

Developing LICC Priorities

To take action, the LICC must first know the needs of its community and the priorities in meeting those needs. The first step will be to identify existing efforts at identifying community needs (e.g., Smart Start plans, Health Department Community Assessments; etc).

Following a search for existing information and assuming that more specific information is needed, the LICC can accomplish this task by a brain-storming session if the LICC has a broad-base of community representatives.

If the LICC is not broad-based, it may be necessary to survey the community by means of a needs assessment. Survey respondents should include agency administrators and agency staff; parents of young children; current agency clients with young children; interested individuals or civic groups, etc.

Another way to survey for community needs is through focus group discussions. These can be held with service providers or consumers. In these focus groups, representatives are invited to attend and are asked an agreed-upon list of questions. Service provider questions could include:

- Why do families need the service(s) your agency provides?
- What barriers do you think families encounter when they try to obtain service(s) from your agency?
- What barriers are experienced by your agency when you try to provide service(s) to families?
- If you could change one specific policy or procedure in your agency to improve services for families, what would it be?

Consumer focus group questions could include:

- What services do you and your family/children need most?
- Describe your most positive encounter with a service delivery agency in your county.
- Describe your most negative encounter in your county.
- If you could change one aspect of the present service system in your county, what would it be?

Still another way to discover community needs is by designing and completing a self-assessment grid. Across the top of the grid, list services typical early intervention services utilized your county. Under this line form two columns: one for ages B-2 years and one for ages 3-5 years. Down the left side, list the various agencies that provide services in your community. Develop a key for how you will complete the grid (e.g., X=Agency provides this service; R=Agency refers families out for this service, ? = unknown). The grid would then look like this:

Pleasant County LICC

X=Provides EI services R=Refer for EI services	Referral		Screening/Evaluation		Direct Services		Parent Support	
	B-2	3-5	B-2	3-5	B-2	3-5	B-2	3-5
CDSA	X	X	X	X	X	X	R	R
Public Schools	X	X	R	X	X	X	R	R
Health Department	X	X	R	X	X	X	X	X
Family Support Network	X	X	R	R	R	R	X	X
XYZ Pediatric Group	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?

At the end of the brain-storming session or when the needs assessment is compiled, the LICC will be left with a number of unmet needs in the community. Similar needs should be grouped together or clarified to eliminate duplication. The LICC will then have to establish priorities among the unmet needs. The group would most likely be stretched too thin if it were to try to tackle every need at one time.

Several methods can be used to establish priorities by consensus in the group. It is important that the priorities be established by consensus of the group so that each member “buys into” the priorities and is assured that their particular need will be addressed by the group as soon as possible.

However, once the needs and the priorities of the LICC are established, it is important to note that **this step needs to be repeated on a regular basis**. The needs of the community will change over time, and the LICC needs to respond to these changing needs.