

# MANAGING COMPETING PRIORITIES

Teams and organizations working to improve the safety and well-being of children and families are often faced with multiple agency-level priorities and limited resources. Whether managing agency-level priorities or multiple prevention strategies, deciding where to focus efforts can be challenging. A structured approach such as the one outlined below can help teams focus on the most critical areas, ensuring resources are used efficiently and effectively.

## 1. Prioritize Statutory Requirements

Not all public health-focused groups operate under applicable legislation or regulations, but for programs that do, compliance with those requirements is a primary concern.

- **Compliance:** Ensure all activities comply with relevant laws and regulations and work to address statutory charges.
- **Documentation:** Keep thorough records of compliance to ensure accountability and transparency.

## 2. Focus on Funders' Requirements

Understanding and aligning with funders' expectations (if applicable), and establishing and maintaining clear team charters, is crucial for securing support and ensuring all team members are on the same page.

- **Alignment With Funders:** Teams should align their goals with funders' expectations, including specific reporting formats, timelines, and outcome measures. This ensures continued support and funding.
  - **Alignment With agency/organization of employment:** Team members should align goals with the expectations, guidelines, and priorities set forth by their respective organizations. A helpful strategy is for teams to identify where their organizational priorities intersect with child safety/well-being as the primary focus area, as well as areas where misalignment might cause problems.
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## Organizational Priorities Diagram



- **Team Charters:** Develop and regularly update team charters to clearly define roles, responsibilities, objectives, and overall scope.

### 3. Plan for Effective Facilitation

Effective facilitation ensures that meetings are productive, focused, and engaging, helping to manage competing priorities efficiently.

- **Preparation:** Plan regularly scheduled meetings with clear objectives focused on prevention. Distribute necessary information in advance to ensure meaningful contributions. Strongly encourage team members to bring relevant documentation to the meeting.
- **Agenda Management:** Create structured agendas with specific times for each topic, including case reviews, prevention strategies, and breaks. Understand that there will likely be times when flexibility is necessary.
- **Engagement:** Use interactive techniques to keep members engaged.

### 4. Use Data-Driven Approaches

Using data to drive decisions ensures that resources are allocated to the most impactful areas, helping to prioritize effectively.

- **Data Collection:** Utilize tools like the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System (NFR-CRS) to collect comprehensive data on child deaths.
  - **Analysis:** Analyze data to identify trends, risk factors, and areas for intervention. Use this analysis to prioritize and allocate resources effectively.
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## 5. Evaluate Recommendations Using the Prioritization Matrix

Using the Prioritization Matrix can help teams evaluate and identify prevention activities that are most likely to succeed, ensuring strategic use of resources.

- **Evaluation:** Use the Prioritization Matrix to assess potential prevention activities based on effectiveness, ease of implementation, cost, sustainability, community acceptance, political reality, and unintended consequences.
- **Prioritization:** Prioritize prevention activities that score highest across these criteria to ensure the most impactful and feasible interventions.

## 6. Refer to the Socio-Ecological Model

Applying the socio-ecological model will help teams understand the interplay among the factors influencing child deaths, leading to comprehensive interventions across all levels of influence demonstrated in the model.

- **Holistic Approach:** Apply the socio-ecological model to understand the interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors in child deaths.
- **Intervention Levels:** Develop interventions that address multiple levels of influence, from individual behaviors to broader systemic actions and/or policies.

## 7. Consider Resource Allocation

To manage competing priorities effectively, it is essential to focus resource allocation on developing and implementing prevention recommendations with the most significant implications for systemic change and ensuring continual training is provided to team members.

- **Case Prioritization:** Focus on cases with the highest potential for prevention impact at a systems level. Use data to identify trends and prioritize resources accordingly.
- **Training:** Provide ongoing training for team members to stay updated on best practices and new research.

## 8. Document and Follow-Up

Maintaining thorough documentation and consistent follow-up helps manage priorities by ensuring accountability and tracking progress.

- **Recordkeeping:** Maintain detailed records of meetings and decisions. Use these records and the Next Steps Table to track progress and follow-up on action items.
- **Feedback Loops:** Implement feedback mechanisms to continually improve the review process and address emerging issues.

## 9. Provide Team Support and Self-Care Opportunities

Supporting team well-being is essential for managing priorities effectively. A healthy team can better handle the demands of their work.

- **Mental Health:** Create and foster a team culture where recognizing and prioritizing mental health needs is normalized.
  - **Debriefing:** Include time for debriefing after particularly challenging cases to support team well-being.
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