



Policy as a Tool for Revolution

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Canadian Policy Research Networks

Framing our Children's Policy Conference

Children's Mental Health Ontario

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Children's Mental Health

- You have a cause we can all believe in
 - One in five children are afflicted,
 - Funding for services was frozen 13 years ago,
 - Average wait times are 5.5 months.
- The question is how to make the case for change and put the issue front and centre.
- As the parents, caregivers and professionals supporting these children, you can build the case better than anyone.
- You are motivated by love and compassion. Policy is moved by cold hard facts and good communication.
- So, what is the best policy mix for these children?

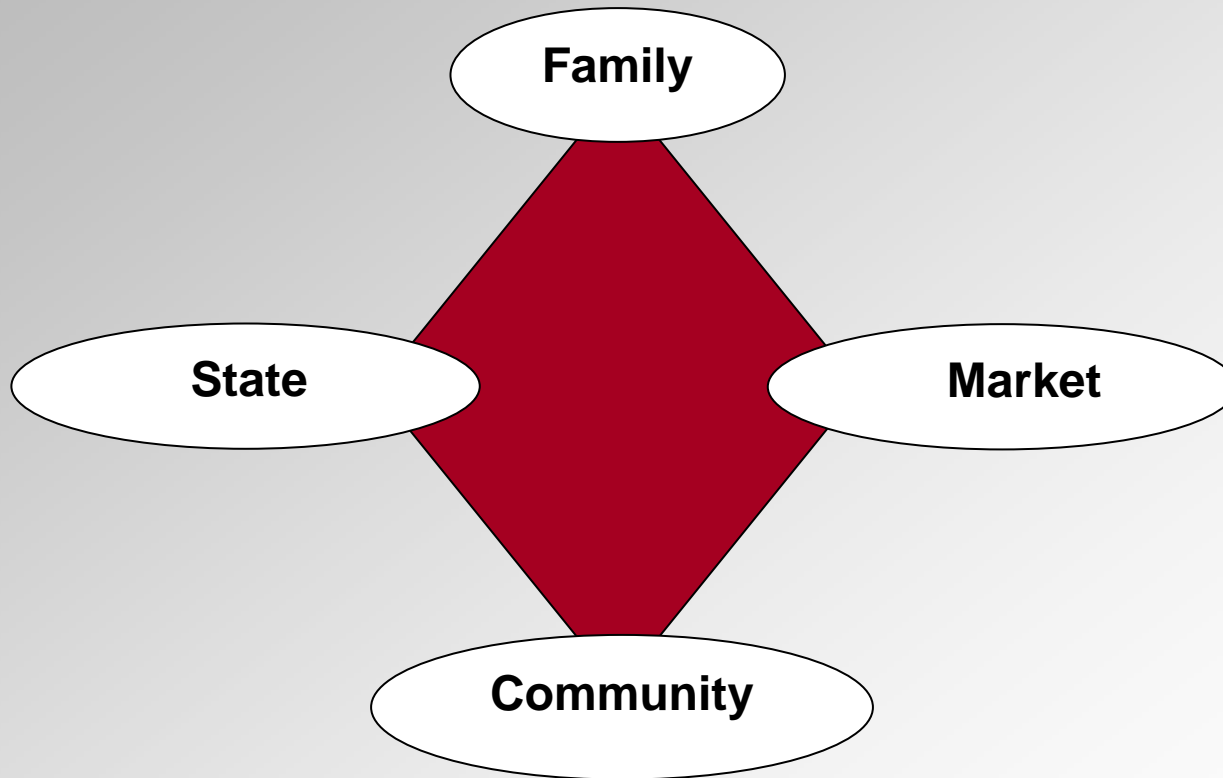


Our Goal

- To give every child and youth the opportunity to live the best life they can.
- Who is responsible?
 - Families, yes, but also governments through health and education systems,
 - As well as communities and neighbourhoods.
- There is a mutual dependence here. All the actors have to work together.



Well-Being Diamond



Enabling Conditions*

- For all children: healthy child development
 - Adequate income, preferably earned income,
 - Effective parenting,
 - Supportive communities.
- Troubled children need all these elements, plus much more by way of community and public services.

* Jenson and Stroick, *A Policy Blueprint for Canada's Children*, 1999, CPRN



Making a Revolution

- Two routes to go: fight at the barricades or engage actively with the policy process.
- In your case, you need to build a partnership with the government and the institutions delivering care and support.
- So I suggest we avoid the barricades and rely on reason and persuasion.
- This means you will win the revolution over time. It may feel like forever, but change is possible.



Policy as the Tool

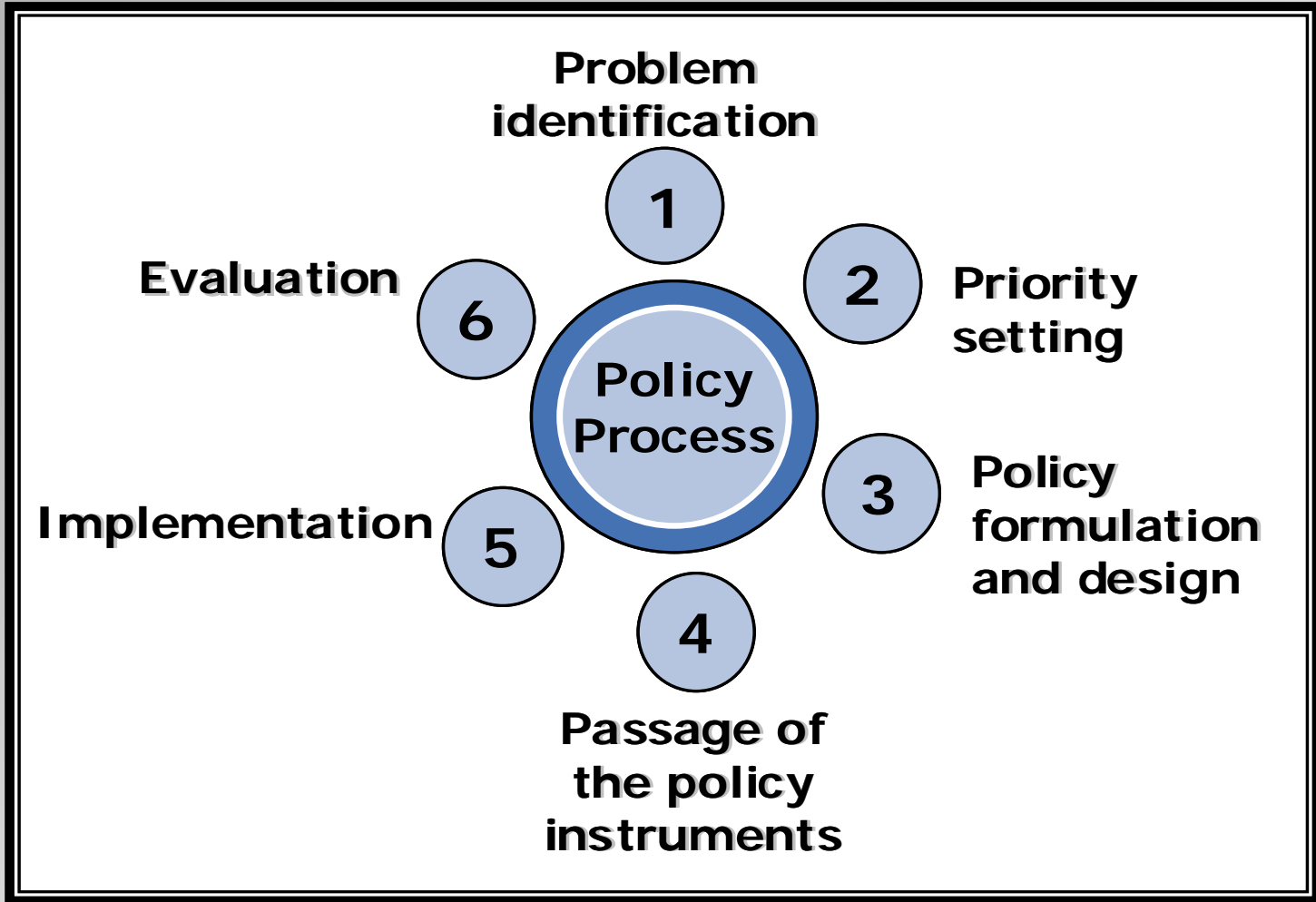
- To establish the best context for our children, we need sensitive, effective policy choices by decision-makers in all these institutions.
 - Many people feel helpless and angry in the face of these remote leaders.
 - Policy seems complex, unpredictable, and often looks irrational from a distance. And it is.
- But people have power too, if they decide to exercise it.
 - This will require tradeoffs and choices.
 - And the final package will require flexibility to adapt to widely varying circumstances.



Navigation Tools

- As parents and caregivers and community leaders, you are the stakeholders.
- To help you mobilize the power of your community, I want to talk
 - about the policy process and
 - the way to mobilize your own power.
- First the policy process – very general:





Source: CPRN, Phillips and Orsini, 2002.



Your Points of Influence

You are the best people to

- Identify the needs.
- Influence the priorities by reaching consensus on what they are.
- Insist on a chance for feedback once policy design is advanced.
- Persuade legislators to vote for the changes.
- Keep a close eye on implementation – is it on track? Will it generate the results you want?
- Take part in the evaluation, and identify problems.



Other Influences on Policy

- Fiscal constraints (very real in Ontario),
- Competing interests of stakeholders,
- Media role in shaping opinion,
- Lack of public understanding,
- Internal contradictions across institutions and ministries (turf wars, ideological views),
- Research evidence.



Progress is Being Made

- You have the Ministry's attention.
- You have an effective leader in Gordon Floyd.
- And you have already participated in regional stakeholder sessions to begin to shape your thinking.
- Congratulations. This is a great beginning.
So, what's next?



Building the Case

- You need to create a vision for the future
- And suggest pathways to get there:
 - What are the easiest things to do first?
 - They cost less and don't need legislation.
 - What are the most urgent things to do asap?
 - What are different delivery models? e.g.
 - Some may be family-driven,
 - Others may be mainly community-based,
 - Or state-driven.



Some Core Components

- Values and principles to frame decisions.
- Who is affected? What are their needs?
 - Explain the spectrum of needs – acuity/duration.
- What are the cost impacts of not treating?
 - Impacts on the children in the future.
- Give some examples of well-functioning systems – other jurisdictions. What are the costs?
- Estimate the costs of doing it right.
- An alliance with researchers will help.



Communication Matters Most

*"Policy-makers obtained most of their information internally and informally. Research evidence was valued and used, but as just one source of ideas and information among many." **

So your case for change must be

- Grounded in research (with some good anecdotes).
- Communicated internally and informally
 - through the media, and
 - your champions in society.

Over and over again.

* (Waddell, Charlotte et al, "Research Use in Children's Mental Health Policy in Canada", 2005)



Making Change – Case Studies

- No two revolutions are the same.
- I will talk about two examples, where I have been a direct participant.
 1. Child care
 2. Health care reform
- Each case is different, and yours will be too.



1. Child Care

- The story never ends, but there has been change since the mid-1990s.
 - At first, this was a women's cause – seeking equality.
 - Major research breakthroughs re
 - Importance of early brain development,
 - Linked to future success in school and work,
 - Evidence on other countries (CPRN),
 - Evidence of needs in Canada.
 - Well-communicated by many voices, some of them unexpected e.g. Fraser Mustard, Charlie Coffey, Margaret McCain.



Child Care Progress

- Created alliance between women's groups and child advocates.
- Conversation shifted from child care as a gender equality issue to early childhood **development and care**.
- Combined women's cause with children's needs, and the quality of the future work force.
- "Enabling conditions" for success
- Several provinces were looking for a way to reduce child poverty and improve readiness to learn. They pushed for action too.



Outcomes

- Uneven and slow progress, but:
- Parental leave extended to one year for many, but not all parents and employers fell in line.
- More investment in family resource centres and child care spaces.
 - Big wins in Quebec,
 - Significant gains in small provinces,
 - Long delays in provinces where ideology got in the way (Ontario and Alberta),
 - Some limited progress on work-family balance (employers).
- And more to come.



2. Health Care Reform

Romanow Commission: **Citizen Dialogue** on the Future of Health Care.

- Established clear values and principles for reform.
- Rejected parallel private system as an option, after vigorous discussion.
- Shifted the terms of the debate:
 - Pressure for private payment abated,
 - Shifted focus to making the public system work better through primary health care reform,
 - Clear support for electronic health records (Smart Cards).
- Example of unaffiliated citizens changing the terms of the public debate (identifying needs, setting priorities).



Impact

- Romanow and all the provincial reports recommended primary care reform:
 - The Citizen Dialogue showed it met people's needs – gave politicians the space to do it.
 - Provinces have signed on, some more than others.
 - But it happens one community at a time, as local leaders build consensus and hire the doctors.*
 - Many local doctors only begin to cooperate, once they begin to see it in action.

* See CHA June 2005 Annual Conference for examples



Why Does It Work?

- Broad participation and good information build a durable consensus.
- Establishing values and principles gives all the actors a foundation for action.
- Identifying common ground removes some of the friction in the policy process.
 - Has greater impact than a poll, a focus group, or intense lobbying.
- Process empowers spokespersons to speak for all, and encourages new actors to commit to change.



Conclusions

- Good policy-making takes a combination of passion, reason and luck.
 - And Tom Kent says it helps to be devious.
- It's worth the work: there are payoffs -
 - For you as a community, as you will be able to do your caring more effectively,
 - For future generations of children,
 - For the future of Canadian society, where every child will be a treasure – because they truly are, and because Canada will not have enough children.





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