

What Does it Mean to Build the Frame in Service Coordination?

Asking the Next Best Question

Understanding the Next Best Answer

Young people and their families who fit within the moderate range of need present in notable ways. Youth and families in this range often are characterized by long lengths of stay within services, episodic service episodes, a high rate of crisis or destabilization and responses that often results in adding more service. Given the up and down cycle associated with youth who land in this range, there is a risk that staff will work harder, become reactive and that more services will be assigned even if they are not the best fit for those youth and their families. Coordination for these youth must be collaborative with consistent communication among all parties to assure that staff are working smarter rather than harder. This should allow families to experience integration of service efforts and improve outcomes while reducing reactive responses.

Within Service Coordination, the person who functions as the frame builder sets the stage for smart responses to situations that don't easily fit with available services. The frame builder has responsibility to develop an understanding of the family, their story and their sense of future and hope. After they start with that understanding they organize that information to set the stage for consistent communication and collaboration with the family and all ancillary service providers. This means that the person has to work to understand where the family is coming from, how their experiences shape their current conditions and how their sense of the future and hope is driving their destination. They then have to summarize that information in a way that is true to the family's sense of self and reflects their story.

Those that operate as the frame builder must seek to understand the family's experience. Using the art of appreciative inquiry, they work to understand and summarize the family's experience. They then summarize that experience as they arrange for ancillary services and supports. Their summary should build a frame around the work for the ancillary service provider or collaborative partner. This means that if a community support provider, treatment provider or peer partner, is assigned they should have an understanding of the what, why and how they can help families move forward on their journey. The art of asking the next best question is about communicating authentic curiosity and a stance of learning from the story.

The skill is about not only asking, but also working to understand the response while summarizing that response. This means the frame builder has to avoid drawing conclusions about behavior without understanding the family's experience. Once the frame builder has asked the next best question, they need to be prepared to accept the answer they receive and put in a context that respectfully summarizes the family's experience. This means frame builders should not only cultivate a stance of acceptance of the family's position and inspire others to do the same. While this sounds easy, it can become difficult for youth and families who don't easily fit into usual and customary services.

As families aren't realizing outcomes and crisis increases, it is easy to create an alternative narrative about what is happening within and around the family. This alternative narrative can range from assigning negative motivation to a situation to assuming the worst in others. The frame builder should be disciplined in setting the stage for the family's sense of future to be recognized and for engagement to occur continuously throughout the process of hope. Use the form on the next page to identify your next best question and how you would use that to communicate the right frame to others involved with the family.

Setting the Frame Activity		
Family Name	Staff Name	Date
What is the situation that is causing concern? Be specific and behavioral in your description.		
What are the conclusions that you or others either are or might be made because of these circumstances?		
What information do you need to know in order to be assured that you have the right story?		
What's your next best question?		
Why haven't you asked it already?		
What is the worst answer you could get? How would that impact your frame?		
What is the best answer you could get? How would that impact your frame?		
What will you do to keep your frame positive and focused?		
Summarize Your Next Steps to Build Your Frame		