

A hand holding a book in a library setting. The background shows bookshelves filled with books, and the foreground shows a hand holding a book, with a blue polka-dot sleeve visible.

Introduction to the Toolkit

Coordinating to Improve Family Experiences Toolkit: Resources for State and Local Human Services Agencies

Many families who interact with multiple human services programs face a complicated array of problems. The barriers and bottlenecks these families experience are often intertwined and complex. Addressing these problems through a whole-family approach to services—by linking, coordinating, and aligning high-quality services across children and their families—can maximize the impact of these services and programs, making them more effective, efficient, and supportive for families. Coordinating services can also be an opportunity to continue to meet families’ needs during periods of policy and budget change for individual programs—intentional coordination efforts can ensure that communication channels are maintained and that resources are fully leveraged within and across agencies to focus on your agency’s shared goal of serving families.

This Toolkit is a resource to support state and local human services agencies in **improving the experiences of families with needs across multiple public benefits and services programs**. It includes strategies and tools to improve the **coordination and integration** of human services programs, with the goal of enabling a whole-family approach to service provision and increasing the efficiency of those programs. Coordination and integration can take many forms, and this Toolkit can be used flexibly for various types of coordination efforts.

The Toolkit is ordered intentionally to help human services agencies:

- **Identify their vision for whole-family services and goals for coordinating** across programs
- **Select a coordination strategy** or set of strategies to develop new coordination efforts or advance existing ones
- **Implement the coordination strategy** in a way that supports both short- and long-term success from their efforts
- **Monitor and continuously improve** those efforts

Your team may not need all guidance and resources provided in every section and the Toolkit does not need to be used or read in its entirety. You can use the Toolkit overview on the following page to identify the content that may be most useful for your context. Facilitators working with teams taking on coordination efforts can use the [**Facilitator Guide and Supplemental Resources**](#) document as a companion to this Toolkit.

Organization of the Toolkit

Each of the Toolkit's five modules can be used by state and local agencies looking to identify and advance coordination strategies based on their specific needs and goals. Additional links to worksheets and templates are provided within the modules to support your team's progress.

Identify a whole-family coordination vision and goal

Module 1: Establishing a Vision and Direction for Coordination

Clarify your vision for whole-family services, **identify pain points** families and staff experience with current processes, and **develop a problem statement** that could be addressed through coordination based on those pain points.

This module may be a helpful place to start if your team is looking to identify or clarify a new opportunity to improve family experiences and prepare to select the appropriate strategy or strategies to address current pain points for families and staff to make that improvement happen.

Select a coordination strategy

Module 2: Guide to Identifying Coordination Strategies

Identify coordination strategies that that may resolve the program pain points that families and staff are experiencing (Module 3) and **reflect on readiness to implement coordination strategies** successfully (Modules 4 and 5).

This module may be a helpful place to start if you have a strong idea of a family experience you'd like to improve and current pain points for families, but don't have a strategy identified that you plan to implement.

Implement a coordination strategy

Module 3: Coordination Strategies and Supporting Resources

Learn more about **implementation considerations** and **identify resources and examples** to support implementation of coordination strategies. The strategies in this module are drawn from a comprehensive scan of existing resources and examples of coordination efforts by human services agencies, focusing on the **most actionable and accessible resources to inform the work of human services coordination leaders**.

Module 4: Coordination Best Practices and Capacity Building

Learn about **common practices of successful coordination efforts** and identify **resources to support capacity building** for implementing coordination efforts, such as developing data-sharing capacity.

Monitor and continuously improve

Module 5: Monitoring Coordination Efforts and Continuous Improvement

Select metrics to monitor the implementation of coordination strategies and **build on coordination successes** to improve families' outcomes and experiences.

Our North Star: Improving The Experiences of Families

The “north star” of this Toolkit is improving the well-being of families and children through a whole-family approach to human services delivery. While different programs or agencies may define whole-family solutions in various ways, whole-family approaches generally address the needs of both children and the adults who care for them with the goal of interrupting intergenerational poverty and increasing family wellbeing. Treating families’ needs as interrelated can reduce the burden placed on families and make them feel respected.

To address families’ experiences, this Toolkit focuses on improving their perceptions of and overall satisfaction with their interactions with an agency or service. This includes time spent accessing services when they are needed, getting their needs met, and feeling respected and treated with courtesy when doing so. To improve the experiences of families, human services agencies should adopt a customer experience lens that formally incorporates the perspectives of those with recent or previous experience participating in or being eligible for human services programs. Suggestions for incorporating this expertise are incorporated throughout this Toolkit.

The Administration for Children and Families’ commitment to whole-family approaches

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, youth, individuals, and communities by providing federal leadership, partnership, and resources for the compassionate and effective delivery of human services. To accomplish this, ACF focuses on serving the whole-family by providing coordinated services, recognizing that children and families face complex, interdependent challenges and that services to address their needs may come from a range of providers and programs. The primary goal of coordination is to improve outcomes for children, for families, or for both, with the theory that improvements from aligned services will extend beyond what any individual service might be able to accomplish on its own. This toolkit, developed for the *Supporting Coordinated Benefits Delivery to Foster Whole-Family Approaches* project, advances this commitment.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the state and local agency teams that were involved with this project for their collaboration with our team and their thoughtful feedback on the Toolkit. We are also appreciative of the contributions of the family advisors who shared their experiences and expertise with the project and site teams. We also want to thank Eleanor Pratt, Carly Morrison, Gretchen Kirby, Heather Hahn, LaDonna Pavetti, and Michelle Derr for their extensive direct contributions to the Toolkit in all its evolutions.

We thank Victoria Kabak for her partnership throughout the project, along with Kathleen Dwyer, Anna Fogel, Cheryl Healy, Anne Miller, and Charlotte Olsen. Our team extends our gratitude to Kate Stepleton and Semhar Gebrekristos for their project leadership and support. Additionally, we are grateful to Caroline Brent-Chessum for designing the project's products.

Finally, we appreciate the contributions of the full project team, whose work shaped the pilot and the Toolkit, as described in this report: Sundjata Aya, Amelia Coffey, Sam Elkin, Anna Farr, Anna Fleming, Imani Hutchinson, Shafiqua Little, Jonah Norwitt, Emily Schmitt, Bryan Thomas, Sonia Torres Rodriguez, Laura Wagner, and Apueela Wekulom.

Suggested Citation

Rau, L., Rosen, J., Richman, R., Lacy, L., Stanley, M., Balu, R., Farrell, L., and Peck, L. (2025). Alexandria, VA: MEF Associates

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