University and Community Engagement

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Why is Engagement between Communities and Universities Important?

- Calls for growing engagement with communities in the decision-making of governments and service systems
- The process of programmatic decision making should be based on evidence-based research
- The collaboration between universities and community service organizations provides for a view of more realistic conditions through research that is conducive to more effective outcomes
- This will allow more participation of citizens and greater inclusion of disadvantaged groups, especially in disparity research
Why is Engagement between Communities and Universities Important?

- Rapid changes in family structures
- Families with poor resources have not adapted well to the demands of contemporary living and parenting, which increases anxiety and stress
- Changes have brought new challenges to the service systems and overwhelm capacities
- Universities, through community engagement, can help to ensure that the services respond to realistic needs
Community Engagement

• There are two ways to view communities that are complementary and inseparable:
  • As geographic entities that are homogenous with a common identity
  • As relationships people have with others where they live or work and their sense of belonging

• Effective community engagement relies on the bonding between members and any strategy that strengthens these bonds is a target for intervention
What Is Community Engagement

• The concept of community engagement is a moving target. It is often used interchangeably with consultation, participation, collaboration and empowerment

• Engagement is frequently seen as a continuum, ranging from low-level strategies such as consultation to higher levels such as empowerment
## Public Participation Spectrum

*(International Association for Public Participation Australasia, 2014)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Participation</th>
<th>INFORM</th>
<th>CONSULT</th>
<th>INVOLVE</th>
<th>COLLABORATE</th>
<th>EMPOWER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution</td>
<td>To place final decision-making in the hands of the public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promise to the Public</td>
<td>We will keep you informed</td>
<td>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced that decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals</td>
<td>We will work with you to ensure that our concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</td>
<td>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible</td>
<td>We will implement what you decide</td>
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Rationale for Community Engagement

• Lack of success of traditional service approaches, especially for families with complex needs

• Improved results of needs assessments and formative research

• Community engagement can lead to improved outcomes by providing a greater sense of ownership, more participation in services, trust in the systems, better outcomes for children and families

• The damaging effects of non-participations such as misinformation and lack of access

• Community engagement is a human right
Standards for Community Engagement

Impact
We assess the impact to use it for improvement

Inclusion
Support
Planning
Methods
Working together

Communication

What makes Community Engagement Effective?

Standards:¹

• **Inclusion**—all the affected (stakeholders) should be involved earlier
• **Support**—remove barriers, provide transportation, facilitate communications
• **Planning**—clear purpose and outcomes for the engagement
• **Working together**—respect, trust, role and responsibilities well defined, development of skills
• **Methods**—process and procedures fit for the purpose, feedback used to improve outcomes, examples: focus groups, public meetings, surveys, etc.
• **Communication**—accessible, clear, regular, relevant, in appropriate format
• **Impact**—monitoring and reviewing, assessing change and how interventions have improved services, outcomes

¹ The 7 National Standards for Community Engagement.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8W4FRtEWE1M&feature=youtu.be
FIU Engagement

• Engagement was one of the originating goals of FIU

• FIU engages with the community through:
  • Several types of agreements with community organizations
  • Internships
  • Education
  • Services

FIU’s groundbreaking ceremony on January 25, 1971
Engagement in Practice

• Faculty and staff of both university and community organizations will need training in new skills, such as:
  • relationship building
  • conflict resolution
  • negotiations
  • communication
  • knowledge management

• To give professionals time for community engagement, their time and roles may need to be reconfigured.
The FIU - RCMI

• The Florida International University Research Center in Minority Institutions (FIU – RCMI) is a program supported by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), grant 1U54-MD012393

• The program is dedicated to growing health disparities research in South Florida.

• The Center focuses on developing and sustaining a national, clinical and behavioral research program addressing health inequalities and disparities associated with substance use problems and HIV for underrepresented minorities.
FIU-RCMI Engagement

• The FIU RCMI supports community engagement through
  • fostering community participatory research
  • development of faculty interested in disparity research
  • recruitment/service in the community
  • collaboration and training

• The RCMI has a community board to guide its activities
  https://rcmi.fiu.edu/cab-map/
Community Engagement
How Can Universities Help Communities?

- Identifying target populations
- Creating opportunities for connecting supportive communities
  - Example - Community Advisory Boards
- Improving the interface between communities and services (formative research)
- Looking at the systemic (ecological) conditions that lead to the problem, finding the root causes to work backwards
- Evidence-based research with the involvement of consumers
- Providing training to community leaders/members on how to use the resources of universities to identify and address needs
Engagement and Research: The Role of Universities

- Creating background data for community organizations through surveys, focus groups, participants interview
- Conducting formative research on identifying which other services are needed to deliver the mission of the organization, how and when to broaden services
- Assistance in obtaining funding and writing proposals and grants available for the specific function and vision of the organization
- Providing professional support and training for engagement and research
Building Supportive Communities CAB
Questions?
Thank you for your attention and participation