

Strengthening Connections

Leveraging Existing Networks for Integrated Prevention Services

Reflection Guide and Tip Sheet

This tool is for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program staff interested in strengthening partnerships with Child Welfare (CW) programs that promote [Purpose 1 of TANF](#) to help ensure children can be cared for in their own homes. When families have unmet basic needs, such as insufficient food, housing, or childcare, they are at increased risk for involvement in the CW system¹. Partnerships between TANF and CW can help coordinate services to ensure families' material needs are met and families stay together. This tool includes reflection questions and tips along with real-world examples of collaboration between TANF and CW programs.

Reflection Questions



Collaborative partnerships are essential for TANF agencies aiming to strengthen prevention efforts. Fostering relationships with partners like CW agencies, schools, and community-based institutions can enable TANF agencies to address causes of family instability more holistically. These partnerships can help ensure families receive comprehensive support before a crisis might escalate to CW involvement. For example, integrated prevention services may look like providing wrap-around case management during TANF appointments, co-designing concrete supports for TANF participants, or formalizing referral pathways between partner agencies. By working together, agencies can create integrated and proactive systems of support that promote economic self-sufficiency and family well-being. Use the reflection questions below to consider how your agency might approach building and sustaining partnerships to support an integrated prevention initiative.

A Video Series on TANF and Child Welfare Partnerships to Promote Purpose 1: Lessons Learned from FAST-LC



The Office for Family Assistance partnered with the Children's Bureau to develop the [Families Are Stronger Together Learning Community \(FAST-LC\)](#), which focused on preventing family involvement in the CW system through developing, implementing, and enhancing TANF-CW partnerships and innovations. FAST-LC was a one-year initiative that involved 10 Tribal and state TANF-CW agencies.

This reflection guide and tip sheet accompanies a video, [Strengthening Connections: Leveraging Existing Networks for Integrated Prevention Services](#), which highlights lessons from the FAST-LC. The video features representatives from the Chippewa Cree Indians of the Rocky Boy's Reservation (Chippewa Cree), the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and the California Tribal TANF Partnership (CTTP), who discuss how they cultivated partnerships with agencies to plan and implement integrated prevention services.

Strategic Thinking & Mindset

How would you define integrated prevention services?

How might integrating TANF, CW, and other agencies' services matter for:

- Staff who provide services?
 - The participants you serve?
 - Your program outcomes?
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Why is cultivating partnerships with CW and other agencies important to you?
Why is it important to your agency?

Understanding Context & Readiness

What are the prevention services currently available to TANF participants?

How are your current prevention services for TANF participants connected to or integrated with CW services?

How might you improve the integration of current TANF and CW services?

With whom do you already have established partnerships and with whom do you need to foster new relationships?

What might designing integrated prevention services with partners look like, given your agency's structure?

¹Anderson, C. and Y. Grewal-Kök. (July 2023). [The Role of TANF in Economic Stability and Family Well-Being and Child Safety](#). Chapin Hall.



Key Insights from the Field



To build effective and sustainable partnerships between TANF and CW agencies and advance integrated prevention services, Chippewa Cree, Pascua Yaqui, and CCTP used a range of strategies to break down agency silos, develop wrap-around services, and coordinate service delivery with partners.



Leverage existing partnerships to design services that reach participants at risk of CW involvement.

In addition to partnering with CW agencies, consider other trusted community partners that can enhance service delivery and credibility. Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF partnered with CW, local schools, and behavioral health agencies to provide targeted prevention services to families with children experiencing truancy. Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF also partnered with Peacemakers, who are trusted Elders in the Tribe, to support a calm and safe environment during wrap-around sessions.



Build integrated data systems to improve coordination.

Siloed operations and lack of communication between partners can contribute to fragmented services. By identifying specific collaboration barriers, TANF agencies can design tailored solutions. CCTP identified data-sharing issues between Tribal and county TANF agencies, such as incompatible software and data sovereignty concerns. In response, CCTP created an integrated data-sharing system called *Tribal Linkages* to connect Tribal TANF, state TANF, and state CW systems and improve coordination.



Maintain regular communication between agencies.

Regular, structured meetings with partners can help cross-agency teams define roles and build trust over time. To support their integrated services, Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF held weekly case reviews with CW, schools, and other partners. These meetings included tracking school attendance, behavior, and progress, which promoted consistent communication and shared responsibility. Chippewa Cree also identified key staff at each partner agency to maintain continuity and streamline communication.



Engage with families directly and early to inform them about available services across agencies.

Families may be more likely to access services when they understand them clearly from the start. Pascua Yaqui Tribal TANF and partners worked together to clearly define referral pathways and available services. Tribal TANF case managers discuss all available services during initial intake with families, including rental assistance, emergency housing, childcare, and TANF-specific support. This early engagement helps families navigate available services and reduces confusion about where to seek help.

Tribal Programs Integrated Service Delivery Models to Better Serve Families

Establishing a Network of Partners to Deliver Wrap-around Case Management

[Chippewa Cree Tribe](#) implemented a wrap-around care model that integrates Tribal TANF, CW, schools, and health services to support families before crises occur. Grounded in cultural practices, this strategy promoted holistic, proactive, and collaborative prevention services.



Creating a Comprehensive Framework of Services

[Pascua Yaqui](#) created a *Continuum of Care framework* that aligned TANF and CW services under a unified prevention and intervention system. This approach fostered collaboration between departments, clarified program roles, and emphasized protective factors to help families navigate services.



Sharing Data for Improved Coordination

[CTTP](#) expanded *Linkages*, an existing data-sharing system, to ensure that families engaged with Tribal TANF and CW receive coordinated services. They implemented the expanded system, called *Tribal Linkages*, in collaboration with Tribal TANF partners to address specific needs and challenges in Tribal service areas.





Frame integrated services as a community effort to support engagement and reduce stigma.

The stigma of participating in TANF and CW services can prevent families from seeking support.

Pascua Yaqui developed a *Continuum of Care* flyer that clearly explains intervention and prevention services and the role of all partners in the integrated system. TANF staff destigmatized accessing prevention services by framing them as a community effort and part of a family's journey to self-sufficiency. The program uses the flyer in participant- and staff-facing materials to help both groups understand the relationships between available services.

From Reflection to Action

How can you use these insights to start or advance your own TANF-CW partnership? Use the following questions to help you identify immediate opportunities, align action with purpose, and set the stage for meaningful progress.

- How can you use relationships with partners (like CW agencies, schools, or other human service programs) to strengthen integrated prevention services? Are there any barriers preventing you from strengthening those relationships?

- What tools (for example, flyers, graphics, community events) could help you communicate your goals and build trust with families and staff?



- How might you involve families early in service design to ensure that integrated services reflect their needs?
- What is one step that you could take this month to improve partnerships? What support would you need from your agency and/or others to make it happen?

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**Lizeth Hester, Janelle Jones, and Damon Waters,
Federal Project Officers**

Steve McLaine and Jeanette Holdbrook, Project Managers

Clare Bradshaw and Brittany Tabora, Lead Authors