

# The Journey to Interprofessional Collaborative Practice

## Are We There Yet?



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### KEYWORDS

- Interprofessional • Collaboration • Teams • Team building • Communication
- Health care • Organization development

### KEY POINTS

- Interprofessional collaborative practice (IPCP) is an aspirational holistic approach to health care. Clinicians who seek to deliver IPCP must achieve core competencies related to teamwork and team effectiveness.
- Although there are a number of daunting systemic factors that are miring the journey to IPCP, clinicians should seek the knowledge and tools required to design effective collaboration.
- Frameworks from disciplines specifically devoted to the study of group and team dynamics, including organizational psychology and organization development, can assist clinicians on this journey.
- Organizational teams frequently act more like groups than actual teams, in part because they lack truly interdependent and shared work, collective accountability, and team member complementarity.
- Several strategies can improve team collaboration and functioning, including developing clear and challenging goals, clarifying team member roles/responsibilities, and reviewing all processes and procedures.

For decades, speech–language pathologists have worked alongside other health care professionals to provide care for children presenting with disorders of communication, cognition, and swallowing. Yet, evolving reimbursement models, increasingly complex diagnoses and intervention strategies, and greater calls for holistic approaches to

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patient care now necessitate professional interdependency in a way that transcends the “work alongside” approach.<sup>1</sup> Recognized by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association as a model that is key to its *Envisioned Future* for speech–language pathologists,<sup>2</sup> interprofessional collaborative practice (IPCP) is a service delivery approach that seeks to improve health care outcomes and the patient experience while simultaneously decreasing health care cost. IPCP is a practice ideal that is intuitively appealing to clinicians and simultaneously challenging to achieve. This article defines IPCP and provides clinicians with tools and frameworks from the fields of organizational psychology and organization development that can be used to foster IPCP in practice settings.

## DEFINING INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

The World Health Organization<sup>3</sup> describes IPCP as the provision of comprehensive health services by multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds who seek to work with patients, families, caregivers, and communities to provide the highest quality of care across settings. This definition highlights multiple key aspects of IPCP in that it is patient and family centered, relationship focused, and community based. Interprofessional team-based care is further defined as care delivery by intentionally created, usually relatively small work groups, whose members recognize themselves as having both a collective identity and a shared responsibility for a patient or group of patients.<sup>4</sup> Clinicians who practice the IPCP model are engaged with each other, and with patients and their stakeholders, in a process-oriented and outcome-driven manner that is holistic, reflective, integrative, and cohesive.<sup>5</sup>

The movement toward IPCP has occurred in tandem with the emergence of interprofessional education (IPE). IPE occurs when “students from two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve outcomes.”<sup>3</sup> IPE, which has largely emerged from the fields of medicine, nursing, pharmacy and public health, is generally associated with preprofessional academic and clinical preparation that occurs in colleges and universities. IPE, however, can also be used in the continuing education setting as a means for training practicing clinicians in the IPCP model.<sup>5</sup>

When we present IPCP to experienced speech–language pathologists at national conferences, we often hear such proclamations as, “This is nothing new! I have been doing this my whole career,” and “Multidisciplinary...interdisciplinary...interprofessional...it’s just the new hot term for the same concept.” Although it can be argued that IPCP evolved from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary practice models that dominated the 1980s and 1990s, as shown in **Table 1**, interprofessional collaboration is distinctive from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in its philosophy, structure, and process.<sup>6</sup> Interprofessional collaboration is a systems-focused approach that targets the provision of holistic care by team members with equal authority and shared responsibility and accountability.<sup>7</sup> To effectively practice IPCP, the clinician must intentionally seek to develop a number of interrelated professional competencies.

### ***Interprofessional Collaborative Practice Core Competencies***

In 2011, the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC)<sup>8</sup> published its core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice. Synthesizing deliberations and recommendations of experts from 6 national health professions associations, the report delineated and defined the interprofessional foundational competencies required for future health professionals to deliver interprofessional collaborative care. In 2016, IPEC released an updated document that incorporated input from 9

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