

Colorado LINKS for Mental Health

Outcome Evaluation: Summary of Key Findings

The Colorado LINKS for Mental Health outcome evaluation is a network study of the relationships between fifteen key divisions, units, and offices within five state departments. Using an approach called *social network analysis*, the LINKS evaluation seeks to identify changes in collaboration and partnership over time, beginning in January 2006 and ending in July 2007. The organizations surveyed are across five state Departments and include:

- Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS):
 - Division of Mental Health (DMH);
 - Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD);
 - Division of Child Welfare (DCW); and
 - Division of Youth Corrections (DYC);
- Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE):
 - Child, Adolescent and School Health Section (CASH);
 - Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Section (CYSHCN); and
 - Injury, Suicide and Violence Prevention Section (ISP);
- Colorado Department of Education (CDE):
 - Exceptional Student Leadership Unit (ESLU); and
 - Prevention Services Unit (PSU);
- Colorado Department of Public Safety (CDPS):
 - Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ);
- Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF):
 - Child Health Plan Plus Office (CHP+);
 - Children's Medicaid (CM); and
 - Mental Health Program (MHP).

Additionally, two interagency planning bodies were included in the survey:

- Mental Health Planning & Advisory Council (MHPAC), housed in CDHS; and
- Prevention Leadership Council (PLC), housed in CDPHE.

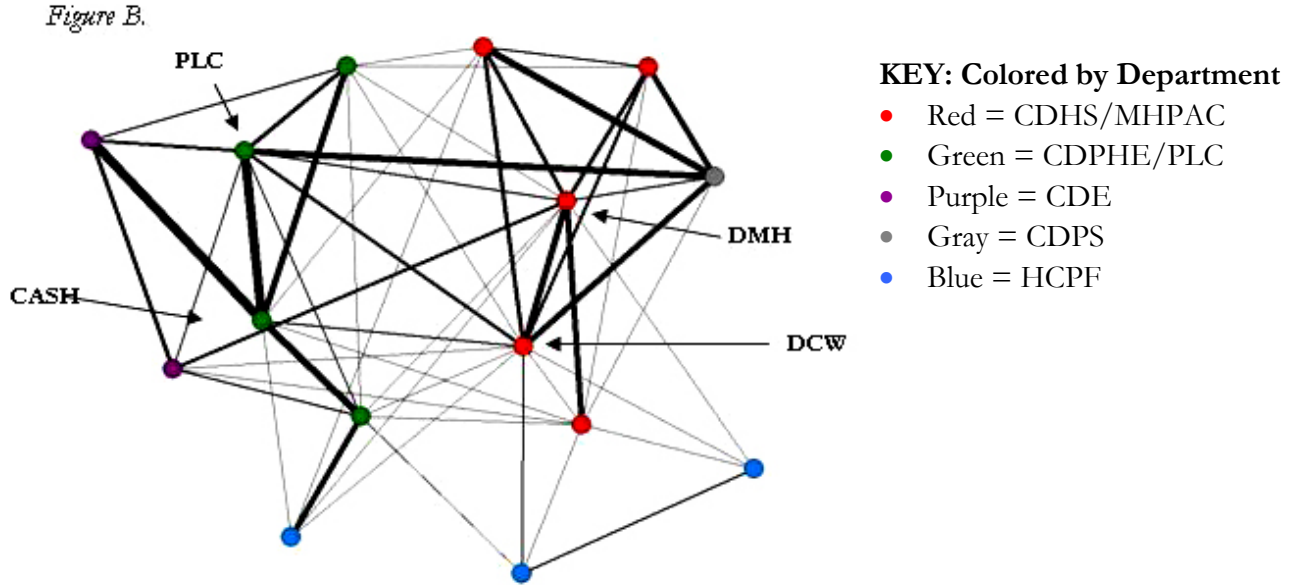
Key Findings from the Partnership Survey as of July 2007 include:

1. *Leadership in the mental health system is gradually centering on four organizations.* Division of Mental Health, Prevention Leadership Council, Division of Child Welfare, and Children's Medicaid.
2. *The networks have changed significantly in the eighteen months between the three rounds of the survey.* Partnership activities have increased by 32%, particularly between Departments.
3. *State offices are increasingly more likely to engage in partnership activities with organizations in other Departments.*
4. *CDHS and CDPHE serve as important bridges between other departments.* The Departments of Education, Public Safety, and Healthcare Policy and Financing are not connected directly to each other, either through perceptions of important partnerships or actual partnership activities. Rather, they are indirectly connected through CDHS and CDPHE.
5. *Staff time and resources are significant barriers to collaboration, but many opportunities for improved collaboration also exist.* The LINKS initiative is an opportunity to find alignment among different agencies and create opportunities for future collaboration.

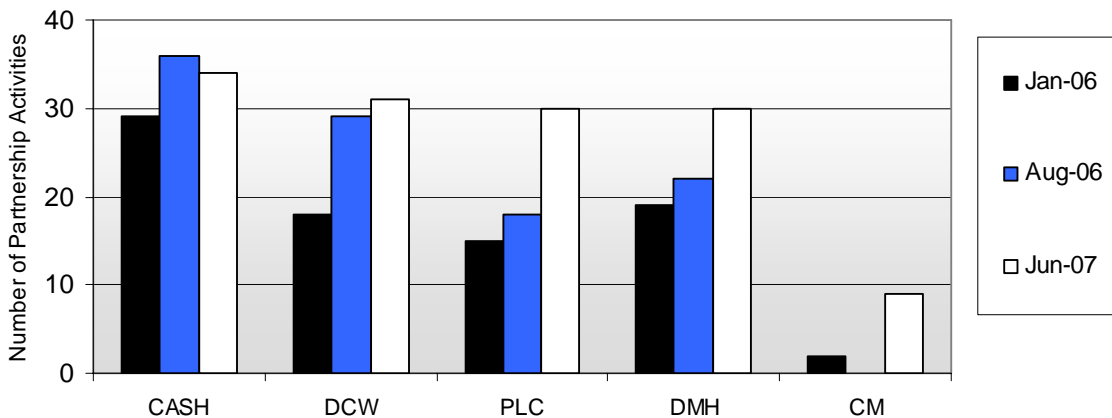
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Visualizing the Partnerships between State Organizations

Social network analysis is a powerful tool for understanding collaboration in part because it can visually show the relationships between organizations. In each round of the survey, respondents were asked to identify activities that their organization engages in with other organizations included in the survey, such as developing programs together, jointly submitted grants, letters of support for each others' grants, sitting on each other's boards, etc. The visual below shows the partnership activities between organizations, with the thickness of the line representing how many activities are underway between two organizations.



Another way to look at the same information is through a bar graph. The graph below shows how the number of partnership activities has increased over the eighteen month period for five central organizations who play important roles in the network of organizations included in the survey.



For additional information about the LINKS outcome evaluation, please contact the initiative evaluator, Jewlya Lynn, Ph.D. (ABD), with the Center for System Integration, Jewlya.Lynn@gmail.com, 720-252-8406.