



IRIS in Action: Building Connections to Home Visiting

Responses to Participant Questions

The following are responses to participant questions asked during the second session of the IRIS in Action Series, [Building Connections to Home Visiting](#).

What advice do you have for early childhood partners looking to strengthen relationships with pediatric healthcare partners?

Building strong healthcare partnerships starts with identifying a champion within the healthcare system—someone who is passionate about serving families and willing to advocate for new approaches. Panelists emphasized the importance of persistence, noting that healthcare organizations often have multiple layers of approval, competing priorities, and operational challenges to navigate. Meaningful partnerships may take time to develop, but consistent relationship-building and follow-up can help communities gain traction and create lasting connections.

How has referral data helped inform decisions, strengthen relationships, and build accountability among partners?

Referral data provides valuable insight into both strengths and gaps within a community's network. Panelists shared that data helps identify where referrals are occurring, which organizations are actively engaged, and where opportunities exist to expand partnerships. Beyond informing network growth, referral data supports accountability by increasing visibility into how families are connected to services. This transparency strengthens trust among partners and often leads to deeper collaboration beyond the referral platform itself.

Looking back, what would you tell yourself about establishing collaborative partnerships and Community Standards?

Panelists reflected that Community Standards can sometimes feel like an administrative task during implementation, but their long-term value becomes clear over time. Thoughtfully developed standards create shared expectations, strengthen accountability, and provide a framework for navigating challenges as a network grows. Investing time upfront to establish and revisit community standards helps ensure partners remain aligned around a common vision for serving families.

How have you helped partners overcome challenges associated with adopting a new referral workflow?

Panelists highlighted simplicity, flexibility, and ongoing support as key factors in successful adoption. Demonstrating how the referral process fits naturally into existing workflows helps reduce concerns about adding "one more thing" to staff responsibilities. Communities have found success by providing ongoing training, troubleshooting workflow challenges, and helping organizations adapt processes to meet their unique needs. Importantly, implementation is not static; workflows can evolve over time as organizations learn what works best for their teams and partners.

What is one takeaway or action attendees can bring back to their own communities?

Gwen Walsh: Advocate for coordinated systems that make it easier for families to access the services they need. Strong partnerships can reduce barriers and create a more seamless experience for those seeking support.

Erin Stout: Find—or become—a champion who can bring partners together and maintain momentum. Remember that every referral represents a real face and a real family, and that shared purpose can help sustain collaboration.

Alexandria Phillips: Engage your IRIS Local Leadership Teams and community partners early and often. Lasting success depends on community ownership, shared commitment, and active participation from partners across the network.