

Family Matters: Three Steps to Building a Family-Centered VTC



Larisa Owen, PhD
Sid Gardner, MPA

Children and Family Futures

Why Focus on Children?



- Approximately 40% of VTC clients have children; more than 1/3 have custody
- Over a million children have parents who served since 9/11
- 30-35% of veteran parents have trauma and substance abuse issues
- More than half of justice-involved veterans have either mental health problems (e.g., PTSD, depression) or high anxiety
- We know that military sexual trauma has an effect on parenting

Why Focus on Children? Relationships



- Role of relationships in recovery
- Substance Use Disorders
- Identity as a father
- Men recover in relationships
- Understand court decisions have an effect on relationships

All Courts are Family Courts - *when their clients include parents and children*



- The good news is you don't have to divert resources from treating parents to help their children
- But you can mobilize and link to new resources from other agencies that already serve children

Serving Families Matters



- Cost Savings
- Decrease recidivism — Individuals who are criminal justice-involved who have more family contact are less likely to be arrested or incarcerated again
- Savings for courts and county
- Engage community – Family assessment tools can capture family strengths as well as needs
- Highlight your leveraged funds for sustainability
- 2nd generational trauma and prevention

The Cost of Not Serving Children



- They are children who arrive at kindergarten not ready for school
- They are in special education caseloads
- They are disproportionately in foster care and are less likely to return home
- They are in juvenile justice caseloads
- They are in residential treatment programs

Numbers, Needs, Networks

- How many children of veterans are in your VTC?
- What services and supports do these children need?
- How can your VTC build lasting, effective networks or partnerships to respond to the needs of these children?



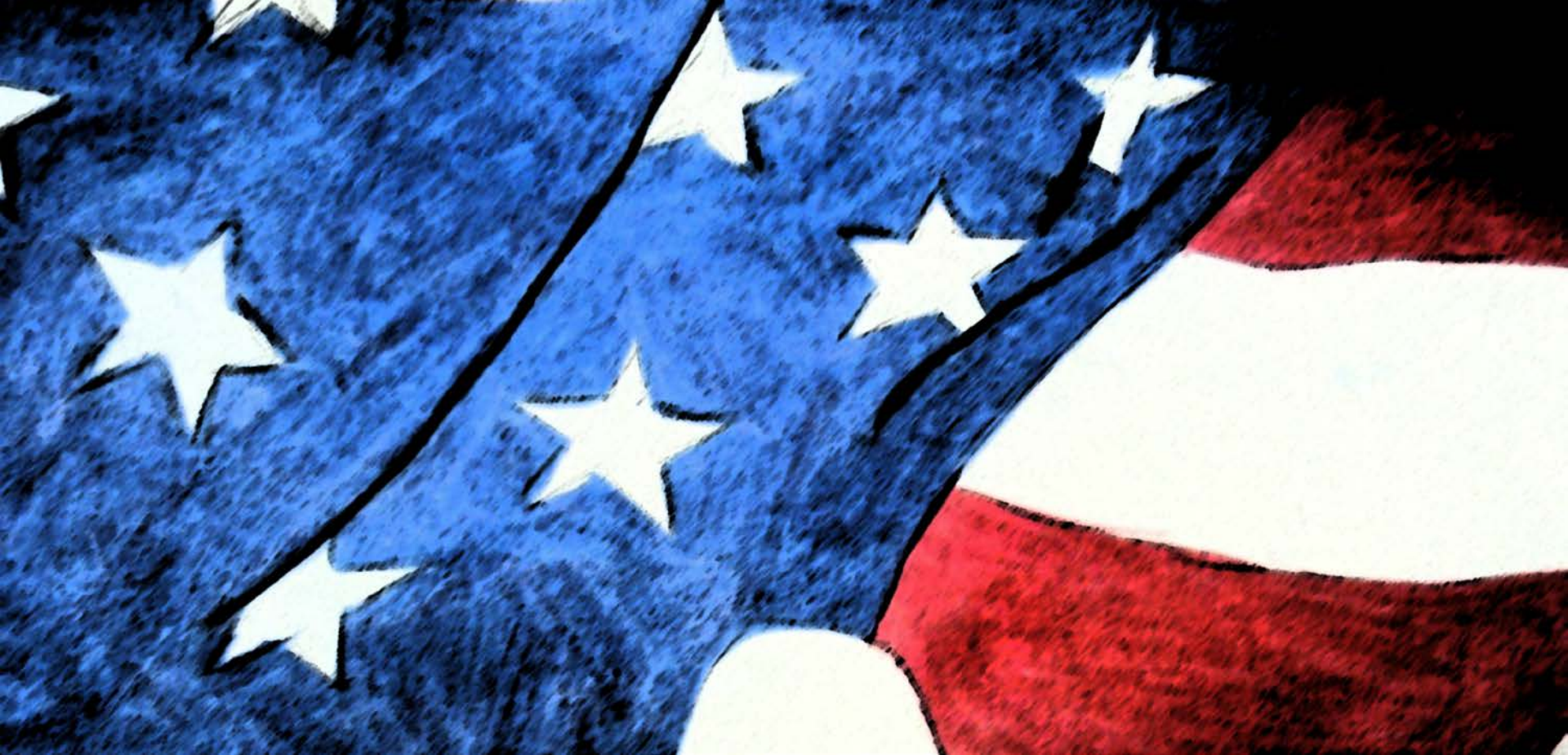
Three Key Steps to Building a Family-Centered VTC:



1. Laying the foundation for a child- and family-focused ***shared mission and vision***

3. Working together towards ***shared outcomes and accountability***

2. Agency ***collaboration for adult and children services***



Step #1

Shared Mission and Vision



A Values-Defining Question:

Should children of veterans who served their country be entitled to their fair share of resources, services and supports?

Shared Mission and Vision

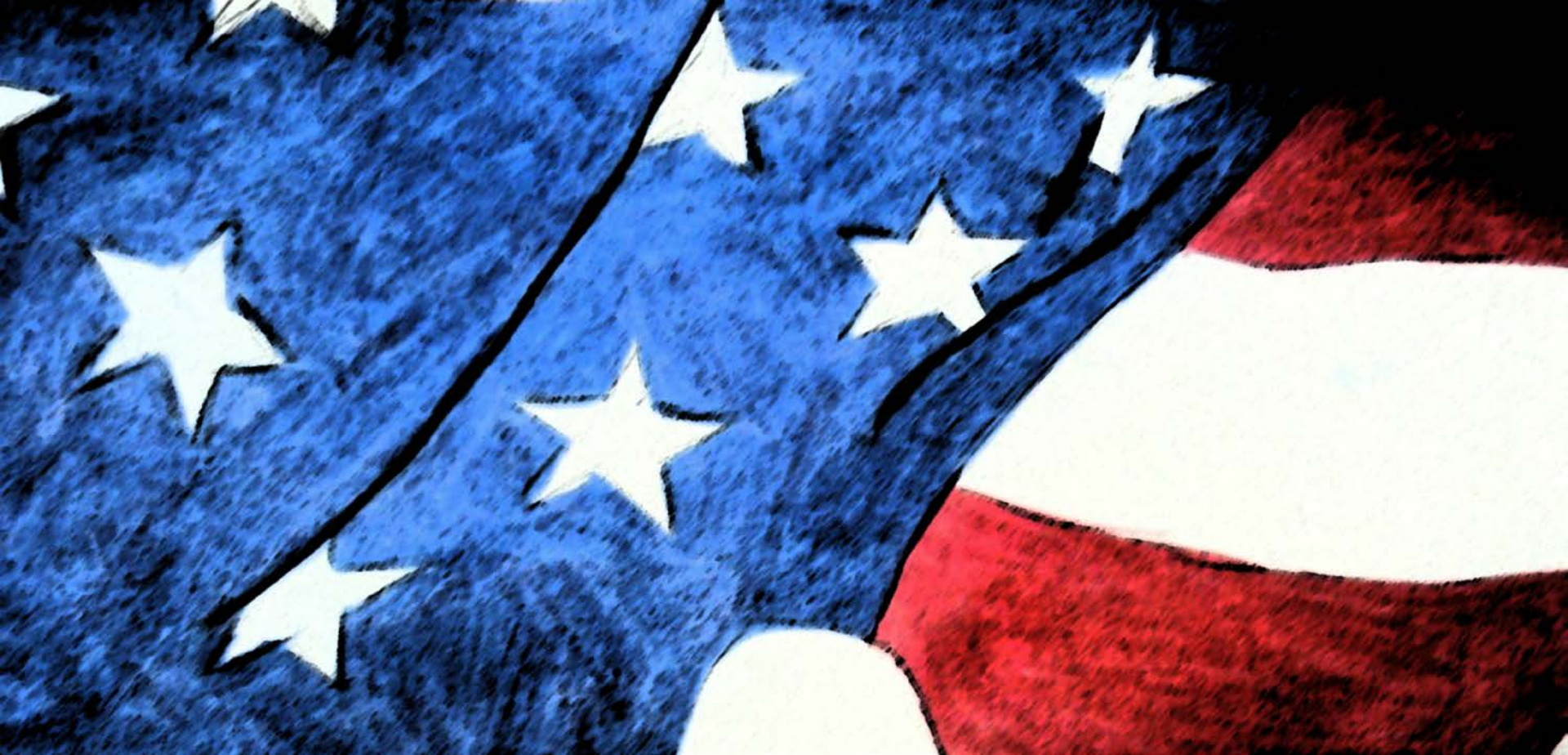
- Do our current mission and vision statements reflect children and families?
 - If so, in what way?
 - If they don't, how could they?
- Is the Steering Committee in agreement that it's an important additional consideration?
- Are there missing partners that can provide assistance in implementing a family-centered approach?

Key Considerations

- Do we know how many children our veterans have?
- Do we know if there are other collaborative courts (Family Treatment Courts) already serving children in our state/city?
- Do we agree that these children are part of the overall task of getting veterans healthy and productive?
- Do we think we can work with child- and family-serving agencies to get services needed by veterans' children?
- Can we agree on how to measure our success in carrying out these tasks?

Next Steps

- Agendize the issue of becoming more child- and family-centered
- Review current mission and vision statements
- Conduct community asset mapping specific to children's service providers



Step #2

Agency Collaboration for Adult and Children Services

Building A Network of Services

- Child-serving agencies in your community are able — and in some cases, required — to screen children referred from a VTC
- For children over 3 who may have learning disabilities, schools are responsible for screening
- For children who may be at risk of neglect or abuse, child welfare agencies can screen or refer to other agencies that they use for screening
- VJOs and VSOs may be able to help connect VTCs with community agencies
- Colleges and universities may have student interns who can help with screening children

Building A Network of Services

- Inventory of children's services
 - Ask your VJO
 - Ask local coordinating bodies
 - Ask local faith community
 - Ask your local treatment courts
- How will you ensure availability of evidence-based, family-centered treatment services?
 - Which agencies have received new federal or state funding? Are veterans' children in their caseloads? Should they be?

VTCs Don't Have To Do It Alone



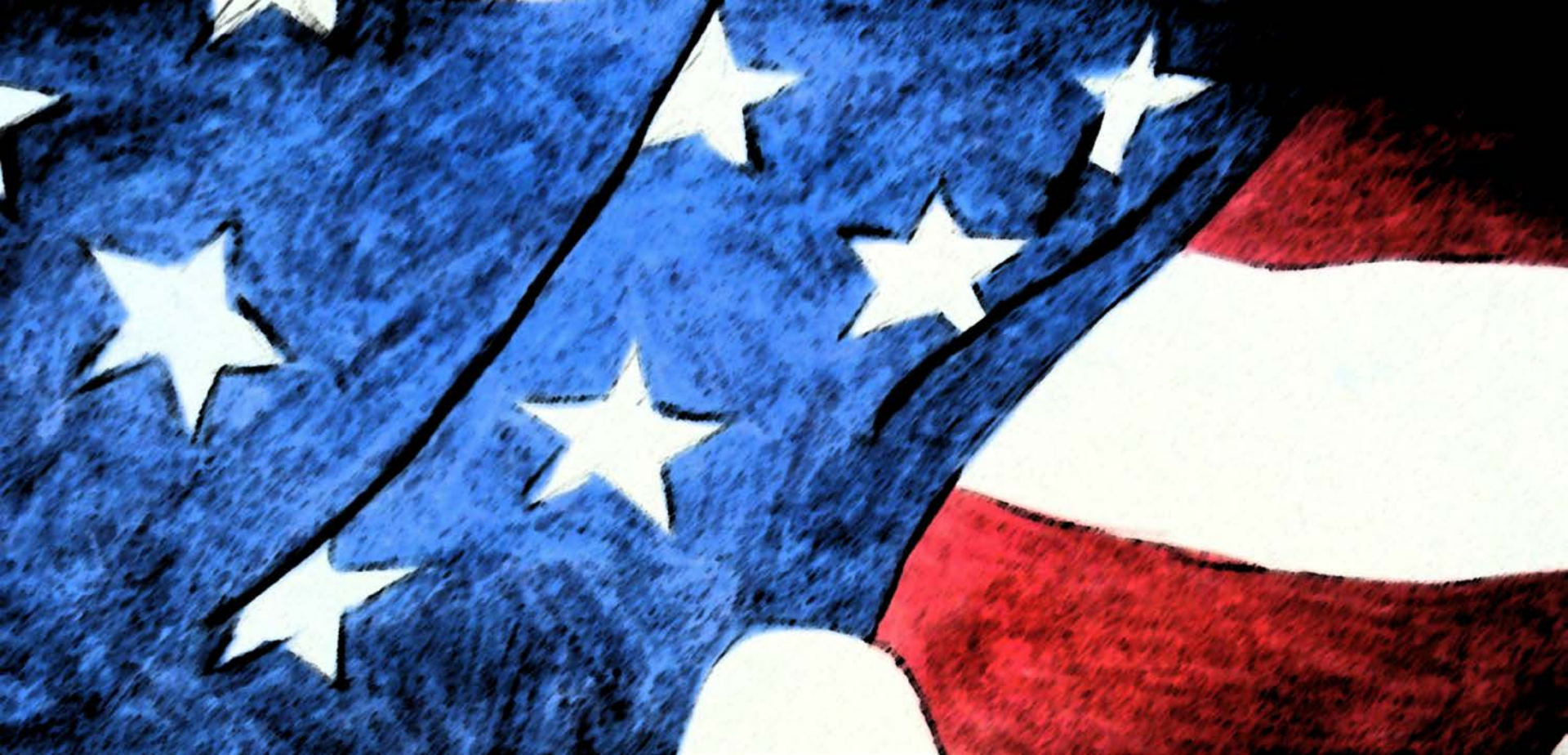
- Maternal and child health
- Mental health
- Child development
- Youth services
- Special education
- Delinquency prevention

That's what collaborative means

- The task is not diverting funds from VTCs, it is *accessing funds already available for children's services*
- Securing their fair share of \$480 billion in existing children's programs

Next Steps

- Review community asset mapping results and create an inventory
- Reach out to children and family service providers
- Determine how to create and strengthen partnerships with children and family service providers



Step #3

Working Together Toward Shared Outcomes and Accountability

VTCs and Accountability



VTCs, like all treatment courts, **hold participants responsible** for their recovery and they must **also hold systems accountable** for responding to the needs of children, parents and families.

What should you measure?

- Parental Status
- Demographic information on family members
- Services provided through children- and family-serving agencies to veterans and their family members
- Family assessment/status including history of family violence
- What else could you measure?

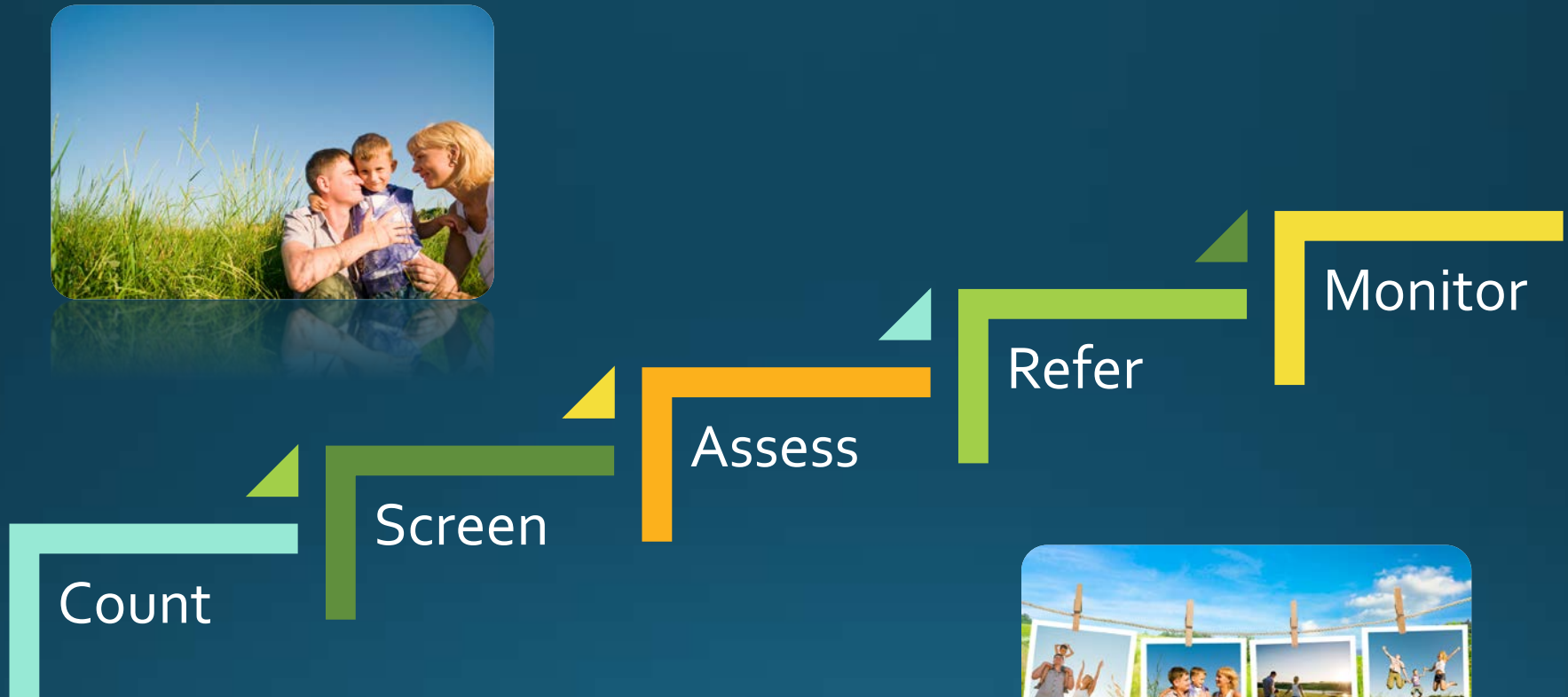
Key Considerations

- How will you decide which outcomes you want to monitor?
- How will you ensure a process of maintaining partnerships?
- How will you ensure policies for sharing information with service providers?
- How will you use court information systems to track progress?
- How will you conduct accountability reviews of outcomes for agencies who serve children and families?
- How will you provide participants opportunities to provide ongoing feedback?

Next Steps

- Determine who, how and when you will ask VTC clients if they have children
- Discuss who, how and when you will ask about other family relationships, such as non-custodial parents (identity, location, and quality of relationship). Is someone already gathering this information?
- How will your VTC ask clients if their children have received appropriate screenings, assessments, intervention and treatment services?
- Develop a mechanism to ensure that children are screened for and receiving appropriate services

Serving Children – A Developmental Process



Contact the FTC TTA Program



- Training and technical assistance to support collaboration and systems change

Contact us: *FDC@cffutures.org*



Children and Family Futures
Strengthening Partnerships, Improving Family Outcomes



**25371 Commercentre Drive, Suite 250
Lake Forest, CA 92630
(714) 505-3525
www.cffutures.org**

