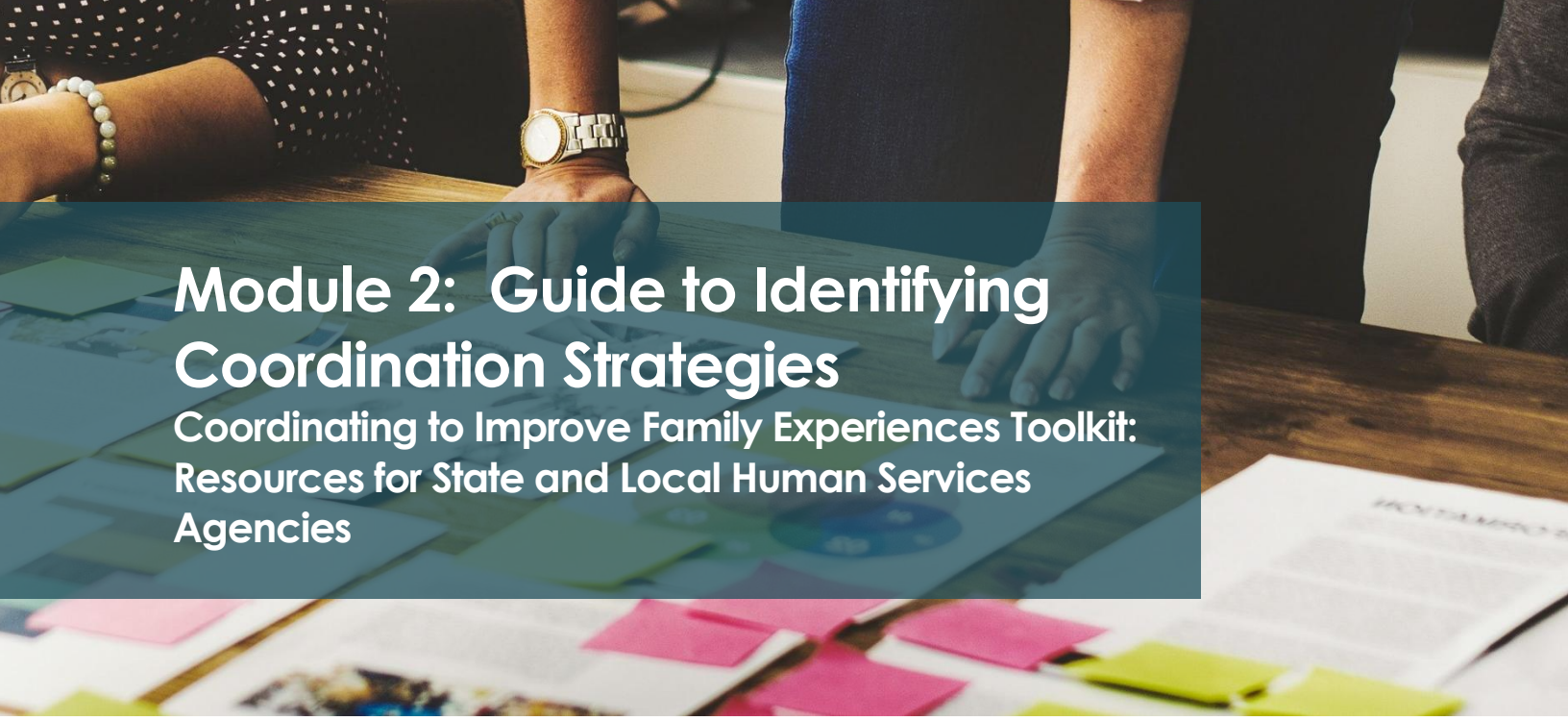

Module 2: Guide to Identifying Coordination Strategies

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

This module aims to help you plan out your use of Module 3 by connecting pain points experienced by families engaging in multiple human services programs, and the staff who work with them, to the coordination strategies detailed further in Module 3. Pain points are the places where families and staff face difficulties and have negative experiences with programs that could be addressed with new or improved coordination across programs.

This module will help your team in thinking about how to identify the right coordination approach for the problem you've identified. If your team has not developed a clear idea of which element(s) of family experiences you'd like to improve, consider taking time to work through the activities in **Module 1** to clarify your goals for coordination.

Linking pain points to potential coordination solution areas

Consider coordination solution areas and examples of family and staff pain points the strategies within them can address in the sections below. The exact pain points your team is looking to resolve may not appear in this section, and your team may need to consider which pain points in this section seem most similar to those identified by your team. Your team's context and specific problem statement may require incorporating multiple strategies as you move forward.

Program-Level Problems

When the basic elements of human services program operations, such as locations, policies, staffing, and communication, are uncoordinated, families experience these programs in siloes. Navigating human services programs is unnecessarily complex and inconvenient for families and families may not receive important information about services that could help improve their well-being.

*Are pain points for families primarily driven by the ways larger program processes, systems, and administration drive service delivery? If you completed a service blueprint in **Module 1**, these are actions in the "backstage" of your blueprint.*

Knowledge sharing

By sharing information about programs and program changes across agencies, staff can learn about the wide range of programs the families they serve could participate in and be eligible for. In turn, staff can be more prepared to serve and inform the families they work with about services that meet their needs.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families do not know what other programs may be available to meet their needs. • Families do not know what to expect or have insufficient information about other programs they may be eligible for.
Staff	• Frontline staff directly serving families do not know how to describe other programs or services that families may be eligible for. • Managers and administrators are unaware of the services related programs provide or the processes involved and rules that govern them, limiting their ability to collaborate on solutions to improve families' experiences and outcomes.

Policy alignment readiness

Identifying opportunities for aligning program policies and regulations, such as definitions and eligibility criteria, can set the stage for creating more consistency across programs—and a less confusing experience for staff and families navigating multiple programs and services.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families experience frustration and confusion about differences in policies and rules across programs. • Families are confused or burdened by differences in how program rules are interpreted and applied across programs and processes.
Staff	• Administrators cannot easily assess where policies conflict or align across programs, and whether those policies are changeable. • Staff serving families directly have difficulty finding and describing policy differences across programs to families.

Physical and virtual co-location

Putting multiple programs under one roof or developing centralized virtual tools for families to learn about and manage multiple services can create more convenient and efficient experiences for families engaging with multiple programs.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families do not have a good sense of the full scope of services offered by an agency from sources in the community. • Families misunderstand the services of and eligibility criteria for programs they may be eligible for due to lack of clear communication from agencies. • Families can't easily see if they could be eligible for other programs.
Staff	• Frontline staff who interact with families cannot quickly assess whether the family they are working with may be eligible for other services that meet their needs.

Coordinated outreach and public communication

Programs or agencies can collaborate on outreach efforts by sharing data and building user-friendly tools for families to get information about programs. As a result, families may be more informed about programs that could help them meet their needs and may be more likely to enroll and access these programs.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families do not have a good sense of the full scope of services offered by an agency from sources in the community. • Families misunderstand the services of and eligibility criteria for programs they may be eligible for due to lack of clear communication from agencies. • Families can't easily check if they could be eligible for other programs.
Staff	• Frontline staff who interact with families cannot quickly assess whether the family they work with may be eligible for other services that meet their needs.

Application, Eligibility Determination, and Renewal Problems

Application, eligibility determination, and renewal processes are not integrated across programs, which creates redundancies for families and staff, places unnecessary burden on families seeking services, and ultimately makes it harder for families to access important services.

Are pain points for families directly related to the application, eligibility determination, and renewal processes across your programs?

Coordinated applications

Integrating applications for multiple services into one common application can decrease the burden on families, making it easier for them to access programs.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families are burdened by being asked the same questions across multiple program applications. • Families are burdened by having to complete multiple applications when accessing multiple programs at the same time.
Staff	• Staff struggle to help families who could benefit from multiple programs in getting timely access.

Coordinated eligibility determination

Programs and agencies can work together to integrate eligibility processes and systems to create a more efficient experience for both staff and families. Programs can also work together to keep families informed on how their eligibility may change based on program participation or changes in income.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families do not understand (or misunderstand) how changes in their income and other household characteristics may change their eligibility for services across programs. • Families experience burdens from having to submit the same documentation in different places and/or repeat the same eligibility steps across multiple programs with similar or the same eligibility criteria.
Staff	• Staff struggle to limit the number of times families are asked the same questions and provide the same or similar documentation for eligibility determination. • Staff struggle to help families navigate program-specific eligibility requirements.

Coordinated renewals

Programs and agencies may be able to coordinate or integrate different elements of renewal, such as renewal timelines or renewal systems. Coordinating renewal can help reduce “churn” and ensure that families do not lose the services they are eligible for.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families need to submit the same renewal or recertification documentation several times throughout the year. • Families need to submit the same renewal or recertification documentation in different places across multiple programs. • Families need to submit the same renewal or recertification information in different formats or using different methods across multiple programs.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Staff	• Staff struggle to limit the number of times families are asked the same questions and provide the same or similar documentation to maintain access to services across programs. • Staff struggle to help families navigate the different specific requirements and timelines for maintaining access to services across programs.

Service-Level Problems

When elements of service delivery, from intake assessments through case management, are uncoordinated, families experience each program separately. This creates redundancies for families and program staff and results in unnecessary barriers among programs when engaging families and working with them to improve outcomes.

Are pain points for families primarily driven by the ways staff interact with families directly? If you completed a service blueprint in **Module 1**, these are actions in the "frontstage" of your blueprint.

Coordinated intake and referrals

Coordinating intake and referral processes across programs can reduce burden on families and help program staff connect families to the services that meet their needs.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families' well-being and needs are not assessed and supported beyond the services provided by the program they access on their own. • Families experience difficulty or confusion when trying to connect to other programs and services they have learned about from staff. • Families do not understand the services provided by other programs they have been referred to. • Families don't understand the eligibility or participation requirements of other programs they have been referred to. • Families are discouraged or burdened by the process of getting connected to other programs.
Staff	• Staff do not know all the barriers that families may face to reaching their goals and meeting program requirements. • Staff do not know all the partners across government and community who can help meet a family's needs and lower barriers to success. • Staff are unsure about what they can share with partners to make referrals most effective. • Staff do not receive the information needed to effectively respond to referrals from partners.

Coordinated and integrated case management

Coordinating or integrating case management across multiple programs can allow programs to work together to improve whole-family outcomes and reduce the burden of sharing information that otherwise falls on families.

Who is impacted?	Example pain points
Families	• Families feel burdened by having to communicate their goals, backgrounds, and activities with different individuals across multiple programs. • Family members do not feel like they are being served as whole people with complex sets of needs and goals when case managers from individual programs only focus on specific elements of their well-being. • Families feel discouraged when they must complete the same or similar case management check-ins across multiple programs.
Staff	• Staff do not have a time or place to connect with other staff who serve families they work with to improve and streamline services. • Staff do not know how to collaborate with staff in other programs who serve the families they work with to improve and streamline services.

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