



# Policy as a Tool for Revolution

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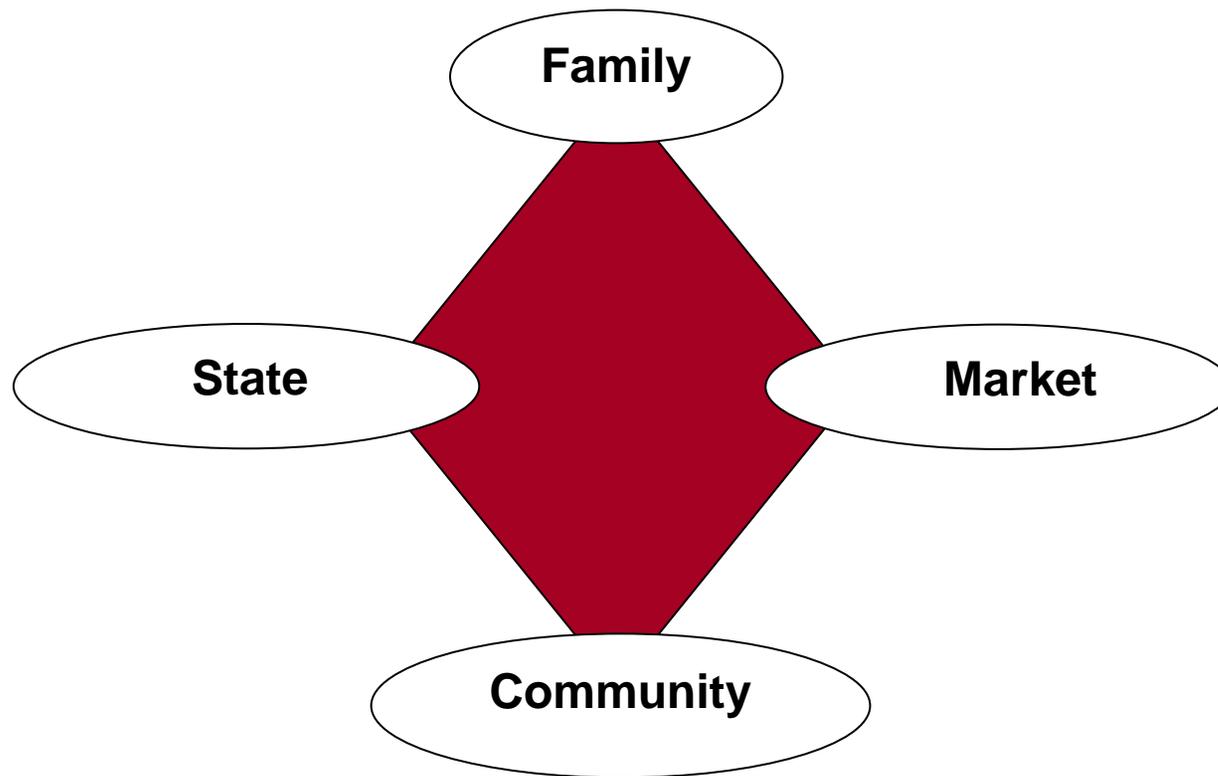
# Children's Mental Health

- You have a cause we can all believe in
  - One in five children are afflicted
  - Funding for services was frozen 13 years ago
  - Average wait times are 5.5 months.
- The question is how to make the case for change and put the issue front and centre.
- As the parents, caregivers and professionals supporting these children, you can build the case better than anyone.
- You are motivated by love and compassion. Policy is moved by cold hard facts and good communication.
- Yes, we need more money. So, what is the best policy mix for these children?

# Our goal

- To give every child and youth the opportunity to live the best life they can
- Who is responsible?
  - Families, yes, but also governments through health and education systems,
  - As well as communities and neighbourhoods
- There is a mutual dependence here. All the actors have to act together.

# Well-Being Diamond



# Making a Revolution

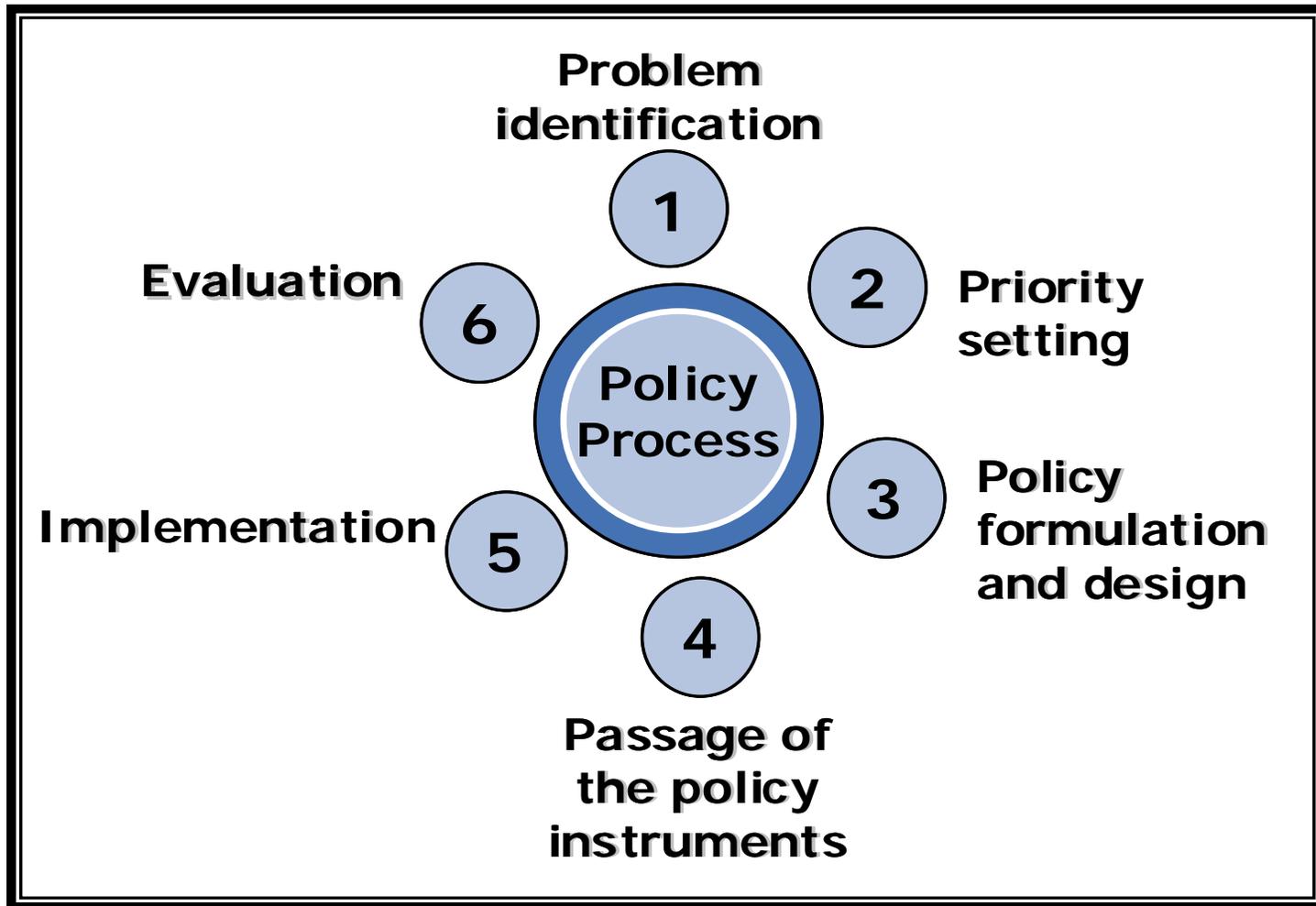
- Two routes to go: fight at the barricades or engage actively with the policy process.
- In your case, you need to build a partnership with the government and the institutions delivering care and support.
- So I suggest we avoid the barricades and rely on reason and persuasion.
- This means you will win the revolution over time. It will feel like forever, but change is possible.

# Policy as the Tool

- To establish the best context for our children, we need sensitive, effective policy choices by decision-makers in all these institutions.
  - Many people feel helpless and angry in the face of these remote leaders’
  - Policy seems complex, unpredictable, and often looks irrational from a distance. And it is.
- But people have power too, if they decide to exercise it and work together.
  - Requires tradeoffs and choices.

# Navigation Tools

- As parents and caregivers and community leaders, you are the stakeholders
- To help you mobilize the power of your community, I want to talk
  - about the policy process and
  - the way to mobilize your own power.
- First the policy process – very general:



Source: CPRN, Phillips and Orsini, 2002.

# Your Points of Influence

## **You are the best people to**

- Identify the needs
- Influence the priorities by reaching consensus on what they are
- Insist on a chance for feedback once policy design is advanced
- Persuade legislators to vote for the changes
- Keep a close eye on implementation – is it on track? Will it generate the results you want?
- Take part in the evaluation, and identify problems

# Some Qualifications

- You can't all take this on – but all can help.
- But you will need to build consensus from the bottom up, and identify trusted, well-informed spokespersons.
- Even then, you will not be the only influence, so you will likely lose some key battles.
- But you can make things happen differently.
- And be prepared to fight the next time.

# Other Influences

- Fiscal constraints (very real in Ontario),
- Competing interests of stakeholders,
- Media role in shaping opinion,
- Lack of public understanding,
- Internal contradictions across institutions and ministries (turf wars, ideological views),
- Research evidence.

# Building the Case.

- You need to create a vision for the future
- And suggest pathways to get there:
  - What are the easiest things to do first?
    - They cost less and don't need legislation.
  - What are the most urgent things to do asap?
  - What are different delivery models? E.g.
    - Some may be family-driven,
    - Others may be mainly community-based,
    - Or state-driven.

# Progress is Being Made

- You have the Ministry's attention,
- You have an effective leader in Gordon Floyd,
- And you have already participated in regional stakeholder sessions to begin to shape your thinking.
- Congratulations. This is a great beginning. So, what next?

# Some Core Components

- Values and principles to frame decisions.
- Who is affected? What are their needs?
  - Explain the spectrum of needs – acuity/duration
- What are the cost impacts of not treating?
  - Impacts on the children in the future,
- Give some examples of well-functioning systems – other jurisdictions. What are the costs?
- Estimate the costs of doing it right.
- An alliance with researchers will help.

# Communication Matters Most

“Policy-makers obtained most of their information internally and informally. Research evidence was valued and used, but as just one source of ideas and information among many.” (Waddell, Charlotte et al, “Research Use in Children’s Mental Health Policy in Canada,” 2005)

- So your case for change must be
  - Grounded in research (with some good anecdotes),
  - Communicated internally and informally
    - through the media, and
    - your champions in society.
- Over and over again.

# Making Change –Case Studies

- No two revolutions are the same.
- I will talk about two examples, where I have been a direct participant.
  1. Child care
  2. Health care reform
- Each case is different, and yours will be too.

# 1. Child Care

- The story never ends, but there's been change since the mid-1990s,
  - At first, this was a women's cause – seeking equality.
  - Major research breakthroughs re
    - Importance of early brain development,
    - Linked to future success in school and work,
    - Evidence on other countries (CPRN),
    - Evidence of needs in Canada.
  - Well-communicated by many voices, some of them unexpected e.g. Fraser Mustard, Charlie Coffey, Margaret McCain.

# Child Care Progress

- Created alliance between women’s groups and child advocates.
- Conversation shifted from child care as a gender equality issue to early childhood **development** and care.
- Combined women’s cause with children’s needs, and the quality of the future work force.
- “Enabling conditions” for success (CPRN)
  - Adequate family income, effective parenting, supportive communities.
- Several provinces were looking for a way to reduce child poverty and improve readiness to learn.

# Outcomes

- Uneven and slow progress, but:
- Parental leave extended to one year for many but not all parents and employers fell in line,
- More investment in family resource centres and child care spaces
  - Big wins in Quebec,
  - Significant gains in small provinces,
  - Long delays in provinces where ideology got in the way (Ontario and Alberta)
  - Some limited progress on work-family balance.
- And more to come.

## 2. Health Care Reform

Romanow Commission: **Citizen Dialogue** on the Future of Health Care.

- Established clear values and principles for reform.
- Rejected parallel private system as an option, after vigorous discussion.
- Shifted the terms of the debate:
  - Pressure for private payment abated,
  - Shifted focus to making the public system work better through primary health care reform,
  - Clear support for electronic health records (Smart Cards).
- Example of unaffiliated citizens changing the terms of the public debate (identifying needs, setting priorities).

# Impact

- Romanow and all the provincial reports recommended primary care reform:
  - The Citizen Dialogue showed it met people's needs – gave politicians the space to do it.
  - Provinces have signed on, some more than others.
  - But it happens one community at a time, as local leaders build local consensus and hire the doctors.
  - Many local doctors only begin to cooperate, once they begin to see it in action.

# Why does it Work?

- Broad participation and good information build a durable consensus.
- Establishing values and principles gives all the actors a foundation for action.
- Identifying common ground removes some of the friction in the policy process.
  - Has greater impact than a poll, a focus group, or intense lobbying.
- Process empowers spokespersons to speak for all, and encourages new actors to commit to change.

# Conclusions

- Good policy-making takes a combination of passion, reason, luck.
  - And Tom Kent says it helps to be devious.
- The payoffs are worth the work and the time:
  - For you as a community, as you will be able to do your caring more effectively,
  - For future generations of children,
  - For the future of Canadian society, where every child will be a treasure – because they truly are, and because Canada will not have enough children.

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