Guidebook:

State Policy Development

Offered by the Emerging Adults Initiative Sites:
Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wisconsin

For the Georgetown Policy Institute
July 2014
Action Steps for Policy Development

**Step 1  Define The Issue:**

It is important to partner with the community in identifying the core problem or problems needing to be addressed. The community is generally in the best position to know what needs improving and they can help to define the problem in a way that is appropriate to their community and what is needed to generate the desired outcomes and positive lasting change.

It helps when the community can agree to work toward on a common goal. It is also important to remember that the issue(s) should be seen through the political, moral, social, and cultural lenses of the community. In general, the broader the focus, the more time and resources it takes to achieve desired impact.

**Step 2  Define the “Community”:**

In today’s technology-based environment, community is more than where people live. It also involves how people are connected and what their common interests are. Usually, the smaller the community, the more concrete and action-oriented the policy can be. As the community grows in size and complexity, the policy tends to be more general reflecting guidance, rather than actions.

It’s important to understand the selected “community” in terms of its political, cultural and social landscape and how they help (or hinder) policy action.

Here are some questions to consider:

a. How cohesive is the community and how do people network?

b. What are the attitudes toward marginalized groups?

c. What is the community’s worldview (norms, values, behaviors, attitude, and hidden rules)?

d. How do people communicate and how is information disseminated?

e. What resources does the community have (time, money, expertise, etc.)?

f. Who are the opinion leaders and decision makers (formal and informal)?
Step 3  Gather Information About the Issue:

The information needed for planning includes *what* (what’s going on?) and *why* (why is it this way?). The more we all understand the issue and the context (political, moral, social and cultural) that shapes the issue, the greater the likelihood of success.

Critical information includes:

a. How significant is the issue?
   - What is the prevalence rate and magnitude of the issue?
   - Is there disparity embedded in the issue?
   - How has the issue cost the community (human and financial)?

b. What are the political, moral, social and cultural contexts that contribute to the issue or allow the issue to exist until today?

c. What is the relationship of the issue to the core belief or value held by the community?

d. What has worked to keep this issue from getting worse?

e. Who is most affected by the issue and why?

It is important to gather information from a variety of available sources. You can review documents, conduct surveys, and talk with people. Involve the community in interpreting the data as it often reveals rich insight on what is really going on behind the numbers. It is also important to talk to many different people within the community to gather information. Often there will be information, opinions, and resources you won’t realize is critical to success until to delve in deeply.

Step 4  Identify What you Want to Achieve With the Policy Action:

Clearly articulate the objectives in order to facilitate the development of a well thought-out policy. The objectives should correspond with the information that you have gathered to address the true causes of the problem or issue. In addition, you need to consider how the policy action will bring about change:

a. Who benefits from the policy and why?

b. Is there anyone or thing that can be hurt by the policy and why?

c. What are potential unintended consequences of the policy?
**Step 5 Identify the Type of Policy for the Issue and Objectives:**

There are many types of policy, and each has a distinct development process and impact. For example, procedures, standards or guidelines may be adequate to impact an agency change. A Memorandum of Understanding may be appropriate when multiple agencies are involved. Legislation or regulations may be needed for bigger and more complex systems or community change.

It is important to select the type of policy that is feasible for the objective, resources, and the desired impact.

**Step 6 Organize a Team of People Critical to the Policy Development:**

The Policy Team should have diverse representations of key stakeholders including: young people, family members, agency leaders, management, direct care staff, various community partners, and advocates. The diverse points of views help in developing a well thought-out policy while minimizing unintended consequences.

The Policy Team should establish a common vision and agreed-upon course of action. Each member makes a commitment to the objectives and a collaborative problem-solving style emphasizing creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. Learning is part of the policy development process and team members need to constantly ask themselves what information or knowledge they need to acquire for policy work.

**Step 7 Conduct a Policy Readiness Assessment:**

The Policy Team conducts the policy readiness assessment to gather information on opportunities and challenges that can facilitate or hinder policy development. Based on the assessment, the Team develops strategies to improve its readiness level with the ultimate goal to develop policy.

**Step 8 Identify a Team Leader (Individual or Organization) to Oversee the Policy Development, Implementation, and Review Process:**

The team leader oversees the process by keeping the team focused, holding each member accountable for the tasks, and maintaining team cohesion. The
team leader assumes the overall responsibility to coordinate the efforts, monitor the progress, alert the Team on obstacles and coordinate efforts to problem solve. The assessment may produce information that helps select the team leader.

**Step 9 Identify the Types of Supports Needed for the Policy Development and Future Implementation:**

Based on the assessment results, identify the types of supports that need to be generated for the proposed policy. Leadership commitment is critical and support from the field (including advocates, youth and families, and providers) helps generate buy-in beyond the policy group.

**Step 10 Develop Action Plans to Move the Policy Forward:**

The action plan incorporates the strengths and challenges identified in the assessment and includes specific action steps of who, what, when and how specific to each action. (i.e. who is assigned to a specific action steps and when it should be completed).

**Step 11 Monitor the Implementation Process and Evaluate the Impact of the Policy:**

Policy is nothing if not implemented as intended. There are three major criteria for policy monitoring and evaluation:

a. Is it being implemented as intended and how is it implemented?

b. How is the policy working? Is it producing the results as designed? If it is not producing the desired results, what needs to change?

c. Is there any unintended results? If yes, what are the impacts of these unintended results: should they be addressed and if yes, how and by whom?

d. How was the policy disseminated to the intended parties that are impacted?
Critical Elements of Policy Development

A. Community Knowledge about the Issue: To what extent do community stakeholders understand the issue and the policy development process?

B. Community Ownership of the Issue: To what extent do community stakeholders believe that the identified issue and the policy action are important for the “community” that each represents?

C. Community Climate: What are the political, moral, social and cultural contexts on the issue? What is the prevailing community attitude toward the issue? Is there a sense of urgency that something needs to be done?

D. Community Collaboration toward a Common Goal: To what extent do community stakeholders solve problems and resolve conflicts in a collaborative manner? How do we ensure that everyone is at the table who can provide input regarding the common goal?

E. Leadership: To what extent are appointed leaders and influential community members supportive of the issue and the direction of the policy action?

F. Allocation of Resources Needed: To what extent are resources - people, time, money, space, etc. - available to support the policy action?

Your community’s status with respect to each of the critical element establishes a profile of the opportunities and challenges for the proposed policy action.
Stages of Readiness

1. Denial/Resistance
2. Indifference
3. Some Awareness
4. Sense of Urgency
5. Action
# Community Knowledge About the Needs for Transition Age Youth and Young Adults (TAYYA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Strategies moving forward</th>
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| 1. Denial/Resistance    | At least some stakeholders have inaccurate understanding of the issue and what needs to be done to address it. | • Conduct public awareness campaign and social marketing.  
• Develop an “elevator speech” so everyone shares the same message.  
• Young people and families share their lived experiences. |
| 2. Indifference         | Majority of stakeholders have general understanding of the issue but little interest in knowing more about it. | • Connect people on intellectual level by providing information.  
• Connect people on emotional level and engage them on what they care about and/or fear.  
• Build alliances between diverse groups. |
| 3. Some Awareness       | Majority of stakeholders have general understanding of the issue but not enough to articulate the negative outcomes of doing nothing. They express interest in knowing more about it. | • Provide Return on Investment data  
• Provide consultation and technical assistance  
• Help people identify their personal stake in the issue |
| 4. Sense of Urgency     | Majority of stakeholders have clear understanding of the issue and can articulate the negative outcomes if no policy action is taken. | • Organize the policy team.  
• Review lessons learned from previous policy efforts and other communities that have engaged in similar efforts.  
• Build consensus on policy action.  
• Develop an action plan. |
| 5. Action               | All stakeholders agree on the actions needed to address the issue.                | • Implement the action plan.  
• Track progress.  
• Consider new strategies as necessary.  
• Maintain stakeholders' buy-in and policy team's cohesion and trust. |
# Community Ownership of the Needs for TAYYA

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<tbody>
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<td>1. Denial/Resistance</td>
<td>At least some stakeholders hold an unfriendly attitude toward the issue and oppose the policy action.</td>
<td>• Conduct public awareness campaign and social marketing;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Develop an “elevator speech” so everyone shares the same message.</td>
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<td>2. Indifference</td>
<td>Majority of stakeholders believe that the issue exists but there is no need to do anything about it at present. They believe that there are other things that are of higher priority. Or, they feel that they can support the policy action in principle as long as it does not require them to devote resources into it.</td>
<td>• Connect people on intellectual level by providing facts/information.</td>
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<td>• Connect people on emotional level and engage them on what they care about and/or fear.</td>
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<td>• Practice NetWeaving to build alliances.</td>
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<td>3. Some Awareness</td>
<td>Majority of stakeholders believe that the issue exists and the policy action probably could help. However, their understandings are vague and they are at a loss of what to do. Or, they believe that something needs to be done, but not necessarily now.</td>
<td>• Provide Return on Investment data.</td>
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<td>• Provide consultation and technical assistance on policy development.</td>
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<td>• Help people develop personal stake in the issue.</td>
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<td>4. Sense of Urgency</td>
<td>There is a clear recognition that the issue is important and something must be done now. Most feel that each has a genuine ownership of the issue and can articulate the negative outcomes if no policy action is taken.</td>
<td>• Organize the Policy Team.</td>
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<td>• Review lessons learned from previous policy efforts and other communities that have engaged in similar efforts.</td>
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<td>• Develop action plan.</td>
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<td>5. Action</td>
<td>Community stakeholders agree on the actions needed and are committed to participate in the policy action. All can articulate what their individual roles are in the policy action.</td>
<td>• Implement action plan.</td>
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<td>• Consider new strategies as necessary.</td>
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## Community Climate

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| 1. Denial/Resistance | The community in general holds an unfriendly attitude toward the issue and opposes the policy action. | • Conduct public awareness campaign and social marketing.  
• Develop an “elevator speech” so everyone shares the same message.  
• Young people and families share their lived experiences.  
• Identify opinion leaders to promote the issue. |
| 2. Indifference | The community in general believes that the issue exists but there is no need to do anything about it at present. It believes that there are other things that are of higher priority for our time and efforts. | • Connect people on intellectual level by providing facts/information.  
• Connect people on emotional level and engage them on what they care or fear about.  
• Develop community’s ownership of the issue. |
| 3. Some Awareness | The community in general believes that the issue exists and the policy action probably could help. However, the citizens’ understanding of the issue is vague and they are at a loss of what to do. | • Create opportunities for people to share their perspectives to develop in-depth understanding about the issue.  
• Help people identify their personal stake in the issue. |
| 4. Sense of Urgency | The community in general agrees that the issue is important and something must be done now. Community can articulate negative outcome if no policy action is taken. | • Establish communication pathways to keep the community informed of the policy action and receive feedback. |
| 5. Action | The community in general agrees on the specific actions to be taken to address the issue. | • Maintaining stakeholders' buy-in and trust.  
• Continue solicit feedback from the community on their perception of the issue and policy action. |
## Community Collaboration toward a Common Goal

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| 1. Denial/Resistance    | At least some community stakeholders have a history of not working well with other agencies/originations. | • Outreach to individual stakeholder group on the issue.  
• Organize a meeting to orient the community on the issue.  
• Develop personal network.  
• Build trust.  
• Establish credibility on the issue. |
| 2. Indifference         | Majority of stakeholders state that the collaboration helps. However, they do not engage in active collaboration. Their agencies’ status quo is very important to them. | • Help people identify personal stake in the issue.  
• Developing ownership of the issue.  
• Practice NetWeaving to build alliances. |
| 3. Some Awareness       | Majority of stakeholders have worked well with each other. They have a general agreement that something needs to be done for the issue but are at a loss of what to do. | • Create learning opportunities for people to develop in-depth understanding about the issue and policy development process. |
| 4. Sense of Urgency     | There is a clear recognition that the issue is important and something must be done now. Most can articulate negative outcomes if no policy action is taken. | • Review lessons learned from previous policy efforts and other communities that have engaged in similar efforts.  
• Build consensus on policy action.  
• Organize the Policy Team.  
• Develop action plan. |
| 5. Action               | Active leaders are identified to lead the action and others have all agreed to the specific roles they play in the policy action. | • Implement the action plan.  
• Track action plan progress.  
• Consider new strategies as necessary.  
• Maintain policy team's cohesion and trust. |
## Leadership

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| 1. Denial/Resistance  | Leadership at the community stakeholder segments hold an unfriendly attitude toward the issue and oppose the policy action. | • Young people and families share their lived experiences.  
• Leaders hear from other leaders who have done something about the issue. |
| 2. Indifference       | Majority of leadership at the stakeholder segments believe that the issue exists but there is no need to do anything about it at present. They believe that there are other things that are of higher priority for their time and efforts. | • Provide Return on Investment data  
• Continue dialogue with other leaders who are experienced in the issue. |
| 3. Some Awareness     | Majority of leadership at the stakeholder segments believe that the issue exists and the policy action probably could help. However, their understanding is vague and they are at a loss of what to do. | • Review lessons learned from previous policy efforts and other communities that have engaged in similar efforts.  
• Continue dialogue with other leaders who are experienced in the issue. |
| 4. Sense of Urgency   | There is a clear recognition among the leaders within stakeholder segments that the issue is important and something must be done now. Most can articulate the negative outcomes if no policy action is taken. | • Leaders appoint representatives to be on the policy team.  
• Build consensus on policy action  
• Develop action plan. |
| 5. Action             | Leaders within the stakeholder segments agree to devote resources needed to facilitate the policy action. | • Leaders are informed of the implementation efforts, progress, and barriers.  
• Leaders help address barriers  
• Maintain leaders’ buy-in and trust. |
### Allocation of Resources Needed

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| **1. Denial/Resistance** | At least some community stakeholders hold an unfriendly attitude toward the issue and oppose to devoting any resource to the issue or the policy action. | • Outreach to individual stakeholder group on the issue.  
• Organize a meeting to orient the community on the issue.  
• Develop personal network.  
• Build trust.  
• Establish credibility on the issue. |
| **2. Indifference**    | Majority of stakeholders believe that the issue exists but there is no need to do anything about it at present. They believe that there are other things that are of higher priority for our time and efforts. | • Help people identify personal stake in the issue.  
• Develop ownership of the issue.  
• Practice NetWeaving.  
• Build alliances. |
| **3. Some Awareness**  | Majority of stakeholders believe that the issue exists and the policy action probably could help. However, their understanding is vague and they are at a loss of what to do or if they can afford to devote resources to the policy action. | • Identify resources available and needed for the policy.  
• Create learning opportunities for people to develop in-depth understanding about the issue and policy development process. |
| **4. Sense of Urgency** | There is a clear recognition that the issue is important and something must be done now. They agree on the resources needed to address the issue | • Review lessons learned from previous policy efforts and other communities that have engaged in similar efforts.  
• Build consensus on policy action.  
• Organize the Policy Team.  
• Develop action plan.  
• Develop new resources to accomplish the policy objective. |
| **5. Action**          | All community stakeholders agree on what specific resources each will provide to the policy action. | • Implement action plan.  
• Track progress including the use of resources.  
• Consider new strategies as necessary. |