

Background

- In 2011, board members from a large Midwestern hospital system decided to develop a community health intervention program
- Large low-income population with significant health disparities within the service footprint of the hospital system
- Community members and healthcare service providers highlighted that an early childhood intervention would have the most impact
- Growing scientific evidence shows that critical periods of human brain development occur during pregnancy and in the early years of life
- Initial concepts of *Raising St. Louis* early childhood development program:
 - Ground program design and delivery with community input
 - Engage existing, effective organizations as core delivery service providers
- Group model building (GMB) is a participatory method for engaging stakeholders to understand dynamic systems¹
- System dynamics has increasingly been used in Public Health to design and inform community based interventions²⁻³

Methods

Two project phases were identified:

- Provider
- Community

The first phase involved five GMB workshops with providers to understand the existing service delivery systems, identify areas of overlap and gaps, and explore design options for a “braided program.”

The second phase included three GMB workshops with community stakeholders, co-facilitated by trusted community members, to understand resources needed to raise a child and identify meaningful services. Community organizations identified and recruited key individuals to participate in the GMB sessions.

Results

Phase 1 (Provider Phase): Group Model Building (March, 2013)



Phase 2 (Community Phase): Group Model Building (July, 2013)



Phase 2 (Community Phase): Causal Loop Diagram (Workshop 2, July 30, 2013)



Conclusion

With input from the provider and community GMB sessions, the *Raising St. Louis* team:

- Developed the Service Delivery Model for the program
- Clarified and refined program goals and objectives
- Informed the design of the program's evaluation plan

This participatory work helped to formalize sustained relationships with key provider and community stakeholders.

The *Raising St. Louis* early childhood initiative launched in January 2014 and is actively recruiting and serving families in six zip codes in North St. Louis city.

References

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- ²Homer, J & Hirsch, G. (2006). System dynamics modeling for public health: Background and opportunities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 96: 452-458.
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