

Module Six

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Module Description

Disproportionate minority contact significantly affects families and minority communities. This module revolves around family and community engagement, communications, and understanding cultural differences. It focuses on techniques, practices, opportunities, local issues, and cultural communication practices to engage families and communities in support of individuals and youth in need.

Module 6 Competencies

- » Participants understand why family and community involvement in school-to-court issues is difficult to motivate.
- » Participants understand the relationships among relevant spheres of influence in the community.
- » Participants develop common strategies for effective family and community engagement in individual and system DMC and bias issues.



One Hour

Supplies for Module 6

- Laptop Computer
- LCD Projector
- Screen
- External Speakers
- Module 6 PowerPoint presentation
- Easel pad with markers and tape
- Handouts:
 - Basic Community Engagement Model
 - Case Study – *Connecting to Your Community*
- Blank paper

Always remind participants at the beginning of a session and throughout the module that any generalizations made are based on aggregate data and may not necessarily represent individual diversities within the participant.

- I. This module focuses on how disproportionate minority contact involves families and minority communities.**

Though the sessions are focused on the three organizations directly related to the school-to-court process, this discussion will be enhanced by participants from community organizations.

- A. In Iowa, adult minority incarceration rates have long been high. We also know that the path to prison often begins in childhood.
 - 1. According to the *Des Moines Register*, in April 2011, the incarceration rate of black Iowans was 17.1%, nearly 6 times higher than their proportion of the population.
 - 2. The incarceration rate of Native Americans was 1.2%, which is 3 times higher than their proportion of the population.
- B. We understand that, given the statistics regarding the rate of incarceration of adult minorities, increasing cultural understanding and eliminating bias in our school-to-court process are essential means to address the immediate short and long-term causal issues.
- C. If we address issues in childhood, fewer youth will follow the path to prison.
- D. We know that involving families and the community in meaningful ways is critical if there is to be success in changing this dynamic.
 - 1. This module accents the value of community engagement and communication among the schools, juvenile court, law enforcement, families, and the minority community.
 - 2. It addresses what is required to better communicate with minority communities.
 - 3. It takes a look at how our counties and state are changing in our cultural, economic, demographic, and age categories.

- E. Let's review some of the data from 2009, as reported in the *Des Moines Register*.
1. The poverty rate for African Americans is 32.5%, as compared to 11.8% for all of Iowa.
 2. 71% of Iowa's black families have one parent living in the home; in all Iowa families, 31% are single-parent households.
 3. In 2009, the median earnings of black Iowans was \$18,622. For all Iowans, it was \$21,119.
 4. 6.4 % of Iowans five years and older speak a language other than English in their home. (2011 – State Data Center)
- F. In addition, this module will allow us to discuss better ways to engage families and communities in support of individuals and youth in need.
- G. Finally, our core premise is that individuals and organizations must achieve cultural understanding to make the school-to-court process work better.

II. The school-to-court process touches those far beyond the individual child.

- A. The decisions made all along the decision process have long-lasting effects on the youth and on who or what else?



Activity/ Discussion:

This discussion links the community with the school-to-court process.

For each, ask the participants to explain how and why each is affected.

Decisions may be more indirectly effected, but should be part of the discussion. How and why are each of these effected?



Cue Video:
Marvin
Spencer

Allow a pause after the video ends for participants to process what they heard. You may then wish to ask if there are comments.

1. The individual student.
2. The student's immediate family and extended family.
3. The school and school district.
4. The minority community.
5. Law enforcement.
6. The Juvenile Court System.
7. The greater community or "community as a whole."

B. Other institutions or organizations will also be effected in the short or long-term. Can you think of what some of those impacts may be?

1. State and local budgets.
2. Corrections systems.
3. City, county, and school district tax bases.
4. Are there others?

C. Watch this short video that focuses on how the school-to-court decisions may affect the student and why family and community engagement are essential. You will see Marvin Spencer DMC Subcommittee Member and Corrections Staff in the Black Hawk County office.

III. Most of us understand that to effectively reach out and engage the minority community – whether it is African American, Vietnamese, Latino, African, immigrant, refugee, or any number of others – requires different approaches for different communities and in different cities.



Understanding the make-up and realities of the cultures and history of any community is essential. If you wish refer to data on poverty, demographics, and DMC see Modules 1 and 3 and Supplemental Materials.

- A. An African American community is different than an African community.
- B. A Vietnamese community is different than a Hmong or Cambodian community.
- C. A Sudanese refugee community is different than a Nigerian immigrant community.
- D. An African American community in Waterloo is different from an African American community in Sioux City or Ottumwa.
- E. An African American teenage girl is different from an African American teenage boy.
- F. These examples of the differences within communities may be apparent, but often, we make certain assumptions about each and not always recognize the distinct cultural differences.

IV. Law enforcement, school districts, the juvenile court system, and other organizations are very aware of the importance of minority community engagement.

- A. Minority community engagement allows for achieving personal, agency, and shared goals for the school-to-court process.

“Spheres of influence” are community leaders representing different interests in the community. These may include the faith and business communities, community organizations, successful artists, athletes, or educators. They are individuals who are trusted and can attract skeptics to support the initiative.

- B. There are significant challenges in creating and supporting a minority community engagement initiative.
1. It takes careful planning. A nonchalant approach will not be effective.
 2. Minority community engagement efforts also require management and coordination, not to mention leadership.
 3. It requires support of the minority community’s spheres of influence to help shape and plan engagement that addresses the respective institutional goals and the goals of the community.
 - a. In this discussion, reducing disproportionate minority contact is the priority goal of the school-to-court process and the minority community.
 - b. A second goal as well as improving the health and well-being of the community.
 - c. Moving all individuals and organizations involved toward better understanding of each other’s respective cultures is a third goal.
 4. We also know that successful community engagement requires real work. Sustained intensity and effort over time is crucial.
 - a. Engagement and lasting change are slow processes.
 - b. It is important that those involved look like the community, and it helps if they are from the community.
 - c. Involvement and respect are important.



Activity/ Discussion

- » Encourage discussion of spheres of influence in the:
- » Various minority communities
- » The non-minority community
- » The community as a whole – those all look to

There are a number of differently worded definitions of community engagement, but they are basically the same. Community and family engagement has become a best practice for organizations that may have different agendas in areas such as community planning, policy development, advocacy, and community education.

C. Let's talk briefly about spheres of influence in this community.

1. Who are some spheres of influence in the minority community?
2. With whom are they influential?

V. We have discussed the importance of family and minority community engagement. But, what is it?

A. Community engagement is defined as any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses the public to make more informed decisions.



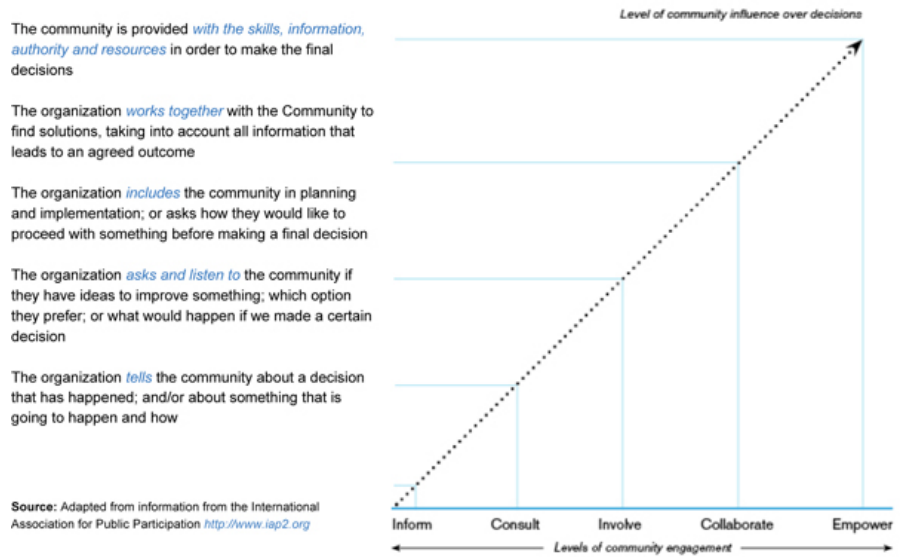
Hand out the Basic Community Engagement Model.

This demonstrates the relationship between levels of community engagement and community influence over decisions.

Participants can answer this for themselves silently; if some wish to share aloud, offer the opportunity.

- B. This includes decisions by organizations, institutions, or governing bodies that impact those who live and work in the community.
- C. Take a look at the Basic Community Engagement Model, which graphically demonstrates how engagement allows community influence.

BASIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL



1. Engaging with the community is more than just providing information or consulting.
2. The more engaged people are, the more skills they need, and they acquire influence as a result.
3. Think about your own city or county and of the population as a whole and the minority population.
 - a. Where would you place your organization in this model relative to minority community engagement?
 - b. Where would you place your organization in this model relative to majority community engagement?

This also allows you to ask follow up questions to some individuals to give more focus to the discussion.



Hand out
Case Study
– *Connecting*
to Your

Community As you discuss and/or ask questions, be prepared to write some of the key points, ideas, or strategies on the chart. Note that Module 7 focuses on sustaining an engagement effort and developing a plan to do that.

VI. Let's discuss the motivation for and realities of minority community engagement as it relates to your own institution.

- A. How important is community engagement to your work? Why?
- B. How do you and your own organization engage minority families and the minority communities?
- C. What are the greatest challenges in your work in engaging the minority communities?

VII. Let's take a closer look at a hypothetical situation presented in *Connecting to Your Community*.

- A. As you read through this, think about the core issues in this case study.
- B. What is the situation?
- C. What is the best way to address the situation?
- D. What can the school do to engage the community in the short and longer-term?
- E. How could this have been done better so it wouldn't have happened at

VIII. To wrap up this session, let's summarize quickly.

- A. Engagement suggests a special sort of collaborative relationship.
 - 1. The organizations involved must fully understand the dynamics of the communities with which they are working.
 - 2. The organizations involved and the people who work in those organizations need to have a high level of cultural understanding.
 - 3. The organizations will need to adapt and develop structures and processes to make them accessible and relevant to those communities.
- B. Community engagement warns us against making assumptions about minority communities and the people who live in those communities.
 - 1. Dialogue is required.
 - 2. Development of the relationships needs to be to be the focus of attention.
 - 3. Organizations will need to legitimately engage with minority communities as well as ask the minority communities to truly engage with the organizations.



Cue Video:
Judy
Bradshaw

IX. Take a look and listen to this short video comment by Judy Bradshaw relating to the value of community engagement taken from a Polk County interview.

BASIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL

The community is provided *with the skills, information, authority and resources* in order to make the final decisions

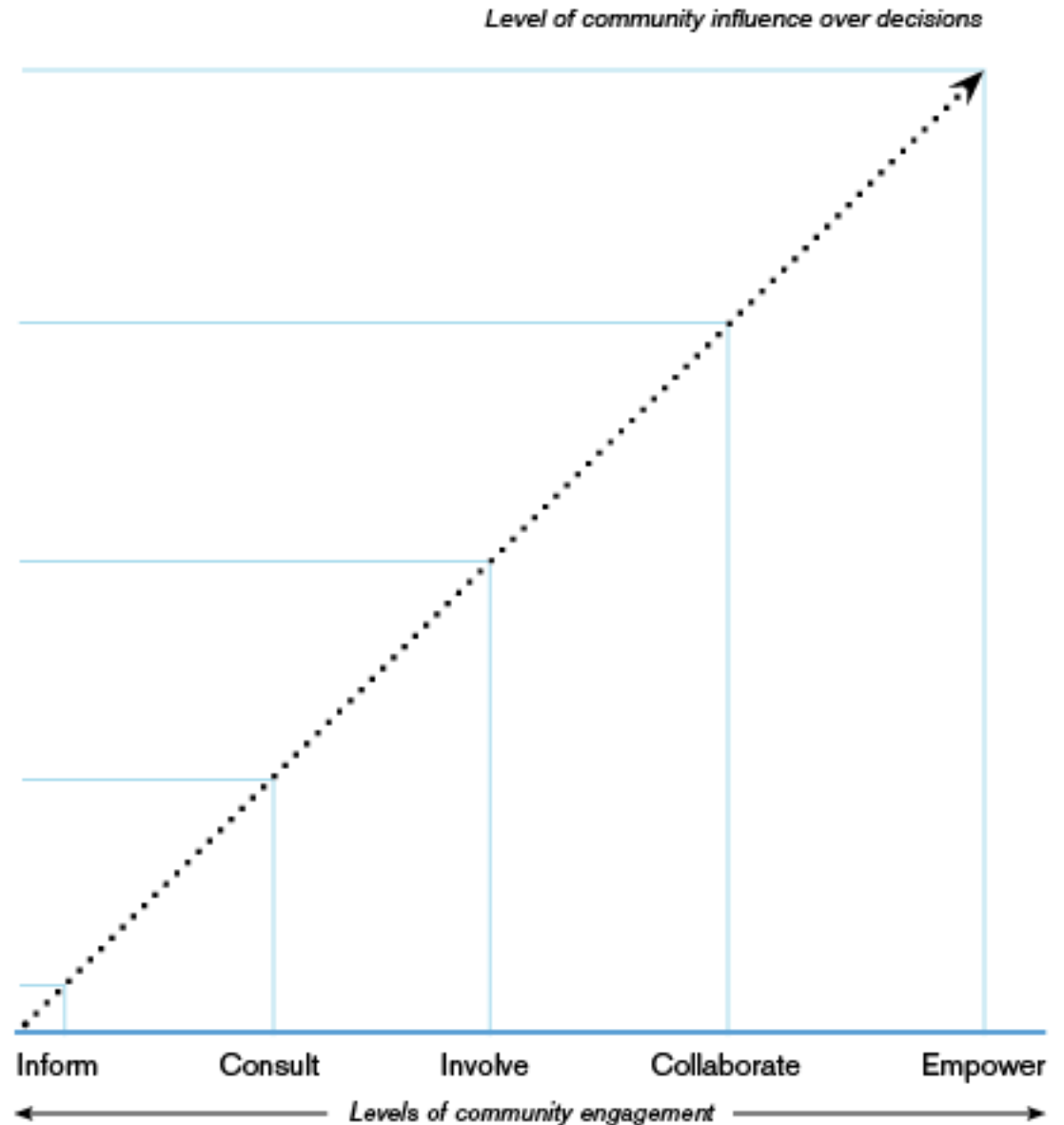
The organization *works together* with the Community to find solutions, taking into account all information that leads to an agreed outcome

The organization *includes* the community in planning and implementation; or asks how they would like to proceed with something before making a final decision

The organization *asks and listen to* the community if they have ideas to improve something; which option they prefer; or what would happen if we made a certain decision

The organization *tells* the community about a decision that has happened; and/or about something that is going to happen and how

Source: Adapted from information from the International Association for Public Participation <http://www.iap2.org>



CASE STUDY – CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY

Dale Larson served as a middle school principal in a middle class neighborhood for nine years. Before becoming the Brightwell Middle School Principal, he was a junior high school history teacher for seven years. He was well respected and could be counted on at school sporting, musical, and special events. Dale served two years as the President of the “Wake-up! Morning Optimist Club” and was a volunteer coach for his church’s Baby Blasters Girls Soccer Team.

In the spring, Dale was asked to apply for the Vice Principal position at the largest high school in the city. Although this would be a change for him and it was farther across town, a 12-month contract, and with much more responsibility, he was excited about the opportunity to enhance his career. He applied for the job and got it. He started his new job at Hubert Humphrey High School (HHHS) August 1st.

Larson had myriad responsibilities as Vice Principal. These included oversight responsibility with non-teaching school staff, substitute teacher scheduling, school and community relations, as well as other duties. A major responsibility involved student discipline and fostering relationships with related support services in the community. Unlike Brightwell, HHHS had a diverse student body, a number of programs for at-risk youth, and issues often typical in large urban high schools.

On the day before the Homecoming Football game, immediately after the Pep Rally, some football players and three other young men got into a loud discussion as they left the auditorium. Exiting through the doors at the same time, there was some jostling and it turned into yelling, which soon deteriorated into pushing and shoving and use of expletives between two of the students. As Mr. Larson came out into the hall, he came between the two young men and warned them about fighting. Each accused the other, and the accusations became even louder, with an audience of kids cheering them on. Robert, an African American student and a sophomore, would not back away. Lance, a senior football player stood his ground. Mr. Larson asked both of them to join him in his office. As they both walked by Mr. Larson, Robert brushed the Vice Principal and persisted in loud banter about the incident as students continued to look on.

As the two young men proceeded to the Vice Principal’s office, they both began to yell comments at each other. Upon entering the office, they both sat down, and Mr. Larson calmly asked them, “What was going on outside the auditorium?” Robert immediately interjected, “Those white jocks started this when they pushed us out of the way when we left the Pep Rally coming out.” And he continued in a more deliberate and louder tone, “It’s not right, just because they are football players don’t mean they can push people around.” Larson interjected, “Just a minute gentlemen...,” and Robert leaned forward and again interrupted and continued to proclaim his innocence and make comments about the altercation. Lance remained seated looking down at the floor of the Vice Principal’s Office.

Larson stood up and stepped around his desk in front of the two seated students and declared, “All right, I have had enough. It seems you were both in the wrong. But you, Robert, have stepped over the line, with your continuous haranguing, and the bump you gave me in the hall was more than inappropriate.” He continued as he glared at Robert, “You, my friend, will be spending some time enjoying the fall colors all day for three days. You are suspended as of right now and not permitted to attend any school Homecoming Weekend events. I will call your parents and notify them to come to the office and remove you from the building.”

Vice Principal Larson walked back behind his desk and sat down. He looked at Lance, who continued to stare at the floor. “Lance, you will not be allowed to return to classes today and will immediately report to Room 207 for the remainder of today and all day tomorrow. You will be required to make up all work in those classes and the time you missed either after school or on Saturdays. Gentlemen, if you would excuse me, I will call Robert’s parents.”

CASE STUDY – CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY

After calling the numbers in the student data base and sending an e-mail, Larson was unsuccessful in getting in touch with Robert's parents, and Robert was dismissed from the Vice Principal's office at the end of the school day. The Vice Principal followed district procedures and sent a letter to Robert's parents informing them of Robert's out of school suspension.

The following Monday, Vice Principal Larson received a visit from Robert's mother asking for an explanation of his out of school suspension. She left unsatisfied. Before he realized it, the African American community in the school district was up in arms about what happened to Robert. They called the local TV station and newspaper and voiced their concerns regarding unfairness and at HHHS and questioned Vice Principal Larson's competence.

Mr. Larson pointed out to the media that he followed school policy, but also understood the community's concern, and he determined the best way to address it was to meet with people in the community and allow them to air their differences. He scheduled a 5:00 pm meeting at the School Library to include the HHHS Principal and the local school district's School Board member. He sent an e-mail out to parents who lived in the zip code where most African Americans resided and invited them to come. He also sent a news release to the newspaper advising them of the meeting.

On the afternoon of the meeting, only seven people were in the room, and three were from the school district. Vice Principal Larson explained what happened during the incident, and the meeting was finished at 5:20. The three school officials went to get pizza, and the others went home.

MODULE 6 SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITY ONE

The following activity may be used to examine and share, if willing, the stage of cultural competence of participants' organizations.

Guidance for the Facilitator:

Activity: Facilitated discussion regarding the City of Des Moines' model for linking with the African American community and other models for engagement



Time required:

30 – 60 minutes, depending upon depth of conversation and time available.

- » Cue the video shown at the conclusion of the core Module 6 session.
- » Police Chief Judy Bradshaw talks about the success of the Des Moines Police Department's Ambassador program.
- » Play the video – approximately 2 minutes.
- » Ask one or more of the following questions, encouraging participants to speak from their perspective, in agreement or disagreement, in a healthy exchange of ideas.

1. Is there a difference between a program such as the Ambassadors and community and family engagement with the minority community?

2. Why do you think the start-up of this program was successful?

3. Are there particular reasons that people participate in the Ambassadors program?

4. What might you do differently or how would you expand this effort? Why?

5. If you were charged with the development of a collaborative minority community engagement initiative, to include the city/county law enforcement, juvenile court services, and the school district, how would you go about it?

MODULE 6 SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITY TWO

The following activity may be used to discuss a school disruption issue and the subsequent community outreach efforts.

Guidance for the Facilitator:

Activity: Facilitated discussion of issues surrounding a student's dismissal from high school.



Time required:

30 – 60 minutes, depending upon depth of conversation and time available.

- » Refer participants to the Case Study – Connecting to the Community - included in Module 6.
- » Give the participants enough time to read through and think about the Case Study.
- » There are two key elements for discussion in this case study.
 - The consideration and decisions made by Vice Principal Dale Larson.
 - The school's response to the family and community as a result of Larson's decisions.
- » Ask one or more of the following questions, encouraging participants to speak from their perspective, in agreement or disagreement, in a healthy exchange of ideas.
- » Note that that the Case Study reflects a variety of issues.

1. Consider Mr. Larson and his role as Vice Principal. How could he have been better prepared to work in his new position at the high school?

2. Discuss the incident in the hall.
 - a. What happened to escalate this situation?

 - b. Did Larson's decisions in the hall demonstrate an appropriate way to alleviate the situation?

 - c. What exacerbated the incident for Robert?

3. Consider the scene in the Vice Principal's office. Were there indicators that might have lead to the decisions Larson made? What were Vice Principal Larson's decisions? Why did he do what he did?

MODULE 6 SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITY TWO

4. How do you think he determined why he made these particular decisions? Were the decisions fair for both students?

5. As a result of the Vice Principal's decisions, how were each of these students affected?

6. If you were in Mr. Larson's position and had to address this disruptive behavior, what would you have done at the time?

7. Did the Vice Principal do what was required in contacting the family?

8. Could Mr. Larson and the school administration have handled the community outreach and meeting differently?

9. What would you have done to address the concerns of the family and community?

10. Would Hubert Horatio Humphrey, the school's namesake, be disappointed?