



MAY 2010

COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION

“The challenge of a collaborative effort is that we are all used to working in our own little silo. Breaking out of that silo and working collaboratively with the courts, alcohol and drug, and schools was difficult. We had our bumps in the road, but in the long term, it taught us a new way of doing business that is much more effective. We can see the results.”

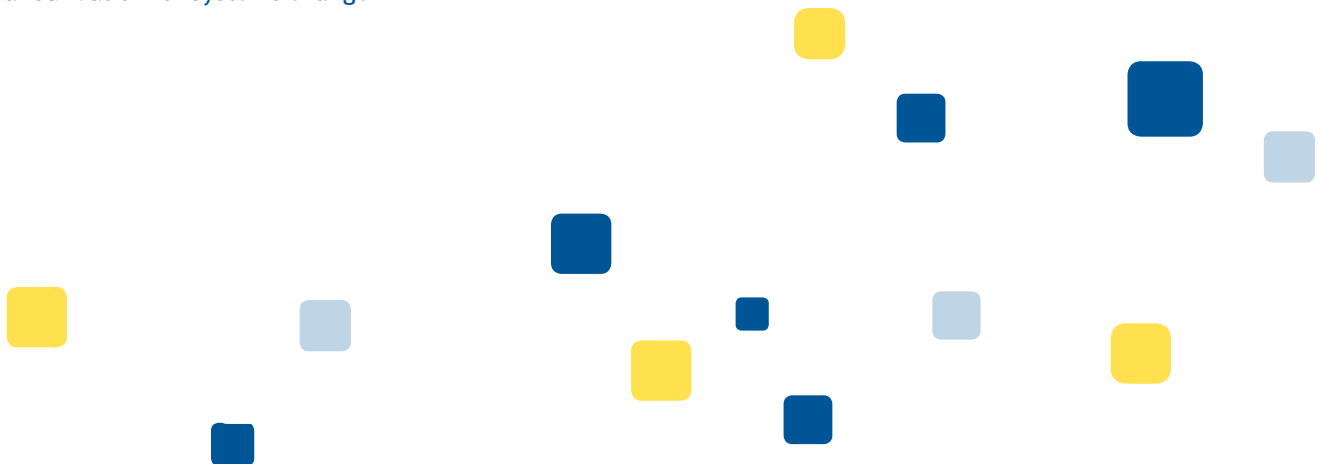
– Karen Staples, Retired Chief Probation Officer, Ventura County Probation Department

In general, systems of care for youth and their families in California are fragmented and siloed, allowing youth to slip through the cracks. Frequently, youth with complex needs, such as mental health and substance abuse disorders, end up in the juvenile justice system because they failed to receive appropriate services in the community. Once in custody, their conditions can worsen, leading to unnecessary confinement, recidivism, and a diminished quality of life. Probation departments often lack the capacity or expertise to effectively meet the needs of these youth and find that traditional punitive approaches result in more incidents of self-harm, increased misbehavior and aggression, longer periods of solitary confinement, and more one-on-one staff time. Upon returning to the community, these youth face enormous barriers in accessing the support services they need to meet their probation requirements and stay successful.

Collaboration and integration of services across multiple counties, agencies, community-based organizations, and providers can help streamline services for youth in the juvenile justice system. However, many agencies and community-based organizations have established histories of working independently with minimal collaboration or have specific departmental rules that create obstacles to collaboration. Information sharing is complicated by confidentiality concerns and incompatible data systems, which also stymie service integration.

Collaboration and integration with multiple stakeholders can help juvenile justice programs:

- Increase the visibility of efforts to serve this population
- Identify gaps in services
- Add new services and resources where needed
- Integrate parallel efforts
- Reduce duplication of services
- Create a foundation for systems change



LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE HEALTHY RETURNS INITIATIVE

The Healthy Returns Initiative county probation departments met the needs of youth with mental health and other complex needs in custody and in the community by creating and strengthening agency and provider partnerships to seamlessly integrate services. To address service gaps and promote systemic change, they contracted and collaborated with county agencies in service planning, established agreements and contracts with community-based providers, facilitated cross-systems and provider trainings for staff and youth, established MDTs with multiple agencies and providers, participated in commissions and held retreats and summits with key stakeholders outside of probation to further address service gaps and promote systemic change, and built upon ongoing efforts to integrate county services for youth. In addition, the counties created information-sharing agreements and developing shared databases to foster information sharing across agencies and providers.

PROMISING PRACTICES


“Our partnership with Children’s Mental Health is at every level of the system, but there wasn’t a lot of attention being paid to keeping the lines of communication open and nurturing that relationship. We also realized that we needed to bring child welfare and physical health in closer, which we hadn’t done. So we did a series of free retreats that started out at the management level, which led the way to reaching other staff.”

– Kathy Martinez, Assistant Juvenile Probation Director, Santa Cruz County Probation Department

Investing in Technical Assistance to Secure Buy-in Across Stakeholders

Enlisting outside expertise can help facilitate partnership development and collaboration, particularly if agencies and community-based organizations have conflicting agendas and goals or if there is a history of working independently. Probation can then be a participant in the relationship building process rather than the driver, an approach that is often met with resistance. In addition, partnerships across agencies need to develop at both the front-line level and the highest level of management. Front line staff need to coordinate on the day-to-day implementation, but upper management is less vulnerable to layoffs during economic downturn and can establish a structure to rebuild partnerships when resources are renewed.

In Ventura County, the Healthy Returns Initiative team held two education summits with key stakeholders from the county district schools, County Office of Education, Probation Department, Mental Health Department, and county courts. An independent consultant encouraged and facilitated a strategy to begin a conversation between providers actively working with youth, to identify where youth slip through the cracks between these two systems. Participants were able to have open dialogue about the need for greater coordination and follow-up with probation youth, better data sharing, and more visible presence of probation in the schools.



“Once I learned of the program’s capacity and impact, I got the list of eligible zip codes and sent every kid I could to the program. Not all kids in juvenile hall have a probation officer that is proactive in figuring out the best plan to meet their needs.”

– Judge Donna Groman, Superior Court of California, Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center

Disseminating Information to Engage Potential Champions

Disseminating information and accomplishments to county decision-makers and cross-agency partners enhances buy-in and can secure potential champions. In Los Angeles County, Superior Court Judge Donna Groman, in her commitment to serving high-risk youth in South Central Los Angeles, established a “Think Tank” at Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center. The goals of the “Think Tank” included learning about community resources and program innovations taking place in South Central LA for at-risk youth; networking and partnership development; and building awareness of community resources, programs, and services available to delinquent youth for court personnel (e.g., judges, district attorneys, public defenders). Shortly after the inception of the “Think Tank,” a member of the Los Angeles County Healthy Returns Initiative team spoke to participants about the program and shared success stories. Participation in the monthly “Think Tank” has created new opportunities for partnership and expanded the Healthy Returns Initiative team’s knowledge of programs and services available within the community, leading to partnerships with public defenders and judges, and ultimately, referrals to the program in an effort to keep youth in the community.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and Contracting Services

Offering partner organizations funding to secure services or information and resources can help them improve the efficiency of their work. In Humboldt County, the probation department hired a licensed mental health clinician as a probation employee, who also worked for county mental health, to provide mental health services to youth. The clinician was able to access mental health case records, check Medi-Cal eligibility, and enter information directly into the mental health system.

“Because we had a mental health clinician who was an employee of our own department, we could better dictate workload and assignments. Our mental health clinician was able to get youth connected to services in a 72 hour period, where it might take us up to 30 days going through the routine entry points of mental health.”

– Doug Rasines, Retired Chief Probation Officer, Humboldt County Probation Department

In addition, Humboldt County also developed MOUs with Native American tribes to provide culturally appropriate services and pro-social activities for tribal youth in the juvenile justice system. Tribal agencies developed age-appropriate and culturally responsive treatment plans and provided nontraditional treatment services, such as sweat lodges.



Cross-Provider Trainings for Staff and Youth

Cross-provider trainings can help move probation towards a more rehabilitative, collaborative, and integrated care approach. In Santa Clara County, training efforts have targeted different staff within juvenile hall and the probation system, focusing on improving the quality, effectiveness, and cultural responsiveness of the treatment youth receive in detention. To improve the ability of juvenile hall staff to better understand and appropriately respond to high-need youth, the mental health clinician developed a curriculum titled “Mental Health Issues in Custody” that covered child/adolescent psychosocial development; moral development; psychological disorders; crisis theory, diffusion and intervention; psychotropic medications; suicide prevention; effective communication; basic group dynamics; and behavioral disorders in childhood and adolescence. This curriculum received state certification and more than 90% of the juvenile hall custodial staff have received this training.

“Being able to access training on so many different topics that normally would not be available to us as probation officers, means that we know how to better serve youth and families.”

— Andrea Gordon, Probation Director, Los Angeles County Probation Department

In Santa Cruz County, the probation department focused on health promotion and gang intervention training programs for youth detained in juvenile hall. The Health Educator, in collaboration with community-based organizations, probation officers, and juvenile hall nursing staff, developed numerous workshops and presentations available to youth in juvenile hall, including the following topic areas: sexually transmitted disease education, nutrition, first aid, goal setting, personal hygiene, parenting classes, countering “pro tobacco” influences, disability awareness, dental care and oral hygiene, domestic violence, “street smart” series on safer sex practices, and a gang intervention series.

Shared Data Systems

Databases that can be accessed and shared across agencies improve the continuity of care for youth receiving multiple services across provider systems and facilitate greater collaboration and communication across providers, resulting in a more holistic care approach. In Santa Cruz County, prior to the Healthy Returns Initiative, there was no single system in place where all partners could access information about youth participating in cross-system services. The development of a shared database allows information sharing between juvenile hall medical providers, mental health clinicians, probation staff/ administration, custody staff, the health educator, and the Certified Application Assistor to facilitate collaboration and service coordination. This comprehensive data system tracks physical and mental health data, case plans and treatment goals, service referrals, insurance and benefit status, and follow-up services needed and utilized by youth and families.





IMPROVING OUTCOMES

- Better coordination and communication across county departments (e.g., public health, mental health, and human services) increases information sharing and enhances treatment planning, ultimately integrating and improving referral systems and service delivery for youth with complex needs.
 - Cross-systems training creates greater awareness and understanding of youth with mental health issues and the mission and goals of those involved with the youth, and facilitates more effective rehabilitative efforts by probation.
 - Stronger relationships between probation and community-based partners ensure effective case plan implementation for youth and their successful transition back to the community.
 - Increased awareness among partner agencies, courts, and community-based organizations creates champions, which can lead to increased program referrals and recognition of specialized capacity within probation to meet the needs of high-risk youth.
 - Collaborations between probation and other agencies and organizations to identify gaps in service or programs leads to the development of new programs, strategies, and resources that benefit other juvenile offenders and youth and families in the community.
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CHALLENGES TO SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION

Limited Funding and Resources for Collaboration and Integration

In general, not enough funding and resources are available or allocated to support inter-agency and cross-provider collaboration. Budget cuts at the state level trickle down to county agencies and local community-based partners, affecting collaboration and service capacity in the community, as well as the ability to develop shared data systems. Developing strong leadership and a workforce capable of using collaborative treatment approaches requires a significant amount of time, resources, training, and reinforcement.

Staff Turnover

Turnover of probation department, partnering agency, and community-based organization staff requires constant re-education on the benefits of collaborative and integrated approaches and trainings. It can be difficult to recruit staff who are flexible and willing to work “differently” and with providers in different disciplines, in the community, and with families. Another consideration is that by training staff to work in this way, they develop skills that make them stronger candidates for other jobs, including promotions.

Relationships with School Districts and Local Schools

Most of the Healthy Returns Initiative counties experienced challenges in getting probation youth back into public schools after they were released from juvenile hall. Many schools have “zero tolerance” policies that serve as barriers for probation youth returning to their district schools once they have entered the juvenile justice system. Partnership building with the local school districts continues to be a significant challenge for probation departments.

Children's Systems of Care

After beginning as a pilot project in Ventura County in the 1980s, Children's Systems of Care (CSOC) have been implemented across California to provide coordinated agency and community-based mental health services for children and youth. Services include mental health assessment, early intervention services, case management, crisis intervention, outpatient and inpatient care, school-based day treatment, in-home services, and family support. In 1988, legislation (AB 377) was passed providing funding for select counties to implement the CSOC model, including Santa Cruz County. Since 1989, Santa Cruz County has provided integrated and collaborative mental health services for youth through CSOC, including mental health clinicians from Children's Mental Health working within juvenile hall to assess youth for immediate needs and provide in-custody services.¹

County Integrated Health and Human Services Programs

Additional legislation promoting collaborative approaches was passed to encourage counties to integrate health, mental health, and social services through County Integrated Health and Human Services Programs (AB 1259, AB 1881, and AB 315). Currently, 11 counties, including Humboldt County, are authorized to operate in this manner. Since 1999, Humboldt County has integrated health and human services delivery structures and processes to more effectively and holistically use resources to serve children and families in the context of their community and culture. With the goals of integrating parallel programs and state initiatives, Humboldt County has worked collaboratively to eliminate or reduce barriers to serving vulnerable populations across systems.²

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Guide to Implementing Children's System of Care in California, California Institute of Mental Health

AB 315 Integrated Services Initiative: 2007-2010 Strategic Plan, Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services

Healthy Returns Initiative Case Studies – Final Report, Desert Vista Consulting

Healthy Returns Initiative Case Studies – Grantee Supplemental Resource Compendium, Desert Vista Consulting

Healthy Returns Initiative: Strengthening Mental Health Services in the Juvenile Justice System, National Council on Crime and Delinquency

Mental Health Issues in California's Juvenile Justice System, Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice

Santa Cruz County Healthy Returns Initiative: Final Evaluation Report, Ceres Policy Research

¹ For more information on Santa Cruz County's Children's System of Care, visit <http://www.santacruzhealth.org/cmhs/2children.htm>.

² For more information on the Humboldt County Integrated Health and Human Services Programs, visit <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/HHS/Administration/>.



www.healthyreturnsinitiative.org