DEFINING THE SYSTEM AROUND YOUR TARGETED PROBLEM

After defining your targeted problem, your next step is to identify the organizations, departments, settings, efforts, and actors that are currently involved—or should be involved—in understanding and addressing this problem. Remember, a system includes sets of actors that interact together towards a shared purpose. Drawing system boundaries around your targeted problem is important because it informs how the problem itself is understood, and who has a potential role in problem solving. Who are the actors that are or should be interacting together to resolve your targeted problem? Consider different departments and units with larger organizations.

Note that this is another example of a boundary that can—and should—be shifted over time given emerging conditions and opportunities.

Here is an example of a system one community defined around the targeted problem of “Not All Kids are Ready for Kindergarten”:

System Relevant to the Targeted Problem

- Families & Youth
- Community supports - Support Group Leader, Peer to Peer Network Coordinator
- Family Advocates
- Public, Private, and Home-Based Childcare Centers – Directors, Child Care Providers
- Home Visitation Workers
- Early On
- Head Start
- Doctor Offices - Pediatricians, Nurses
- WIC
- Department of Human Services - Foster Care Case Workers, Child Abuse/Neglect Case Workers
- School Districts: Superintendent, Principals, Teachers, Social Workers, Special Education
- Faith-Based Groups – Pastors, Volunteer Coordinator
- School Readiness Programs – Director, Staff
System Relevant to Your Targeted Problem

How will these system boundaries around the targeted problem influence the scope of your efforts?