

Supporting Families Community of Practice Evaluation

Sharing Information and Creating Partnerships: Angela's Story

"CtLC has given our family tools to develop a vision of Jackson's Good Life and a way to share that with others who support him like his school team, therapists, and our family. Having everyone be able to see and share that same vision for Jackson gives me hope as a parent that he will have that Good Life we want for him!" –Angela

Overview

In 2012 the Administration for Community Living (ACL) funded the development of a National Community of Practice for Supporting Families (CoP) to help state agencies and stakeholders, such as families, make systemic changes that positively impacts individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. The CoP is driven by a set of principles that comprise the Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) framework designed by and for families through the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC)-Institute for Human Development. The core belief of the CtLC framework is that all people have the right to live, love, work, play and pursue their life aspirations in their community.

In 2017, ACL funded an evaluation of the CoP to identify measurable outcomes achieved by the sixteen participating states. The evaluation uses five categories to evaluate the benefits of the CoP and CtLC: sharing information and creating partnerships, increasing knowledge, changing practice, improving performance, and redefining success. This document highlights themes observed across states that relate to the first category: *sharing information and creating partnerships*.

Category One Activities: Sharing Information and Creating Partnerships

- Sharing information
- Listening to families and their perspective
- Peer-to-peer support (families)
- Listening to self-advocates and their perspective
- Peer-to-peer support (self-advocates)
- Connection to National Community of Practice
- Partnerships between organizations
- CoP member engagement
- State agency leadership participating in CoP

Themes across States

Several themes regarding *sharing information and creating partnerships* emerged across all sixteen states participating in the evaluation. Information-sharing and partnerships often lead to policy and practice changes in the future. States confirm this impact by noting that the CoP is a conduit for information exchange. Increased opportunity for peer-peer support is a major achievement of the CoP, with many states highlighting the role of family members and self-advocates in CoP activities. Although each state has its own CoP structure, many cited that a high level of commitment and engagement from members, particularly state agency leadership, has helped them to achieve their goals. Finally, states communicated the importance of having strong relationships among various organizations to promote collaboration across diverse systems.

Angela's Story

Angela Donley is a member of Oklahoma's CoP. She plays a vital role in providing information to individuals and families about CtLC. In collaboration with the Assistant Director of Special Education of the Edmond School District, Angela helps facilitate Parent Education Nights. Parent Education Nights promote the use of CtLC tools as a way to help individuals with I/DD find the support they need by fostering peer-peer support relationships among families.



Angela Donley is personally and professionally motivated in her support for individuals with I/DD and their families. As the mother of a child with I/DD, she understands the importance of community connection and informed decision-making. As an employee of the Oklahoma Family Network, she works with individuals with special health care needs and disabilities and their families to learn and access services in their communities.

Angela learned about CtLC through an Oklahoma CoP presentation. Seeing its value, Angela began using the tools with her son, Jackson. She wanted Jackson to experience full engagement in school experiences. Angela used the Integrated Supports Star with his teachers, which resulted in a change in schedule leading to greater inclusion and connection to students without disabilities. Jackson's success motivated Angela to share her experiences and knowledge about CtLC with Megan Moore, the Special Education Program Specialist of the Edmond School District, where Jackson attends school.

After learning about the CoP and CtLC, Megan became the driving force behind sharing resources with families in the district. Megan and Angela began holding *Parent Education Nights*. They contacted families of children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the district and hosted a three-part series featuring each of the CtLC tools: One Page Portfolio, Life Trajectory Worksheet, and the Integrated Supports Star. Additionally, they supported teachers by sharing the practical application of CtLC to the daily life of their students.

In summary, parent education and teacher information sharing led to changes in knowledge among those who support individuals with I/DD and their families. The CoP drives greater peer to peer support and community engagement, enabling individuals with disabilities and their families to reach their own goals through self-advocacy and access to community resources.