BUILDING PROGRAM CAPACITY
OUTREACH TO THE COMMUNITY, ADVISORY BOARDS, USING THE MIS

Healthy Families New York sets a performance indicator for program capacity at 85%. The factors related to capacity building are often complex, and may look very different from another program's, depending on your community and the landscape of services and community culture. The following offers some basic resources and methods for building and maintaining your program's capacity.

Community Relations

A significant aspect of HFNY is how it fits, works and collaborates within each community in order to cooperate with other services and to avoid duplication of effort. Each program strives for high prenatal enrollment, early prenatal commitment, and universal screening of pregnant women or newly parenting women, men and their families in the target area. They rely heavily on relationships with community agencies. HFNY programs devote considerable effort to developing and maintaining community relationships in order to meet this goal.

Program Managers play a key role in outreach and connection within the community, but need not be the only ones in this role. Many programs find that having all staff participate in outreach activities is beneficial for the program and for staff morale. HFNY staff becomes experts on services in the community and makes ongoing referrals for families. **Using their connections in the community to promote the program is also a great role for the supervisor of the Program Manager.**

Community events are great for reaching and enrolling the families you want to serve. Programs have had success organizing community baby showers and emphasizing how HFNY can support expecting parents to have a healthy, happy baby. Community baby showers and family groups are great venues for getting referrals.

There were probably some significant efforts made in this area before your program was approved for funding. Remember to consider traditional (clinics, WIC offices) and non-traditional (hair salons, bodegas) for your outreach efforts. *HFA's Site Development Guide- "Getting Started by Gathering People Together" is helpful.*

Program Managers often meet with community groups and agencies to provide education about the program. It can be helpful to develop talking points for presentations that are specific to each group. For example, a presentation to private doctors would look different from one to a teen parent program. For example, if your referral source is an OB/GYN, you might share information about our low birth weight outcomes, smoking cessation and breastfeeding rates. Help your referrals sources see "what's in it for me" if they refer to your program.

You can find ideas for these talking points on the HFNY website. Our research briefs also have great information for you to use in presentations; use the research that matches the referral source you are targeting.

Communicate with your referral sources regularly. Some sites have developed **outreach calendars** to be sure all referral sources have some routine contact throughout the year. Some will need more

regular visits to account for their staff turnover. As motivation, **consider giving incentives** like post it notes or other items when they send a certain number of screens.

Once relationships are developed, **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU's) are created and renewed each year. This is another great place for the supervisor of the Program Manager to offer assistance.** Your Program Contract Manager can provide you with samples of MOUs.

Building and Maintaining Advisory Groups

Your Advisory Board offers you the opportunity to stay connected to the community, maintain responsiveness to community issues, and assure outside support. The BPS GA-1 describes the function of the Advisory Board, and offers guidance for the composition of its members and their skills, abilities, cultural characteristics, professions and community knowledge. You are required to meet with your Advisory Board on a quarterly basis. **There is a webinar about Advisory Boards on the HFA website.**

When asked how she increased her capacity from 50% to almost 100%, one Program Manager shared, "It was mostly due to the efforts of my Advisory Board."

The key to a successful Advisory Board lies in assuring mutual support and benefit. What does your program need from them, what do they need from you, and how do you work to meet those expectations? **Look to other Program Managers for ideas about how they have had success with their Advisory Boards.**

Management Information System and Capacity Building

Use the **Capacity Building Report** to keep track of the number of referrals from community resources, screens, assessments and enrollments your program is averaging, and the number you need in order to build your capacity.

- You can use this report to set targets with your team.
- Consider cross training staff to boost the number of assessments you are able to do each month.

Use the **1-1.C Referral Source Outcome Summary Report and the Referral Form Report** to monitor the referrals you are getting from your referral sources.
- Don't be fooled by volume! You may receive many referrals from a particular site but it's important to look closer and ask questions. For example:
    o Are they (early) prenatal referrals?
    o Are families from that referral source typically eligible for services?
    o Do families from that referral source typically end up enrolling or do they decline?
    o Can families from that referral source be located?

- Some program managers distribute this report at their Advisory Board meetings.

Use the report that allows you to analyze your **Acceptance Rate** so you can determine who is enrolling and compare their characteristics to those who are refusing your services. Family

retention is also a component of building your capacity. If families are dropping out of your program, you will have a difficult time meeting your capacity. You can use the report that lets you analyze your **Retention Rate** to help understand who stays in your program and compare them with those who leave. Both of these reports are useful for developing strategies and plans for increasing your acceptance and retention rates as required in the Best Practice Standards.

Use the **1-2.B Initial Engagement Process Report** to identify where there may be a bottleneck with moving families through the various steps toward program enrollment. Look for patterns among the average days between referral, first contact and offer of services to see if timeframes follow what is required in the Policy, and adjust if necessary.

Finally, look at **the Link newsletter (Summer 2016) on the HFNY website "Increasing Program Capacity – Stories from the Field."** Program Managers shared their experiences building their capacity and you might find one of them used strategies and approaches that could fit your site and your community.