How to Improve
INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION

Humans are complex creatures with many needs — physiological, mental, emotional, financial, and more. Fortunately, government agencies and human services organizations exist to help those struggling with one or more of these needs. However, specialists often can't address all the challenges a client might face, which is why numerous programs rely on interagency collaboration.
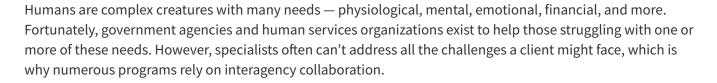
Even though interagency collaboration is paramount, it's not always easy to facilitate. Insecure communication channels and potentially conflicting objectives can all create stumbling blocks for providers and clients as they seek resources and support from external agencies.

Thankfully, technology is continually evolving to simplify collaboration across agencies and locations, so teams all over the world can interact and work together toward their clients' objectives.

We'll explore some of our top tips for interagency collaboration, including steps you and your collaborators can take to ensure information is shared, understood, and acted upon to enhance one another's work — and your clients' outcomes.

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BENEFITS OF
Effective Interagency Collaboration

When organizations and specialists rally around their clients, they can consolidate their efforts and address the complex, multifaceted obstacles that might hinder progress. By working to resolve issues' symptoms and root causes simultaneously, service providers can improve a client's quality of life now and equip them to prevent similar issues from arriving in the future.

Effective interagency partnerships can produce more impactful, long-term results and improvements for everyone involved. Some of these benefits include:

Improved outcomes for clients:

As we mentioned previously, agencies working together have a better chance of creating a long-term impact on their clients than organizations working alone. When cross-agency partnerships are formed, they bolster each other's efforts and compound the results.

For example: agencies providing support services might be able to help someone find emergency housing, but this may not address the client's future housing needs. Collaborating with employment specialists might help the client find better work with higher pay so they can afford their own housing. And to empower clients in their new role, offering childcare can help a parent strike a healthy work-life balance. Without integrating ancillary services, the client may experience a brief respite from housing instability versus the long-term benefits a holistic approach can provide.

Plays to each agency's strengths:

Everyone's needs are different, but clusters and trends certainly exist throughout our communities. Nonprofits, government agencies, and human services organizations exist to meet their communities' needs. Interagency cooperation allows experts with in-depth knowledge of practices, initiatives, and available resources to do what they do best without overlooking an individual's other needs. Through collaboration and information sharing, these service providers can lend their own data, knowledge, and skills for a more holistic, whole-person approach to services.

Can reduce the cost to client:

Agencies can reduce costs for their clients by pinpointing exactly what services are required and having a solid network of collaborators to generate referrals. When a small group of agencies can quickly coordinate care for a client, that client has less need to invest money, time, travel expenses, and energy into procuring the resources and support they need. Sharing data and case notes on a client's situation can help each appointment lead to more and better services provided to the client, reducing the need for additional appointments, assessments, and reports.

METHODS TO IMPROVE
Interagency Collaboration & Communication

If your organization isn't sharing the burden of client services with other specialists, you're foregoing opportunities to loop in more stakeholders and resources — and potentially limiting the well-being of your clients. But where can you start?

Below, we break down some concrete steps you can take to establish and maintain connections with different agencies that can offer benefits to your clients.

Establish a Clear Mission and Shared Goals

Before connecting clients with another organization's services, establish your own connection with the organization. Clearly state your organization's goals, what services you provide, and what problems you solve, and have a discussion on the ways your new partners' goals align with your own. Establish common ground to inform cross-agency decision-making for your clients and to encourage buy-in from all stakeholders. This can also help clients better understand the relationship between your agency and any agencies you work with.

Consolidate Data Sources

Grant access to your proprietary data and connect partners with your resources whenever possible, bearing in mind compliance and security concerns. If your organization uses cloud-based software with user authentication, create an account (or many accounts) for your partner organizations to use. When cross-agency teams have access to the same information and resources, there are fewer opportunities for miscommunication, crossed wires, or clients' needs falling through the cracks. Sharing program data can help teams determine what they can do and what potential risks or conflicts might arise.

Designate Interagency Contacts

Involving multiple teams in your agency's work might sound chaotic, and it can be. No one can focus on entire teams' questions and concerns all the time — especially in the age of constant connection via the internet — without sacrificing time that should be focused on clients. A designated person or committee dedicated to receiving and vetting incoming questions and information filters out or redirects those messages that don't require the attention of the entire team. This keeps collaborative meetings with entire teams more efficient, effective, and productive by focusing on issues that can't be resolved with a simple phone call or email.

Communicate Regularly

If you can't partition access to data to protect clients' sensitive data from outside agencies (and even if you can), regular communication is critical to keeping stakeholders informed. Holding a weekly touch-base meeting with external service providers gives both agencies the opportunity to explain recent or upcoming initiatives or changes. Establishing a regular communication schedule also encourages teams to save their points, concerns, or questions for a time they know all parties will be present. Collaborating in real time with all stakeholders ensures that all teams and their decisions take into account input and consideration from everyone involved.

Establish feedback systems

Interagency collaboration will likely require ongoing improvement from both sides. Providing clients with much-needed support should be the primary focus for both teams, but all teams should spend time considering and suggesting opportunities to improve the partnership and its outcomes. Establishing a dedicated channel and schedule for feedback from all involved parties allows for identification and correction of issues as they arise, resulting in continuous improvement of processes and client outcomes.

DIGITAL TOOLS YOU NEED
for Effective Collaboration

If your organization is looking for better ways to boost its impact by collaborating with other agencies in the community, digital tools can (and often do) provide a solid foundation on which teams can build. Inter-agency collaboration requires collecting, sharing, and protecting massive stores of client data, but digital tools are making all of this easier than ever.

Digital case management tools like CaseWorthy's were built to facilitate seamless, effective collaboration between individual providers or entire teams. Our customizable dashboards allow teams to get granular with client data while tracking overarching trends throughout the entire organization. With enough data shared with enough teams, everyone can benefit from better-informed evidence-based practices.

We've worked in the human services industry for a long time, so we know what features teams need to provide safe, effective care and support to clients. Features like:

- **Customizable and intuitive dashboards** so your team can focus on the data that's most important to your mission.
- **Secure and compliant referral and communication channels** to get information to those who need it without sacrificing client privacy and safety.
- **Built-in live chat, audio, and video communication** through CommHUB so teams and clients can communicate directly in real-time.
- **Integrations** with more than 40 external digital tools for faster communication, reporting, analysis, billing, and more.
- **Secure client access via our web portal**, so clients and agency partners can communicate with one another from any device anywhere.

We understand how interagency collaboration works — and how it should work, for you and for your clients. And we've built the perfect tools for you and your organization to do more good with more partners.

If you'd like to learn more about how we can help foster connections with agencies in your community, let us know. We're proud of what we've built, and we'd love to share it with you.

Learn more at CaseWorthy.com
877.347.0877