

National Center and Cross-System Collaboration

**Families experience services as one system,
regardless of agency boundaries.**



Children with complex behavioral health needs rarely fit neatly within one system. They may touch behavioral health, child welfare, Medicaid, education, crisis response, and community-based services at the same time. When those systems operate independently, families experience the gaps: delayed care, inconsistent treatment, repeated storytelling, increased caregiver stress, and worsening outcomes.

State mental health leaders do not have to solve this alone. The National Center helps states, tribes, and territories build practical cross-system structures that make coordinated care more possible.

Stronger Outcomes Require Stronger Cross-System Collaboration

State mental health leaders are uniquely positioned to build the partnerships and infrastructure needed to improve care for children and families with complex needs. The National Center helps state, tribes, and territories move from collaboration in principle to collaboration in practice:



ALIGN

Create a shared vision, common language, and priorities across mental health, child welfare, and partner systems.



CONNECT

Strengthen interagency partnerships, referral pathways, communication, and information flow.



EQUIP

Build workforce capacity to respond to trauma, separation and loss, disrupted relationships, identity, and child welfare experiences.



IMPLEMENT

Move from collaboration in principle to sustainable changes in policy, supervision, training, and service delivery.



Why State Leaders Partner With the National Center

We bring a multidisciplinary team with deep experience in child welfare, children's behavioral health, lived experience engagement, implementation, workforce development, and systems change. Our support is practical, collaborative, and tailored to each state's priorities. We work alongside leaders and implementation teams to move from conversation to action.

We Help Systems Build the Structures for Collaboration

Through no-cost technical assistance, training, and implementation support, the National Center can help states:

- ▶ Strengthen interagency agreements and practice guidelines
- ▶ Strengthen information flow and data-sharing practices
- ▶ Improve access and capacity to support families
- ▶ Partner meaningfully with youth and families with lived experience
- ▶ Build cross-system training and workforce development strategies
- ▶ Align workforce development with broader system priorities
- ▶ Engage Medicaid, managed care organizations, and provider networks
- ▶ Create structures to sustain collaboration and monitor progress

Do you have children in your state whose needs require new solutions?

If families are still navigating gaps between systems, your next collaboration step matters. The National Center can help you identify what is working, where coordination is getting stuck, and how targeted no-cost support could strengthen care for children and families with complex needs.



Contact Mary Wichansky, Director of the National Center, at wichansky@adoptionsupport.org to talk about how the National Center can help your state.



Better Collaboration. Better Care. Better Outcomes.

When systems work together, children and families are more likely to receive trauma-informed, timely, coordinated, individualized, and family-centered care. The National Center helps leaders build bridges between mental health and child welfare so systems can better respond to children with complex needs, and families don't have to bridge the gaps themselves.