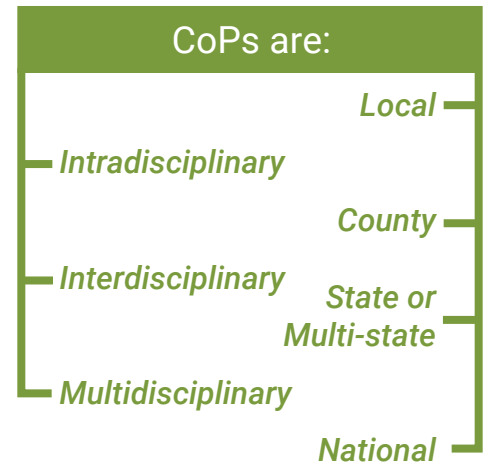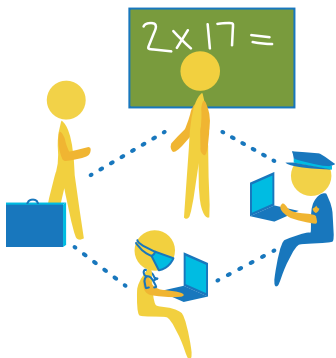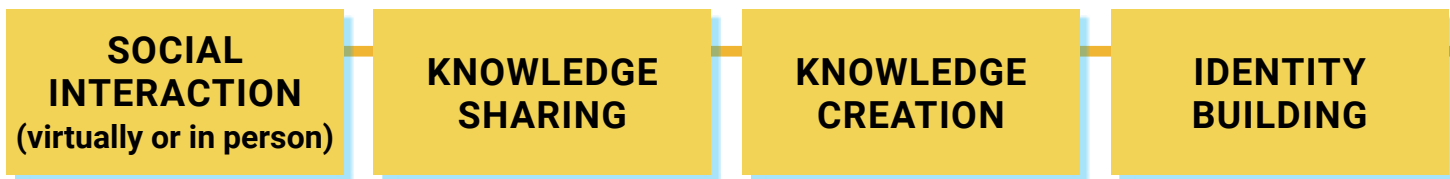# Community of Practice

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Communities of Practice (CoP) can help bridge professionals across sectors and geographic areas who share the common goal of preventing, screening, and treating child maltreatment while improving outcomes for youth who have experienced maltreatment.

The concept of CoPs comes from the corporate world and in recent years has become popular in the health care and human services sectors. A CoP can be defined as a "…group of people who share a concern, set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002, p 4). A CoP can have a broad or narrow scope depending on its purpose. CoPs "…can be used to provide some guidance for the development of groups, teams, and networks" (Li et al., 2009).

CoPs are:

Intradisciplinary

Interdisciplinary

Multidisciplinary

Local

County

State or Multi-state

National

CoPs share four characteristics (Li et al., 2009):

SOCIAL INTERACTION (virtually or in person)	KNOWLEDGE SHARING	KNOWLEDGE CREATION	IDENTITY BUILDING

1. SOCIAL INTERACTION (VIRTUALLY OR IN PERSON): *Engaging in honest talk across disciplines.*

Allows cross pollination of ideas among sectors to create innovative solutions to a problem that needs to be solved (Li et al., 2009).

Brings all voices to the table. Voices from varying sectors can enable a new perspective and a new way to view a problem.

Cuts across individual fields, sectors, and silos with a collaborative cohesive mission.

2 x 17 =

2. KNOWLEDGE SHARING: *Sharing understanding and creating a sense that one's work is part of something bigger.*

Participants share their understandings and concerns about what they are doing and what their work means for their lives and communities (Lave & Wenger, 1998; Cox, 2005).

Masters as well as novices of knowledge are included. CoPs are a means to share and pass on information across silos and within disciplines (Li et al., 2009).
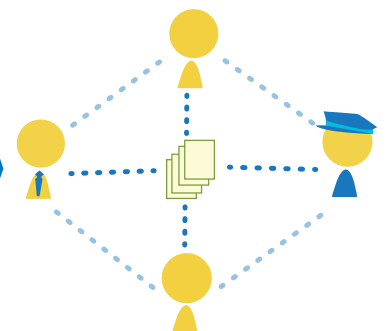
3. KNOWLEDGE CREATION: *Creating solutions to problems where traditional approaches are inadequate (Cox, 2005).*

Emphasizes generating "solutions to novel problems, rather than the reproduction of existing knowledge" (Cox, 2005 p.529, Brown & Duguid, 1991).

Fosters informal networks that actually explore how to get the job done (Cox, 2005, Brown & Duguid, 1991).

Participants come to the table with equal footing, regardless of their titles, for a common goal to solve a shared problem.

4. IDENTITY BUILDING

By seeing issues and problems from a new perspective, identity change can occur as learning becomes more than simply acquiring knowledge (Cox, 2005).

By breaking down silos, participants from various sectors begin to see themselves in a broader role within their communities.

Education

Law

Medicine
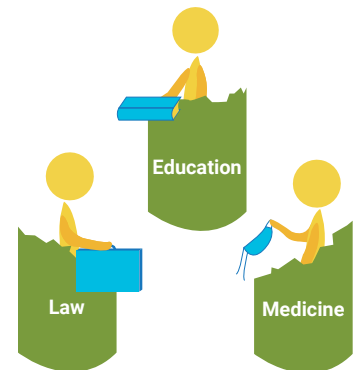
WHAT CAN WE DO?

1 Connect with and invite co-organizers

2 Identify an issue and set a specific goal

3 Gauge the scope: an intra, inter, or multi-disciplinary group of participants

4 Determine a meeting schedule, process, and timeline

5 Set an agenda that helps the group meet the intended goal

6 Choose a facilitator who will personify the CoP characteristics and build trust

7 Invite and build relationships with cross-sector participants (think broadly)

8 Encourage a growth mindset — every person's contribution matters

9 Create an environment of innovation and creativity

10 Evaluate your progress against measures and target goals

Working to prevent child abuse and neglect is a responsibility that reaches far beyond courtrooms, hospitals, and social services offices. Any individual working with or for children, including teachers, caregivers, parents, healthcare practitioners, policymakers, and lawyers can be included in discussions regarding child abuse prevention. Child abuse and neglect CoPs should cut across individual fields, sectors, and silos as a means to become collaborative with a cohesive mission to focus on *prevention.*

We recognize that many communities have child abuse and neglect response teams, as well as fatality reviews, and this work is important. A child abuse and neglect prevention CoP may in fact be comprised of the same work group.

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