What makes a community change effort "big picture?"

A *Big Picture Approach* takes a whole person or whole family perspective instead of a disease-specific or issue-centered one.

Communities naturally coalesce around pressing issues such as substance abuse, crime, school readiness, high school graduation, income security or homelessness. Personal experience, community tragedies or new data bring these issues to a community's attention and become a moral call for collective action. It is tempting to focus on the "hot topic," but no one experiences problems in isolation or "one at a time." Problems must be viewed as connected and understood as they are actually experienced in the day-to-day context of a child or family's life .

A *big picture approach* makes it more likely that a community can move outcomes for any one of these specific issues by addressing the problem from a child- or family-centered point of view.

A *Big Picture Approach* promotes alignment with other community actors and partnerships.

The first response by concerned community stakeholders is often to form a new group, partnership or coalition. The result is that most communities have more partnerships than they can sustain – sometimes upwards of 50. These partnerships can be an important venue for collective action, but not if they remain disconnected from each other and from broader community goals. Their respective work must be aligned to maximize their collective impact.

A *big picture approach* looks to existing actors and coalitions before starting new efforts. A *big picture approach* follows key steps that promote alignment with broad community goals and with the work of other community actors and initiatives. *Big picture* does not mean that everyone does everything. It means that issues are not tackled in isolation and that solutions are not implemented alone.

A *Big Picture Approach* focuses on root causes, underlying conditions and broader systems change to create lasting differences in population outcomes.

Faced with a moral call to action many community groups jump to selecting "evidence-based" interventions. While implementing the best of what is known is a requirement of good community work, an accurate diagnosis must precede the selection process. As in medicine, an incorrect diagnosis can lead to prescriptions for action that fail to address real causes and fail to produce desired results.

A *big picture approach* assures a localized and data-based diagnosis anchors the choices a community makes for needed action.

A *Big Picture Approach* puts pressing problems into a broader and long-term aspirational frame while committing to public accountability for progress.

Measuring impact is key, but it will take some time before community-level concerns respond to collective action. Sustaining community action therefore becomes imperative. Often problem-oriented initiatives struggle to sustain their efforts as communities fatigue from being the "no-fun police" (such as in the case of youth problem behaviors like substance abuse, juvenile delinquency or teen pregnancy). In the end, we all aspire to achieve positive goals for our children and families, not just to avoid specific problems.

A *big picture approach* tackles pressing problems directly while couching the overall effort in aspirational terms and as the pursuit of goals communities hold for long-term well-being.