

Supporting Families Community of Practice Evaluation

Changes in Knowledge: Maggie's Story

“The framework has guided my professional development and built capacity in me to serve self-advocates and families in a way that is person-centered and proactive.” –Maggie

Overview

In 2012 the Administration for Community Living (ACL) funded the development of a National Community of Practice for Supporting Families (CoP) to help state agencies and stakeholders, such as families, make systemic changes that positively impacts individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. The CoP is driven by a set of principles that comprise the Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) framework designed by and for families through the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC)-Institute for Human Development. The core belief of the CtLC framework is that all people have the right to live, love, work, play and pursue their life aspirations in their community.

In 2017, ACL funded an evaluation of the CoP to identify measurable outcomes achieved by the sixteen participating states. The evaluation uses five categories to evaluate the benefits of the CoP and CtLC: sharing information and creating partnerships, increasing knowledge, changing practice, improving performance, and redefining success. This document highlights themes observed across states that relate to the second category: *increasing knowledge*.

Category Two Activities: Increasing Knowledge

- Using CtLC tools and principles
- Advancing current initiatives and goals
- National training, state training, and informal training
- Workgroup and learning community
- Family Outreach
- Website and technology development
- Creating and disseminating products

Themes across States

Several themes regarding *increasing knowledge* emerged across all sixteen states participating in the evaluation. States noted increased use and dissemination of CtLC tools and principles by CoP members. States deploy diverse strategies to help build knowledge, which includes attending and administering training on CtLC. CoP members are participating in the Ambassador Series training to diffuse information learned through state and local training. In addition, CtLC helps state systems and organizations reframe their strategies. CoP members cited the value of diffusing the framework across sectors, including education. All states are advancing current initiatives, leading to changes in thinking and increased understanding of how to best assist families through alternative avenues of support for individuals with I/DD and their families across the lifespan. States credit the framework for helping individuals and families develop a vision for a good life and identify available supports.

Maggie's Story

Maggie's story highlights how the CoP and CtLC tools and principles promote changes in thinking and knowledge, in both professional and personal settings. She notes how CtLC has expanded into the education sector and refers to her use of the tools in her role at Abilities First and their work with Green County School District. Utilizing the tools has also enabled Maggie to support her son Max's behavioral health needs at home.



Maggie Rollwagen is an Educational Liaison for Abilities First, an organization focused on inclusion within the community for individuals with I/DD. She first learned about CtLC during her leadership team's participation in a training by UMKC. In her role, Maggie uses the CtLC tools to help families articulate their needs and promote the effective navigation of support options within schools by linking families to additional resources identified by their Supports Star.

As an organization, Abilities First supports the CtLC by spreading use of the tools throughout the education field by working with school districts such as the Green County School District (GCSD) in Missouri. Use of CtLC can support schools to fulfill Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirements. The GCSD has 1,500 students with special education needs but only 5% have program support coordinators helping families to navigate their service options. To educate the community and coordinate resources, Abilities First uses CtLC to fill the gap in support to families. They conduct five community resource events each year, sharing lessons learned with a focus on topics such as life transitions, guardianship, and DESE requirements through the lens of the CtLC framework. Maggie witnessed firsthand the positive impact CtLC can have when utilized efficiently across sectors.

Using CtLC on a professional level prompted Maggie to explore its use on a personal level. Her stepson Max has behavioral challenges that prevent him from inclusion within the school environment. Maggie worked with his biological mother using the Life Trajectory as a tool to determine what had and had not worked in the past. Doing so resulted in a shared vision, allowing both parties to mitigate tension and find a balance among potential support options.

In summary, the CtLC tools have not only supported Maggie in her professional role, but have helped Maggie to support Max to meet his life goals. With assistance, Max developed the individual portfolio providing him with a tangible tool he can use to speak for himself in all settings and across all experiences. The CtLC tools changed how Maggie thinks about her family's life and empowered her to share their knowledge with others.