

Rationale for having an HFA State System

Since the launching of HFA in 1992, a broad range of activities to help strengthen, support and demonstrate the effectiveness of the program have been implemented across the country. As the number of sites has increased, so has the need to develop local and statewide infrastructures to support this growth. State systems have emerged for a variety of reasons and in a number of different ways. For example, some states recognized a need early on to develop their own in-state training capacity and quality assurance systems. Other states have been fortunate to obtain large sums of money for HFA which created the need to quickly put into place the supports necessary to achieve successful outcomes. Regardless of how these activities have occurred, what has emerged is a pattern that seemingly enhances states' abilities to serve families and support programs like HFA. Within the HFA community, these activities are now being referred to as a state system.

What is a State System?

A state system is an infrastructure comprised of representatives from multiple disciplines who work collaboratively to support families through the provision of home visiting services. A state system facilitates the integration of activities such as training, evaluation and quality assurance to help ensure that members of the system keep abreast of emerging issues as they relate to serving families and children.

What are the Benefits of Having a State System?

Having a state system helps states develop the capacity to meet the needs of children and families. States with comprehensive systems are better able to provide HFA training for staff at all sites; facilitate implementation of home visiting programs that meet the critical elements; assist established sites to prepare for credentialing; increase public awareness and advocacy for HFA; identify potential funding streams; implement statewide management information systems to monitor and evaluate services and report outcomes; and facilitate the sharing of information among members and stakeholders.

States with state systems may also experience the following benefits:

- * **Common Mission** – Developing a state system requires all key players to work towards a common purpose or goal. The process brings everyone together and focuses all their efforts.
- * **Create Economies of Scale** – Sites throughout the state can share resources. For example, a state that purchases a data management system like PIMS for its state system will utilize less resources overall than if each site purchased individual (or different) systems. This may also hold true for evaluations. If a state system is working with an evaluator, more sites may be able to participate in the planning process and contribute to the development of a more extensive evaluation than if a single site undertook an evaluation on its own.
- * **Minimize Duplication of Effort** – By creating statewide standards, processes and/or guidelines for staffing issues, training and technical assistance around community planning, site development and quality assurance, the need for each site to develop its own set of standards is decreased.
- * **Establish a Stronger Advocacy Base** – Mobilizing interested parties from all aspects of HFA (sites, State Leaders, trainers, peer reviewers, evaluators, etc) is an effective way to voice concerns and promote the effectiveness of the program to wide audiences. While single sites can certainly make an impact, there is strength in numbers.
- * **Generate Stronger Outcomes** – Members of a state system can decide as a group what data to collect to ensure consistency across the state. Consistent data collected from all sites can contribute to stronger and more generalizable outcomes.
- * **Enhance Opportunities for Training and Technical Assistance** – Developing an in-state training team enables sites to access training more efficiently and cost-effectively. Without having to rely on out-of-state or national trainers, sites could

receive training sooner and eliminate having to pay travel expenses. In addition, the in-state trainers could be charged with providing wrap-around trainings and could be a resource for meeting other technical assistance needs such as site development and quality assurance.

- * **Demonstrate Capacity to Serve Families** – States with well-functioning state systems are better able to support families in the state. In addition, they are better positioned to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program and their ability to effectively utilize public and private dollars.
- * **Provide Mechanisms for Sharing Information and Support** – There is a wide range of expertise among members of the HFA network. State systems that have a mechanism for members to share information (via meetings, conferences, site visits, newsletters, conference calls, etc) provide a valuable opportunity to build on one another's strengths. State systems can utilize this expertise to offer mentoring or consultation, ensure quality and help with site development. Regular communication also provides opportunities for state systems to identify and address emerging needs and focus on prevention.
- * **Facilitate Relationship Development/Collaboration** – A state system is better positioned to collaborate with other organizations on the state level. These partnerships may lead to reductions in the duplication of services and opportunities to partner with diverse organizations.
- * **Greater Potential for Public Relations and Marketing Activities** – A state system may be able to support a PR/marketing professional who could promote HFA statewide and decrease the need for sites to conduct their own marketing efforts. Utilizing promotional and marketing vehicles, a state system has them opportunity to bring attention to prevention and the multiple needs of families and children.