

EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING TECHNIQUES

BUBBLE PLANNING

Materials needed: Flip charts (2 if possible) or else butcher paper that can be taped or tacked up onto the wall. Markers. (The more colors the better, and they should be non-toxic and preferably fruit-scented.) A poster or flip chart page that lists the life domains.

First meeting

- The facilitator welcomes the group and describes the process. A few rules are presented around topics such as participation and respect. Generally, rules focus on points such as “any idea will be written down” & “we cannot talk about money or funding issues while we are brainstorming.”
- The initial strengths inventory is presented, often on one or two flip chart pages which are posted on the wall. The group is asked to elaborate on additional strengths of the child and family, and also on strengths in the extended family and the in the formal and informal supports available for the family. The additional strengths sheets are completed and posted.
- The facilitator next leads the group through a detailed goal setting process. First, the group is asked to imagine a child and family from the basic culture and life context of the family that is the focus of concern, except that the imaginary family is doing all right. The group is then asked to offer specific examples of what “doing all right” means in the context of each of the life domains, in other words, what are their homes, lives and activities like.
- For each domain, the facilitator draws a circle in the center of the flip chart page and writes a life domain title in it. As ideas about “doing all right” are presented, they are written around the central circle. They are put in bubbles themselves and connected to the first bubble. Often , someone will present a basic topic and then others will proposed subsidiary ideas that branch off it. As this happens, the facilitator connects up additional bubbles, in effect mapping the thought processes of the group.
- The amount of time taken, and the number of domains addressed in this manner depends on the complexity of the needs of the child and family. In highly involved situations, it is best to prepare a normalized picture across all domains. Where things are a little more settled, the facilitator might start by asking the child and family to think about each domain and prioritize those in which they feel they have the greatest needs. The group can then work with those for the first round of planning and come back to the others as needed.
- Once a sense of what doing all right means in the key domains has been established, the parent is asked to talk about how the family’s life matches up with the descriptions that have been mapped out. Where ever the family identifies a need, the facilitator records the fact in an additional ring of circles drawn in a

separate color. At this point, all needs are listed, big or small. As ideas are being thrown out, the facilitator may guide the team by helping them distinguish between services and needs. (Services are what we do or provide, needs are why we do or provide them.)

- After the constellation of needs for each domain is completed, the group is asked to vote on those which are most immediate and important. The facilitator gives each team member two or three votes, except for the parent and child, who each receive an extra vote. The members come up and record their votes on the chart, using the colored markers to make a check in the bubbles for the needs they are selecting.
- The key needs selected from each domain chart are then all transferred to one chart which has a circle in the middle labeled "Big Needs." Around the center a ring of circles is created listing each of the life domains that had big needs attached to them. Then the selected big needs are added, branching off the appropriate domains. The group is asked whether everyone agrees that if they can find ways to meet most of these big needs, the child and family will be able to have a better life. Any hesitations or concerns are addressed until the team reaches consensus on a common vision of the needs they will address in supporting the child and family. A second meeting is then scheduled to begin developing specific strategies.

Second meeting

- The team is welcomed back and congratulated for the great work they did at the first meeting. The big needs chart and the strengths charts are posted. Questions and comments from the team are discussed.

A strategy chart for the first domain with a big need is started. The name of the domain is put in the center circle and the big need or needs are put in a ring around it. The team is then asked to brainstorm as many possible strategies as they can think of to address each of the big needs in that domain. Once all of the potential strategies have been posted, the team is again asked to vote to prioritize the strategies they feel have the best fit with the strengths of the child, family and systems of support. Again, team members are given two or three votes (the number of votes usually depends on the number of strategies in the initial constellation). The child and parents are given an extra vote.

- The selected strategies are then transferred to an action chart for each domain. In the center of the action chart goes the circle with the domain. Around it in a ring go the selected strategies. The group is then asked to brainstorm what actions or steps will be necessary to implement each strategy, and whether they need to take place in any sort of sequence. When the proposed actions have been listed, the team comes up to the chart one last time. But this time, instead of voting, the team members each indicate which action they will take responsibility for accomplishing.
- As a final step in the process, each team member makes a list of the actions for which he or she is responsible, the dates by which they are to be accomplished, and any information about sequences or relationships with the actions of other team members.