

Central New York Regional Interagency Technical Assistance Team

Mission: The CNY RITAT is a committed team, comprised of several regional state agency offices, which strives to ensure optimal regional communication and coordination of various New York State agency initiatives which are designed to address the health and well being of children and their families in the Central New York Region.

History: The CNY RITAT was originally formed in 1993/4, when the Coordinated Children's Services Initiative (CCSI) was launched, and its focus was strictly CCSI. Initial membership included SDSS, OASAS, DPCA, DFY, OMH and occasionally SED. Regional offices for the Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives have since been eliminated.

Membership: CNY RITAT mirrors that of the Commissioners' Committee in most respects and includes, Office of Mental Health (OMH), OMH Parent Advisors, Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), Department of Health (DOH), and Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). As our efforts to engage State Education Department (SED) over the years were unsuccessful, BOCES staff was invited to represent the education system.

Purpose: The Team serves as a liaison between the Commissioners' Committee and the CNY Region with regard to improving cross systems collaborations. The Team is committed to sharing information and delivering quality technical assistance and consultation to agencies and counties which will enable them to achieve better outcomes for children, youth and families.

Over the years, both the purpose and membership of the Team evolved well beyond the single focus of CCSI. As collaborative initiatives grew at the state level, it was evident that leadership and resources at both the state and county level were necessary. Collective and shared knowledge and expertise of the team are used to maximize efforts, avoid duplication and help support evidence-based programming.

Meeting Agenda: The standard agenda at monthly meetings includes updates from the Commissioners' Committee and its sub-committees followed by member updates about collaborative initiatives and/or agency-specific initiatives such as School Based Health Centers, Integrated County Planning (ICP), CCSI, ACT (Assets Coming Together) for Youth, Healthy Families, B2H, Obesity prevention, tobacco control, early intervention, cross systems training (OASAS/OMH, OMRDD/OMH, OCFS waiver) and others. County specific discussions follow and may include areas of concern and potential strategies to address technical assistance needs. Collaborative decision making and problem solving have proven to be the most effective and successful assets for the CNY Team.

Accomplishments: Recent accomplishments include a June, 2009 Regional Forum, held on behalf of the Commissioners Committee, which involved over one hundred participants from 12 counties. Leaders from six State agencies were involved. A CCSI Regional Forum on best practices held in Utica in November, 2008 involved over forty representatives from 13 counties. Seven state agencies participated, including several Commissioners, who shared information on the Commissioners Committee. The Team recently provided technical assistance and training to

3 counties to enable them to either reestablish or strengthen CCSI. For 8 years, with its annual allocation of training funds, the CNY RITAT has supported parent advocate training for 20 counties with a focus on skill development to help families navigate across systems for needed services.

Projects undertaken over the years include convening CCSI coordinators, coordinating and delivering CCSI training, convening ICP counties, reviewing RFPs as a team, promoting training (Youth Development, Communities That Care, Search Institute) and sponsoring training such as 3 regional *Bridges out of Poverty* training sessions. In addition, cross-agency efforts have been used to provide specific technical assistance, training and consultation to individual and/or groups of agencies or counties.

Team members continue to share valuable educational opportunities for providers, training resources, relevant legislative updates, policy changes and funding resources with each other and with counties.