It is generally believed that the existing human services structure is most accurately described as an array of potentially related programs that deliver distinct benefits or services to narrowly defined target populations. Each program can be thought of as representing a service silo: a separate and distinct funnel through which money, regulations, professional norms, and expectations flow. While some overlap across silos has always existed, each usually operates in a relatively self-contained manner. As a whole, the configuration of services available to support and assist families in their efforts to become self-sufficient can be complex, confusing, redundant, and incoherent. The opposite of this silo-based approach to organizing and delivering human services is often coined ‘systems integration.’ What exactly is systems integration? Building on lessons learned from the field, the authors conclude that, although it is not possible to create one all-encompassing definition of ‘service integration,’ it is possible to develop an overarching, conceptual framework for understanding and analyzing the essential process involved in such efforts to simplify and transform the service experience of target populations.

This paper identifies the heterogeneity that exists across these efforts and from it develops a set of organizing principles and constructs for planning a service integration initiative. First, it elaborates on two key dimensions—relationship intensity and institutional similarity—critical for understanding any particular integration effort. Second, it proposes a strategy for framing integration efforts based on these two dimensions. This framework is reflected in Figure 1.

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**Figure 1**

**INTEGRATION CHALLENGE: INSTITUTIONAL SIMILARITY –RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY MATRIX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITY INDEX</th>
<th>CULTURAL TYPES</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>Nonroutinized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- For simplicity, this represents integration efforts between two systems. Efforts that encompass more than two systems are inherently more complex.

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Third, it considers the implications of this framework for developing an integration agenda. Finally, it identifies the basic components of all integration efforts within the context of a dynamic, rather than static, operating environment. This ongoing planning and implementation process is reflected Figure 2 (over).
Related publications include:


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