

CQI Summary Report¹

Collocation: Views from Staff in October 2010

Orange County, NY System of Care

This report presents findings from a survey about the Orange County System of Care collocation model where staff from different departments work in one setting – “The SOC House.” The SOC House includes workers from the county departments of mental health, probation, and social services as well as a Family Partner from Family Empowerment Council, Inc. Nineteen of 25 staff members completed an anonymous survey about the collocation experience in August, 2010. The survey consisted of 22 questions and covered four topics: I. Physical Collocation, II. In-House Communication, III. Supervision and Management, and IV. Team Functioning. There were 7 true/false statements regarding knowledge and attitudes towards children’s mental health. This report presents a snapshot of staff perspectives at a time when significant changes were occurring in referral and intake processes and in staffing configurations, so findings should be viewed within this context. The survey will be re-administered throughout the initiative to capture changes over time.

Findings and Recommendations

I. Physical Collocation

Workers had generally favorable opinions of the *concept* of collocation, but views were mixed regarding how well the concept is currently being implemented. Work remains on establishing an efficient, well-functioning team. The potential for cross-system education exists, and staff seems eager for opportunities for more information sharing and cross-system communication.

Figure 2

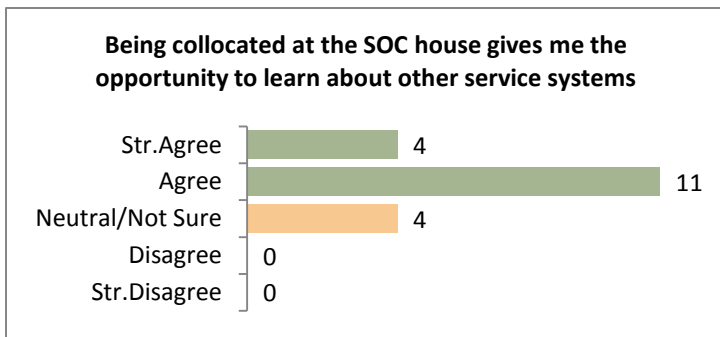
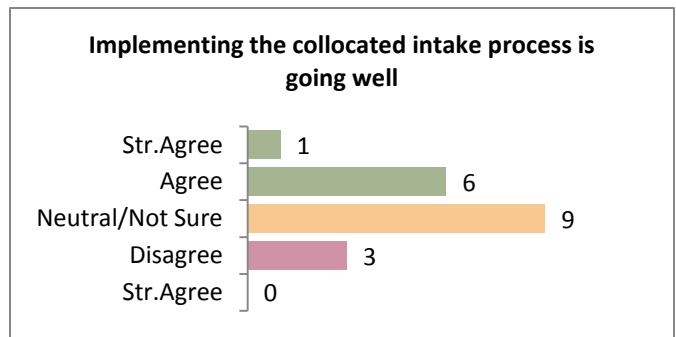


Figure 1



Recommendations:

- System change takes time. Continued attention to the implementation of the collocation concept is necessary to ensure it succeeds. An important strategy to this end is soliciting continued feedback from workers. Administering surveys such as this one throughout the initiative is one approach to gathering perspectives and keeping the dialogue going.
- Supervisors and project leaders need to be a part of the ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process and may want to consider developing mechanisms for ongoing feedback between formal evaluation surveys.
- The majority of workers did not agree that rotating staff at the SOC House was working well. Ongoing assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of staff rotation is warranted.

¹ A full report was presented and discussed at the October 2010 SOC House Meeting.

II. In-House Communication

Workers generally understand the lines of communication and most know what services are available for youth. While most agreed that their inquiries are answered timely, there was some concern over the consistency of communication among staff members. Many responses reflected an eagerness for additional information sharing and cross-system communication. Comments throughout the survey reflected frustration over frequent changes to the intake process. Decisions and processes have become more stable over time.

Figure 3

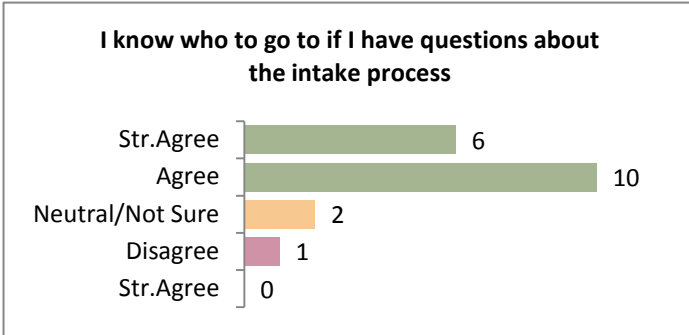
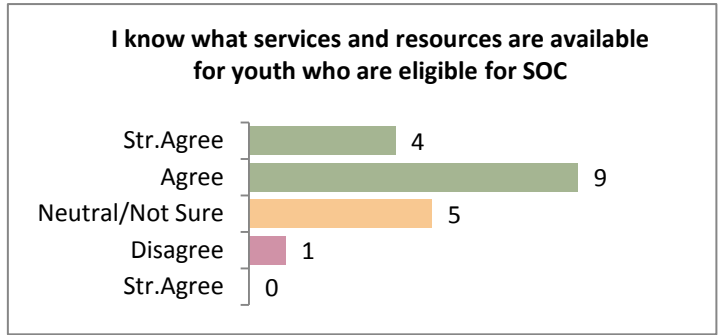


Figure 4



Recommendations:

- While most workers know where to go to get their questions answered, several mentioned that answers may change depending on who is asked or because the process changes frequently. It is recommended that communication channels be clarified so it is understood who is responsible for responding to specific questions.
- Those who are responsible for answering questions need to be consistent in their responses. Written instructions and definitions of terms would foster this consistency.
- Community resource lists from each system should be made available to all staff at the SOC House; consider developing a centralized list of resources.
- Offering both informal and formal opportunities for exchange will foster the cross-fertilization of knowledge and experience among the collocated workers with the goal of establishing a mutually-dependent team.

III. Supervision and Management

Responses were mixed on the feedback workers receive about their jobs and how well the SOC House is managed. More than a third of the workers reported being unclear about their job responsibilities. Slightly less than half reported they have received adequate training.

Figure 5

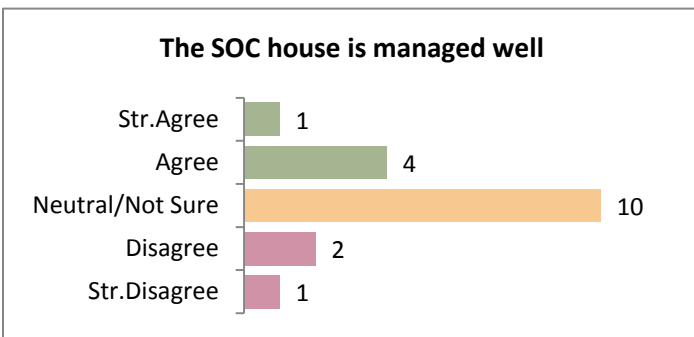
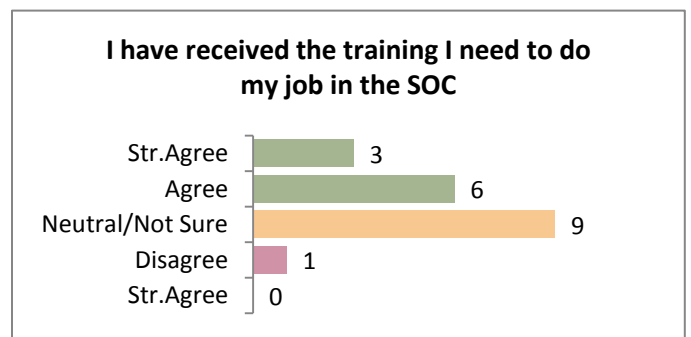


Figure 6



Recommendations:

- Maintaining regular and positive communication between supervisors and workers is critical to the successful implementation of this complex, labor-intensive collocated intake model. The system of care principle of being strength-based should apply throughout all aspects of the initiative, including interactions between supervisors and employees.
- Reviewing existing job descriptions, clarifying job roles, and providing the necessary training to support workers, is warranted.

IV. Team Functioning

A feature of the cross-system collocation model is the opportunity for shared learning, working together as a multi-disciplinary team, and relying on each others' experience and areas of expertise. Findings are mixed on team functioning and workers feeling valued as part of the team.

Figure 7

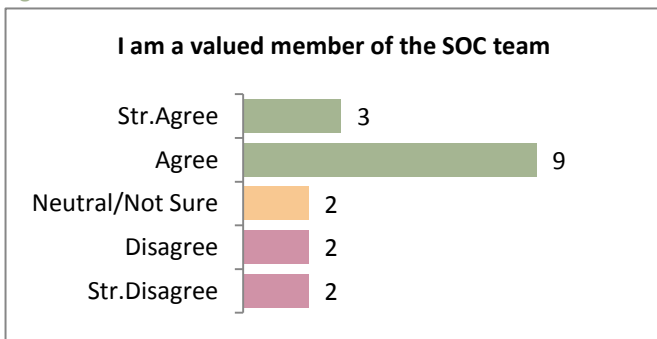
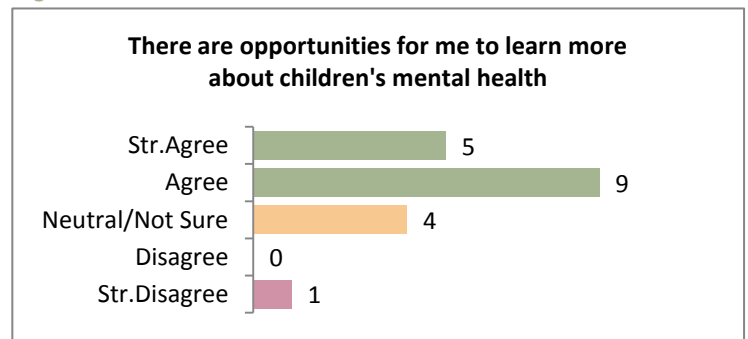


Figure 8

**Recommendations:**

- Opportunities for informal information sharing, e.g., brown bag lunches, may help to build trust, respect, and a sense of a team among SOC House staff.
- Clarification and communication of each staff member's job function and relevant experience may also foster internal communication and team building.

Knowledge and Attitudes

The true/false quiz shed some light on areas for staff education and discussion. In order for cross-fertilization of knowledge and experiences to occur, workers need opportunities for education and information sharing in both formal and informal venues.

- Consider offering ongoing in-service training or brown bag lunches to educate all staff about children's mental health.
- Encourage workers to review available Fact Sheets regularly. The Technical Assistance Partnership website provides free resources (www.tapartnership.org).
- Provide both formal and informal opportunities for open discussions of beliefs and attitudes towards youth and families involved in different systems – mental health, probation and juvenile justice, DSS and child welfare.

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