

“We’re poised to continue to make significant strides in our journey, and it’s exciting to think that we’ve only scratched the surface of what’s possible. Together we can – and will – ensure every child in La Crosse has the opportunity to succeed!”

~ Jason Witt, La Crosse County Human Services Director

Family and Youth Subcommittee (Rebuilding for Learning Steering Committee)

Lineage and Purpose

The La Crosse Community Collaboration

The Family and Youth Subcommittee (Rebuilding for Learning Steering Committee) is a subcommittee of the La Crosse Community Collaboration, which is a partnership between three local governmental entities: (1) The School District of La Crosse, (2) the City of La Crosse and (3) La Crosse County. The Collaboration, which began in 2005, has a meeting once per quarter which is chaired jointly by the School District of La Crosse Superintendent, the Mayor of the City of La Crosse, and the La Crosse County Administrator. Participants include Department Heads / Managers / Directors from those three organizations in the functional areas listed below. All members of this larger group are part of subcommittees which align to the functional areas.

- Planning
- Human Resources
- Buildings and Ground
- Purchasing
- Finance
- Information Technology
- Family and Youth Services

The stated mission of the Community Collaboration is, ***“To strengthen collaboration and improve communication between our organizations.”*** The subcommittees are charged with carrying out the mission within each functional area.

At each quarterly meeting, all subcommittees provide a verbal report on their activities over the last quarter and any forthcoming subcommittee activities of note.

The Family and Youth Services Subcommittee

In 2011, the Family and Youth Subcommittee adopted a conceptual framework outlined in Howard S. Adelman and Linda Taylor’s book, “Rebuilding for Learning,” to advance the mission of strengthening collaboration and improving communication within the family and youth services area. In adopting this framework, the subcommittee began to refer to itself as the “Rebuilding for Learning Steering Committee.” The descriptive term “Rebuilding for Learning Initiative” now refers to the subcommittee’s activities.

Under the new framework, the RfL Steering Committee adopted the goal of ***ensuring all children have the opportunity to succeed by addressing barriers students face that prevent them from coming into the classroom “ready to learn.”*** Examples of these barriers, stemming from challenges faced by either the child or the child’s parents, include, but are not limited to: (a) mental health, (b) substance abuse, (c) abuse or neglect, (d) lack of fundamental basic needs, (e) behaviors which disrupt the classroom and put the child at risk of entering the criminal justice system either as a youth or later as an adult, etc.

To address these barriers, the RfL Steering Committee adopted Adelman and Taylor’s strategy of working towards ***creating more integrated and seamless systems across three levels of intervention:*** (1) prevention, (2) early intervention, and (3) emergency intervention.

One of the first objectives of the renamed “RfL Steering Committee” was to plan a summit bringing together School, City, County and community providers of services to children and youth. This first summit in

August of 2011 focused heavily on examining local systems of intervention to identify gaps and overlaps. From this first summit came the objectives of creating and maintaining a website (www.lacrossepartnersinlearning.org), and addressing perceived communication barriers that were created by the need to keep certain child and youth information confidential.

Recent summits (both in 2015 and 2016) have focused on increasing trauma-informed practices throughout our three agencies as well as community service agencies. They have also sought to increase awareness of RfL activities as well as available community services and promising initiatives (i.e., neighborhood revitalization, community policing, local mental health services, etc.). Attendance at the summits has grown each year, with over 1,000 individuals attending the 2016 summit.

Since 2011, the RfL Steering Committee as served as an important collaboration point for several projects and initiatives that have advanced the strategy of creating more integrated and seamless intervention systems. These have included:

- Developing a Memorandum of Understanding that led to better and more streamlined communications between the School District and La Crosse County about the status and needs of specific children and youth.
- Launching a collaborative effort (La Crosse Area Family Collaborative, LAFC) that includes new Neighborhood Social Workers who are integrated with local schools and serve as an early intervention resource to stabilize families (with the County, City and School District all contributing funding and/or in-kind resources).
- Developing a comprehensive “system of care” to address behaviors that put youth at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, and which more closely aligns policies and practices of the school, county and community youth service providers.
- Creating a jointly funded administrator position to manage the new “system of care,” help administer the LAFC, assist with coordination RfL activities, and facilitate development of a 501(c)3 organization.

“Rebuilding for Learning efforts led by the La Crosse School District, La Crosse County and the City of La Crosse, are directly tied to better engagement of students. Rebuilding for Learning emphasizes the role that blighted neighborhoods may have in disengaging students, and the impact this plays on student’s ability to learn in the classroom.”

~Karl Green, Community Resource Educator – La Crosse County UW Extension

“To successfully address complex issues, we must build on the positive momentum that’s started. Creating meaningful cross-sector partnerships, with an open mind, is the only path forward to ensuring that families, no matter their income, can move to this beautiful city to find better opportunities and upward social mobility.

~Caroline (Neilsen) Gregerson, City of La Crosse Community Development Administrator

Rebuilding for Learning Steering Committee

Perspective and Ideas Related to Mission, Goals, Strategy, Etc.

Mission: To serve as a “big-picture” and “backbone” point of connection committed to a common agenda and mutually reinforcing activities that strengthen collaboration and improve communication between the City, School District and County in the area of family and youth services (as charged by our “parent group”).

Goal: Work collaboratively to fortify a system – including agreed upon measurements for gauging success – in which all youth and families thrive within their schools and community by addressing barriers youth and families face that prevent them from experiencing successes. (Addressing barriers faced by youth or their parents/guardians related to mental health, substance abuse, lack of basic needs, or disruptive and pre-criminal behavior.)

Strategy: Create more integrated (“seamless”) systems across our agencies and within the following levels of intervention: prevention, early intervention, and treatment.

Objectives:

1. Maintain effective communication and working relationships among system leaders.
 - a. Each member agency is responsible for regularly reporting on relevant developments relative to the programs within their purview with the intent on making connections among efforts that will advance our goals.
2. Support the planning of an annual “summit” that advances our integration strategy.
3. Maintain a website that provides information on the Rebuilding for Learning Initiative.
4. Identify either new or existing efforts that the RfL Steering Committee could support which advance the strategy of system integration.

Efforts Supported to Date

- Better coordination of information sharing
- Filling the gap of early intervention services for children at risk of abuse or neglect
- Filling gap of early intervention for youth whose behavior disrupts the classroom and puts them at risk of entering the juvenile justice system

Possible Future Focus Areas

- Trauma-informed care efforts with system supporters
- More countywide expansion of RfL (engaging other school districts as both planning and resource partners)
- Early intervention for children facing mental health challenges (coordination with the behavioral health project)
- Work on increasing knowledge of, and engagement in, RfL efforts within our agencies.

Meeting Focus: Utilized as a monthly face-to-face communication forum to check in on existing projects and identify additional areas to advance goal of system integration. “Heavy lifting” on specific projects or efforts actualized by subcommittees or related content arena groups.

Steering Committee Membership: Membership is fluid depending on the involvement of both partner agencies and the individuals representing them. Current membership includes:

Jennifer Rombalski	JRombalski@lacrossecounty.org
Catherine Kolkmeier	ckolkmeier@uwlax.edu
Karl Green	green.karl@co.la-crosse.wi.us
Dawn Reinhart	reinhartda@cityoflacrosse.org
Bridget Todd-Robbins	btodd-robbins@lacrossecounty.org
Jason Witt	jwitt@lacrossecounty.org
Regina Siegel	rsiegel@lacrossesd.org
Jennifer Knutson	jknutson@lacrossesd.org
Troy Harcey	tharcey@lacrossesd.org

Membership currently consist of the following agencies and the programs they are best connected with (but do not necessarily represent their views)...

County

- County Human Services
 - La Crosse Family Collaborative
 - System of Care
 - Family Policy Board
 - Juvenile Justice
 - SQUAD
- County Health
 - Education program
 - Community Health Improvement Plan
 - Community Pathways HUB
 - COMPASS
 - Heroin Task Force

Health Science Consortium

- Alcohol Coalition
- Behavioral Health Grant
- Medical Centers
- Higher Education Institutions
- Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault
Coordinated Community Response (CCR)

City

- Planning
 - Housing
 - Urban/community development
- Law Enforcement
- Mayor’s Office
- Parks and Recreation
- Library
- Other City Offices

UW Extension/Community Development

- La Crosse Promise
- Housing Studies

School District of La Crosse

- Superintendent’s Office
- Admin., Teachers, & Support Staff
- Students & Families