

ARTICLE CITATION

Blanch, A.K., Boustead, R., Boothroyd, R.A. et al. (2015). The role of conflict identification and management in sustaining community collaboration: Report on a four-year exploratory study. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 1-9.

FURTHER READING

The Community Tool Box, Work Group for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas

- Ch 20, Sec 6, "Training for Conflict Resolution" - <http://bit.ly/CTBConflictResolutionTraining>
- Ch 27, Sec 9, "Transforming Conflict in Diverse Communities" - <http://bit.ly/CTBTransformingConflict>
- Troubleshooting Guide 4, "No clear direction within the group" - <http://bit.ly/CTBUnclearDirectionGroup>
- Troubleshooting Guide 7, "Facing conflict" - <http://bit.ly/CTBFacingConflict>

Manager's guide to resolving conflicts in collaborative networks. IBM Center for the Business of Government http://www.uquebec.ca/observgo/fichiers/42245_Guideconflits.pdf

Chavis D.M. (2001). The paradoxes and promise of community coalitions. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 29(2), 309-320.

Foster-Fishman, P.G., Berkowitz, S.L, Lounsbury, S.J., et al. (2001a). Building collaborative capacity in community coalitions: A review and integrative framework. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 29(2): 241-261.

CREDITS**In Their Own Words: Researcher**

Andrea Blanch, PhD, Senior Consultant, National Center on Trauma-Informed Care

In Their Own Words: Coalition Leader

Danelle Campbell, Program Manager, Butte Youth Now, Chico, CA

Writing and Design Team:

Andrea de la Flor, MA, ICPS, Senior Manager, Evaluation & Research, CADCA
Melanie Florencio, MA, E-Learning Technology Manager, Innovation & Outreach, CADCA

HOW DOES YOUR COALITION PERCEIVE AND MANAGE CONFLICT?

IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINING COMMUNITY COLLABORATION***WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?***

- How a coalition manages and addresses conflict has more of an influence on staff and member perceptions about the impact of conflict on the organization (either positively or negatively) than the actual amount of conflict that occurs.
- Coalitions that view conflict as a normal, necessary, and even creative aspect of the collaboration process are more likely to sustain their stakeholder partnerships beyond funding than coalitions that view conflict as destructive or something to avoid.
- Partnership sustainability may be at risk when coalition staff and members are not provided with clear procedures for conflict management that they feel confident about putting into action.
- Coalitions are more likely to sustain good relations with partners when conflict is framed as a symptom of an organization's structural issues rather than as an issue with one or more individuals or groups (e.g. personalities and motivations).



RESEARCH INTO ACTION

WHAT COALITIONS CAN DO

Invite a local expert in conflict management to be part of your coalition. Many communities have dispute resolution centers, peer and student mediation programs, social justice or restorative justice centers. These groups are often not given the opportunity to be active coalition members but they have a unique lens to approach the work that can build your coalition capacity. If you are not located near one of these centers, seek out individuals with conflict management and facilitation skills that may be able to train coalition staff and members.

Assess the conflict management protocols at all coalition levels. The best time to create a method to address conflict is before it occurs. Formal written procedures, structural supports, and conflict management tools can prevent conflict from negatively impacting your coalition. Even your MOU's should clearly describe the method for resolution including who is responsible for mediation and management. Keep in mind that protocols are only effective if your board, staff and members know what they are and how to use them appropriately.

Identify and resolve conflict in a timely manner. Conflict left simmering beneath the surface is detrimental to effective collaboration. Coalitions can create opportunities for respectful, positive and productive conversations. In this safe space, staff and members should feel comfortable voicing opinions and concerns and deciding how to address them. When conflict is discussed, keep the focus on issues requiring structural solutions instead of on individual motivations.

Have questions about RESEARCH INTO ACTION?

Contact the Evaluation and Research Team at
CADCA's National Coalition Institute today!
evaluation@cadca.org or 1-800-54-CADCA

Have questions about CREATING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY CHANGE?

For **FREE** information about using these strategies in the coalition field,
Contact CADCA's Technical Assistance Manager today!
training@cadca.org or 1-800-54-CADCA ext. 240

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Researcher: Dr. Andrea Blanch



As society gets more complex, problems are interwoven and everything is connected to everything else. Working in silos simply doesn't have traction anymore. Real community change is coming at the boundaries of where interest groups and organizations overlap. It is coming from people learning how to come together and work collectively for change.

Simply put, conflict equals differences in opinions and for coalitions working to change systems, conflict is absolutely to be expected. I want to remind coalitions that

this is okay. In fact, it is a great thing! Conflict can be the creative juice that moves coalitions forward. Coalitions need to be competent and confident in their abilities to encounter, resolve, and grow from conflict.

I recommend that the most important thing coalitions can do is to make sure that members feel safe to discuss issues when some thing is bothering them. This involves a group process of exploring what is necessary to make everyone feel safe; this may look different for each coalition. We know that every member views things with a different lens. Coalitions should take the time to find out how their values might be consistent or conflict at both the individual and group level. When members understand where others are coming from, that will go a long way towards avoiding conflict.

Coalition Leader: Danelle Campbell

Conflict can become difficult to manage if the goals and expectations have not been clearly developed and agreed to when a coalition forms. Coalition members are busy so it is helpful to find simple and efficient procedures and practices. It is critical that we invest the time and energy into the relationships we have with coalition members. Get to know their stories, areas of focus, strengths, and limitations. These factors contribute to the group as a whole and it is often staff's job to help connect the dots. It is important to take the time to nurture the health of the coalition by building strong relationships and identifying strategies to successfully resolve conflict. After all, coalitions are collaborations of people and agencies who may have their own priorities. We need to be skilled at identifying how a particular issue we are concerned about also impacts our partners to help ensure that everyone's needs are met.



We have a coalition partner who provides a training on de-escalation as part of his law enforcement training series. This training has practical application for the coalition (conflict resolution, communication techniques, etc.). I may ask our coalition if they want to add this to our training plan and also discuss opportunities to enhance our current mechanisms for managing conflict.