



The Building Bridges Initiative and Child Welfare: A Collaborative Path to Achieve Permanency

What is the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) All About?

Child welfare systems and providers across the country are faced with the need to provide **safety, stability and permanency** for young people who have complex needs that may include emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges. The BBI offers those involved in child welfare a set of guiding principles and a framework to support their efforts.

The BBI **builds partnerships** among residential and community providers, families, youth, advocates, and policy makers to achieve positive outcomes for youth and families. This growing national effort promotes values, principles, and practices for residential and community programs serving youth with emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges and their families which helps to achieve permanency.

“BBI is a very helpful framework for child welfare providers both residential and community-based to implement for improved outcomes for the children, youth and families served. It is not just for mental health providers. We are hearing from child welfare agencies that have embraced and implemented this framework, that it not only helped them to transform the way they do business but also improved their collaborative processes resulting in better outcomes. We strongly encourage child welfare providers both public and private to get involved with BBI.”
-Christine James-Brown
President/CEO, CWLA

Why is BBI Important for Child Welfare?

Will working with BBI help improve youth and family outcomes?

Child welfare residential and community-based programs are implementing a range of family-driven, youth-guided, and culturally and linguistically competent practices and policies grounded in BBI principles that yield positive outcomes such as:

- More stable and permanent living environments
- More family and youth involvement in programs, policies, and practices
- Improvements in how young people and their families function at home, in school and the community
- Successful ways to search for families so young people have a place to live permanently
- More effective connections to the community that continue over time
- Reduced time in out-of-home programs

“At The Children’s Village, we actively promoted integration of BBI principles and practices in our residential services and it worked! The BBI principles are a common sense guide for the residential organization committed to moving from the child focused traditional model to the family responsive model that continues to deliver measurable outcomes and remains efficacious despite the dramatic changes in populations served.”
-Jeremy Kohomban, Ph.D.
President & Chief Executive Officer, Children’s Village, Dobbs Ferry, NY

Will working with BBI help improve systems-level outcomes?

Child welfare systems seek to provide services that meet the broad array of youth and family needs, ensure adequate training to staff and providers, and engage in continuous quality improvement. The BBI helps child welfare systems to:

- Align youth-serving systems along BBI and Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) principles that include family-centered, individualized, and community-based services
- Provide greater access to a broad and coordinated array of effective mental health and other services
- Offer more opportunities for joint staff and provider training on relevant topics
- Promote improved responsiveness to community needs through ongoing coordination and collaboration of youth-serving providers

The BBI: Mission, Goals & Partners

The BBI Mission and Goals are to identify and promote effective practices and policies; create strong and well-coordinated partnerships and collaborations; and ensure that comprehensive services and supports are:

- family-driven
- youth-guided
- strengths-based
- culturally and linguistically competent
- individualized
- evidence and practice-informed
- consistent with the research on sustained positive outcomes.

These principles align with those of the CFSRs, which help States improve child welfare services to achieve the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being.

The BBI encourages programs, agencies, communities, systems and states across the country to work in partnership with youth and families to adopt and implement Building Bridges principles and practices fully. You can find the BBI's core values clearly explained in the *Joint Resolution to Advance a Statement of Shared Core Principles* which can be accessed at <http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org/sites/default/files/BB-Joint-Resolution.pdf>

The BBI: What Others Involved with Child Welfare Are Saying

Many involved with child welfare agree that BBI principles and practices can improve outcomes.

"BBI recognizes the value of the Golden Rule – that one should treat others as one would like to be treated – and that the Golden Rule should be applied to everyone – in private (within families) and public (within organizations and systems) – as this is the touch stone of good practice."

-Veola Green, Family Member involved in reshaping Child Welfare, Boston, MA

"As a young person who was involved with the child welfare system, BBI is important because it helps youth to successfully exit the system and become more empowered and independent. BBI has also offered me a great opportunity to use my personal experience to help other youth."

-Raquel Montes, Senior Youth Advocate and Former Child Welfare-Involved Youth, Camarillo, CA

"BBI has provided Massachusetts with a framework that is proving to be an effective tool in guiding our efforts to reform and create a more family driven and community connected system of residential services. Budgetary reductions due to the current economic climate will impact the utilization of residential services and the lengths of stay as they've been traditionally delivered. BB provides a rational approach and foundation that builds upon the work of Massachusetts providers -- together enabling us to achieve desired permanency outcomes for children and families in a more efficient and effective manner."

-Angelo McClain, Ph.D., LICSW, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

How You Can Become Involved with BBI to Support Child Welfare Efforts

You can be a valuable and active member of the team working with BBI by:

- Endorsing the Joint Resolution to demonstrate your commitment to BBI principles
- Actively working to promote BBI core values, principles and practices in your setting
- Encouraging your State to include BBI principles in the State Child & Family Services and Program Improvement Plans
- Using the BBI products, resources and tools available on the website
- Spreading the word – sharing your enthusiasm and asking others to visit the website
- Joining a BBI workgroup – check the website for groups and contact information
- Visiting an agency implementing BBI near you
- Arranging for a presentation about BBI or consultation on how to bring BBI to life in your organization

To learn more about the Building Bridges Initiative and how it can benefit the youth and families in your organization and community, please visit: www.BuildingBridges4Youth.org