skeptical about expansion like the pattern seen with direct care workers. This diversity in opinion about collaboration is important to keep in mind as the CC moves forward.

Figure 5




Although there is support for future development of collaboration, the interviews reveal how the support is qualified by some:

- *If there were resources, it should be a top priority; but we're all trying to pay our staff people so [it] becomes low priority.*
- *[I would place a high priority on future collaboration] if it would benefit our patients and clients, but if it makes a barrier for them and makes it harder, then no.*
- *If there was someone to organize collaboration, then yes, if not, then no.*
- *To me, if it's not a [high priority for everyone] then it's not going to happen; if it's a [lower priority], things won't change – there's got to be buy in.*
- *I think it should be a high priority. I know a lot of agencies here but it's because I personally took the time to know them, but I'm not sure how much other people know about agencies.*

Our analysis of the future of collaboration is further informed by responses to the question about mechanisms to further enhance collaboration at the CC: “There are many models for collaboration. [Here] is a list of some suggestions for mechanisms to further enhance collaboration at the CC. Please indicate how useful you believe it would be for your organization to coordinate with other agencies at the Campus on [each effort].” The results are presented in Table 4. (Note: the averages exclude those who responded “don’t know”.) While there is some support for all of these mechanisms, the first seven

listed are seen as especially useful. For each of these, at least three-quarters of the survey respondents reported the mechanism would be “very” or “somewhat” useful for further collaboration. Four of these involve staff interaction or “face time”: interagency meetings, informal social support, formal events for staff networking, and discussion of client issues. Two are more procedural: campus wide orientation and case management.

Table 4

Mechanisms to enhance collaboration (item 7 on survey)				
		Mean	N	% don't know
<p>More useful</p>  <p>Less useful</p>	Interagency meetings	1.5	70	9
	Case management	1.6	66	15%
	Campus-wide orientation for new staff	1.6	74	6
	A formal plan for collaboration	1.6	64	18
	Informal social support	1.6	66	15
	Formal events for staff networking	1.7	71	10
	Discussion of client issues	1.7	64	17
	Human resources	1.8	54	29
	Joint fund raising efforts	1.9	67	15
	Common data collection and management of information	1.9	64	18
	Grant writing	1.9	59	24
	Common in-take form	1.97	67	13
	Shared office resources (computers, photocopying, fax, purchasing, etc.)	2	68	14

low score=more useful

One falls in the domain of planning: a formal plan for collaboration. While the staff indicate that direct interaction would facilitate collaboration, they also perceive that a formal plan would be productive. Such a plan would address the uncertainty that now exists about who is responsible for collaboration (see below).

The interview data provide additional insights about the future of collaboration at the CC. In the interviews, we asked about funding for future collaboration. The responses are summarized in Table 5. The largest percent of interviewees (27%) felt that grants should be solicited to fund collaborative efforts. Several interviewees who provided this answer felt strongly that the grants should not compete with agency-specific funding sources. Naturally, some donors might not be willing to fund both agency programming and

campus-wide collaborative efforts. As an alternative, national grants were suggested. The next largest percentage felt that the Foundation (FSH) should fund greater collaboration. However, there was variation in this answer worth noting. Some interviewees felt that it should be a benefit of rent while others felt the Foundation had the resources to offer, regardless of the rental agreements.

Table 5

“Who Do You Think Should Fund Greater Collaboration?”: Responses from Interviews

Who you think should fund greater collaboration	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
fsh	12	23.53	23.53
grants	14	27.45	50.98
agencies	6	11.76	62.75
combination of above	6	11.76	74.51
streamline and free up funds	2	3.92	78.43
other	11	21.57	100.00
Total	51	100.00	

Interviewees were also asked what they felt their respective agencies would be willing and able to contribute to make greater collaboration a reality; very few expressed any unwillingness (see Table 6). In fact, those that did felt that their agencies were already contributing and therefore it would not be necessary. The largest percentage of interviewees was willing to attend meetings or sit on a committee but this should be qualified as meaning mostly monthly meetings and also under the assumption that the benefits to clients and staff would be made obvious.

Table 6

“What Would Your Agency Be Willing to Contribute toward Greater Collaboration?”
Responses from Interviews

Contribution that your agency is willing to make	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
attend events/meetings	14	27.45	27.45
offer/share resources	6	11.76	39.22
whatever it takes	7	13.73	52.94
anything that would benefit clients	4	7.84	60.78
already doing	4	7.84	68.63
quality programming	2	3.92	72.55
time and resources	4	7.84	80.39
other	10	19.60	100.00
Total	51	100.00	

Regardless of the importance interviewees attributed to more collaboration, with the exception of 4 individuals, almost everyone interviewed had a suggestion for who should be responsible for enabling greater collaboration. According to Table 7, the largest percentage of interviewees thought some sort of care coordinator or collaboration facilitator should be hired – someone unaffiliated with any of the agencies.

Table 7
 “Who Do You Think Should Be Responsible for More Collaboration?”:
 Responses from Interviews

Who interviewee thinks should be responsible for collaboration	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
hire a coordinator/facilitator	20	39.22	39.22
agencies should coordinate a task force	12	23.53	62.75
combo of facilitator & agency coord	7	13.73	76.47
foundation should coordinate	5	9.80	86.27
agencies: programmatic; fsh: admin	1	1.96	88.24
hire a coordination team	1	1.96	90.20
leadership from someone at an agency	1	1.96	92.16
not sure it is needed	4	7.84	100.00
Total	51	100.00	

- *We need a care coordinator for the building, so that when a person first comes into the building, when we get calls from Families First – ‘Can you give me info about Bonnie CLAC’ or whatever – a care coordinator could talk about all the stuff and have a release form right there. We’ve wanted this from the start.*
- *Hiring someone from outside may be the best route to go. They would have to familiarize themselves with all the agencies that would take some time, but I lean more towards this.*

The next largest percentage felt that agencies should coordinate a task force consisting of staff from each agency, to meet on a regular basis with the goal of identifying collaborative opportunities to better meet the needs of families.

- *The best scenario would be one person from each agency committed to collaborative effort.*
- *Probably a task force so you get a little from everybody, but you can’t force someone’s hand to doing something.*
- *It would have to be a committee from various agencies because people know what Families First does but it’s what they do on a piece of paper. You can’t have a good concept from piece of paper of how much lives are impacted; it would be important for each agency to know what their role is at the Community Campus.*

More progressive ideas included a combination of agency resources and the hiring of a coordination staff.

- *The ideal would be having a campus coordination team – advisors from different agencies - would have to hire more than one person – things like coordinating funding and marketing but also programmatic and administrative collaboration. It would be a big job – getting to know systems and getting to know each agency really well; we need more than one person - a coordination department; anything less would get less done.*

Some interviewees also commented on the style of leadership they would want.

- *I firmly believe that if you want to involve people then you need people that are stakeholders involved in the decision-making as opposed to telling people – ‘Well, you have to do this’.*

Obstacles to Future Collaboration

There is much support for collaboration, but this is coupled with a realistic assessment by some at the Campus of the challenges and obstacles associated with a fully collaborative model.

According to multiple interviewees, there was a vision to collaborate at the outset of the CC but for many reasons and numerous obstacles, it has yet to firmly take hold. In fact, there was a concern among some staff that collaboration would be pursued for the sake of collaboration. This brought to light the importance among staff that there needs to be a reason to collaborate and the benefits to families, children and the community must be both obvious and real. Both survey and interview data provide further evidence about the important issue of the obstacles to further collaboration at the CC.

On the survey we posed an open-ended question about obstacles: “What, if any, do you perceive as obstacles to greater collaboration between agencies at the CC?” The most common response to this, by far, was “time.” Twenty-five of those who answered this question mentioned the constraint of not enough time. Often the mention of time was linked with the demands on tight resources posed by collaboration. A distant second were responses that mentioned a lack of knowledge about other agencies and the different missions of Campus agencies.

The interviews provide a similar but more in-depth picture of the obstacles. Some illustrative quotes point to the importance of time, resources, and unique agency characteristics:

- *Allocation of our time and conflict of schedules: in essence, collaboration is not going to be an effortless process; again in theory it’s a phenomenal idea but it is difficult to have time and resources to make it happen.*

- *Being quite logistical about it; staff at every agency are really stretched so adding more to everyone's job is hard; everyone is pretty overbooked; but I think it would be worth the effort.*
- *[It is] so hard to envision even one more meeting; this would need an on-going committee/effort; [it would] be difficult to fit in - how can we do [better] what we're doing would be the key.*
- *I think HIPPA is always an obstacle; I think communication would be an obstacle until it got ironed out because we're not all in the same agencies – organizations might not be on same page about what's going on – already a weakness, it could get better but it would be an obstacle until it did.*
- *Confidentially is a huge issue for us.*
- *I think the biggest piece of it is all the agencies have own policies and putting those all in same bucket is difficult – we are working with memorandum of understanding with other places we're trying to collaborate with and it's really difficult. It's difficult for them, all of the policies – there's so many bases to cover.*
- *Everyone's funded from different source, so there is a limit on collaboration.*

A great deal can be gained by identifying obstacles to greater collaboration. Perhaps strategies can emerge from knowing that any efforts must be preceded by staff buy-in. Knowing that time is a large challenge may motivate designers of collaborative efforts to focus on how best to incorporate collaboration into the structure without overburdening staff members.

Beyond Collaboration: Other Positive Perceptions and Tensions

This research has focused on collaboration at the CC. However, we did ask about other aspects of the Campus in the surveys and interviews, and both positive views and perceived challenges are summarized in this section. These provide an important context for future directions at the Campus which will affect collaborative efforts.

On the survey we asked “What is the best thing about being located at the Community Campus for your agency?” The most frequent mentions were the quality of the facilities, the connections between agencies, and the location of the Campus.

- *The actual space and facility is wonderful.*
- *It is a wonderful facility, and it does feel good to be surrounded by other people doing good work for those less fortunate.*
- *The pleasant surroundings – the message it gives to clients about how our community values social and health services and prioritizes meeting their needs.*

- *Beautiful location.*
- *Great outdoor location.*
- *Having so many different agencies for children right here.*
- *Definitely being co-located with other agencies serving children.*
- *I like the support of all the agencies under one roof. There is a wealth of information.*
- *Supportive, connected feeling.*
- *It is central to the city of Portsmouth.*

There is much praise for the Campus in these comments. There are tensions and challenges as well, and some of the very features that receive praise by some are raised by others as challenges. Many praise the space; others cite the *cost* of the space as a challenging thing about being located at the CC. When we asked “What is the most challenging thing about being located at the Community Campus?” the most frequent response was the cost of the space, cited by 20 of those answering this question.

Another critical issue for some is the location of the Campus; while the location is praised by some, others find it isolating and a challenge for families to locate and get to. Other issues raised, less frequently but nonetheless noteworthy, are parking, the role of and relations with the Foundation, rules, and maintenance.

CONCLUSIONS

“Collaboration” is not a simple, one-dimensional concept. It has different meanings in different contexts. In this research, we defined collaboration as “instances when agencies work together for the mutual benefit of clients and when agencies work together to realize greater efficiencies.” It is obvious from the feedback provided on the surveys and the interviews that the view of collaboration at the CC is much more than this limited definition. There are many conclusions to be drawn from this research. Several of the most salient conclusions follow.

1. Co-location of agencies at the CC is perceived to have many advantages, and it could be argued that co-location greatly enhances collaboration.
2. Co-location does not automatically increase knowledge and understanding across agencies. Some staff at the Campus feel that they do not know enough about what other agencies are doing.

3. Many appreciate the high quality of the physical facility in addition to the benefits of co-location. The building is attractive, the grounds are serene and pleasant, the space provides for common areas like the cafeteria, vital for networking.
4. The Foundation functions as both a landlord and as an administrative leader for the coordination of efforts among agencies. These dual roles are challenging and create tensions among agencies and between agencies and the Foundation.
5. Many of the Campus workers are committed to and supportive of efforts to collaborate, and collaboration is seen by many as an important benefit for the families and children who come to the Campus.
6. On the other hand, there are staff who question the ability of collaboration to work given the constraints imposed by resources, especially staff time, and competing agency missions. If efforts to advance collaboration are to be effective, additional resources and processes will be required.
7. Much of the collaboration that now exists is informal and results from the networking that occurs as staff carry out their work. The networking is facilitated by co-location and common areas at the Campus.
8. Collaboration, though valued, is not an articulated goal of any one agency. At this point when collaboration occurs, it tends to be sporadic, programmatic, and driven by staff initiative as opposed to regular, multi-faceted and supported by a structured process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research on collaboration has shown that for the most part, staff at the CC value collaboration and see it as beneficial to both themselves and the families they serve. The CC is at a point where it could make a decision to put a stake in the ground and attempt to build more comprehensive collaborative mechanisms and processes into the structure at an administrative level, or it could continue along the current path, having a structure that allows for programmatic collaboration, based on staff and agency initiative but that does not support it with systems. This research has shown that if the member agencies decide to formalize collaboration at the administrative level, the following need to happen:

- Decide whether it is in the best interests of the member agencies and the families served by the CC to move forward with a collaborative system, supported at all levels. If there is agreement on this, then:
- Develop a shared vision for formalizing collaboration at the administrative level, paying careful attention to the value-add associated with collaboration.

- Develop a formal plan for collaboration, articulating the shared vision, and setting benchmarks and outcomes.
- Incorporate ideas from parents and community members for the formalized collaboration plan.
- Present the plan to all staff with the goal of soliciting staff buy-in – how will this help staff meet the needs of families and children better?

Assuming the steps above are followed, some specific examples for strategies that might be included in a collaboration plan were suggested by many of those we interviewed and surveyed. Respondents offered suggestions about how the CC might move forward to advance collaboration and/or better serve the needs of the families and clients who come to the Campus. Based on this feedback and our analysis of the data, we offer several recommendations. Some of these are straightforward, while some are more complicated. Most have resource implications.

1. Create a common reception area for clients.
2. Have a campus-wide, ongoing orientation for new staff.
3. Hire a staff person (possibly more than one) whose position is defined as enhancing collaboration at the campus.
4. Hold occasional campus-wide events.
5. Develop a budget for collaboration-oriented activities: marketing and PR, security personnel, an interactive web site, etc.
6. Consider investing in campus-wide communication systems that facilitate collaboration by creating time efficiencies.
7. Develop incentives for collaborating.

REFERENCES

Kraemer, Jacqueline. 1993. *Building Villages to Raise Our Children: Collaboration*. Harvard Family Research Project, Cambridge, MA.