

CHAPTER 3

The Evolving BASSC Vision Statements

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In addition to tracing its roots to 1987 when the Bay Area Welfare Directors formed the Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC), the network evolved into a dues-paying partnership between county social service directors, university deans and directors, and foundation representatives. Beginning in 1992, BASSC became a think tank and support group that launched shared projects in the areas of research, training, and policy implementation. One of the first activities involved the development of a vision statement that reflected a shared view of how human services might be reconfigured eight years later in the year 2000. This exercise featured a multi-meeting process that encouraged the participants to engage in visionary thinking using provocative, energizing, and futuristic language. Given the responsibilities of BASSC participants to provide leadership in their respective organizations, the brief vision statement was developed for use in

executive team discussions, community presentations, faculty meetings, and the BASSC Executive Development Program designed to prepare future leaders. The vision statement represented a regional approach to thinking about the future and, for many counties, it complemented their own county strategic plans. The vision statement also provided BASSC members with the opportunity to frame meeting discussions through the use of annual regional goal setting that could be linked to implementing the current vision statement over time.

BASSC Vision: Human Services in 2000

One of the major goals of vision statement development is to step back from the daily pressures of service delivery and policy implementation to take into account the ever-changing context of delivering human services. The reflective process allows for a continuous reaffirmation of a focus on poverty and housing amidst changing client demographics. In addition to the ongoing focus on service users, a similar emphasis includes addressing staffing demands related to diversity, turnover, and organizational restructuring. Beyond the internal focus on organizational life, there is a parallel interest in the ongoing building and maintaining of inter-organizational relationships (across

public sector departments, nonprofit partners, and university partners) based on the shared recognition that “it still takes a village” to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. In addition, all of these daily concerns are compounded by the constant demand to manage expanding and contracting funding sources.

As illustrated in *Figure 1*, the first vision statement featured the articulation of core values that inform both current and future service provision. There was considerable interest in the ideas of building system of neighborhood-based community services to support families in need as well as educate them to access available services and thereby empower them gain self-sufficiency. There was also an early recognition of the importance of evaluating service outcomes while also investing in prevention-oriented services.

This recognition also reflected a strong interest in developing family-focused neighborhood community service centers that honored diversity, engaged in community problem-solving, featured the use of flexible government funding, identified pathways to employment and career development (especially connecting the regional economic marketplace with the human service marketplace of services), and promoted the use of inter-disciplinary service provision for all ages. Prospects for service evaluation included such factors as: impact of changing neighborhoods, breadth and depth of culturally competent services, balancing temporary with long-term family supports, the expanding nature of inter-disciplinary practice, the role of advocacy by public sector organizations, and the linkages between the needs of both low-income and middle-class families.

BASSC Vision for the 21st Century:

SUPPORTING LOW INCOME WORKERS

Based on the first BASSC vision statement (1993), the second vision statement (1999) focused on the new millennium of the 21st century related to supporting low-income

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FIGURE 1
Human Services 2000: An Evolving Vision Statement (adopted in 1993)

- I. Building a community service system that serves all families in need where neighborhood-based constituencies are both service users and owners of the services by:**
- Serving all people who do not have an intact or strong personal support system (nuclear or extended family to help meet basic needs for survival and growth)
 - Educate consumers to utilize available service supports and empowers them by fostering self-sufficiency
 - Prevention-oriented system where outcomes are measured on the basis of community health and social supports, not by the impact of services on individuals
- II. Specially designed family-focused neighborhood community center**
- People are valued for their individuality and diversity
 - Use of a community approach to problem-solving, not just individually focused
 - Use of “behind the scenes” universal non-categorical government programs that maximize the accumulation of social and financial resources to preserve families
 - All services reflect a commitment to racial and cultural diversity
 - Substantial commitment to the promotion of employment and economic self-sufficiency, along with the provision of role models for working people and youth
 - Comprehensive array of inter-disciplinary services for children, families, adults, and senior citizens.
- III. Core values**
- Collaborative community approach to meeting the needs of individuals and families
 - Professionals and service consumers work together as partners in managing the family-focused neighborhood center
 - Connecting the regional economic marketplace (employment) with the human service marketplace (housing, food, medical care, etc.)
 - Use of tangible outcomes for neighborhood betterment using the following assessment criteria:
 - Community response to changing neighborhood demographics
 - Degree of involvement of extended families in service programs that utilize culturally competent practice
 - Degree to which temporary family supports are complemented by long-term supports,
 - Extent to which professionals work together in inter-disciplinary practice
 - Degree to which neighborhood service systems include advocacy for the total community
 - Extent to which the needs of middle-income families are integrated with those of low-income families.

workers. It featured a set of eight principles designed to guide the development of future practice and policies in the midst of implementing welfare reform that focused more on caseload reduction than addressing broader social problems like poverty. These principles reflected more of a societal focus and featured such macro issues as: 1) targeting economic investments in low-income communities, 2) increasing attention to public-private partnerships that focused on creating healthy families and communities, 3) identifying employment opportunities that contribute to the development of a resilient workforce where skill development keeps pace with the rapidly changing economy, and 4) targeting public policies that increase the income and assets of low

income families by addressing the inequities of the private market.

As illustrated in *Figure 2*, the second vision statement moved beyond the macro focus and called for employment assistance in moving families out of poverty (child care, transportation, housing, and health care). This focus included the implementation of values that featured social inclusiveness, community development, and social investment. This vision called for a new definition of social service practice that reflected a blend of the current responsibilities of assessment, counseling, referral, advocacy, and program development with a new social activism based on an understanding of the work-related values and skills of entry-level employees. In a similar manner, practitioners at the

FIGURE 2
Supporting Low Income Workers in the 21st Century:
An Evolving BASSC Vision Statement (adopted in 1999)

Social Development Approach: Social development focuses on enhancing the capacity of the needy to participate in the economy by targeting investments in specific communities and individuals.

Building Community and Fostering a Civil Society: A civil society recognizes the importance of private, voluntary associations, as well as the ability of government to organize broad initiatives, mobilize resources, and build infrastructure. Social service agencies in a civil society therefore need to work as partners for change in multiple collaborations in order to create healthy families and communities.

Developing a Career Resilient Workforce: Social service agencies have an important role to play in supporting workers and employers in order to ensure that skill development keeps pace with the rapidly changing economy.

Supporting the Family: Social service agencies must seek to help working families to move out of poverty through family-centered investment policies that provide support for child care, transportation, housing, and health care.

Family-Focused, Neighborhood-Based Human Service Systems: Human service systems should be based on values of social inclusiveness, community development, and social investment.

Changing Professional Roles: In order to support workforce development and empower families, agency staff need to blend the current responsibilities of assessment, counseling, referral, advocacy, and program development with a new social activism based on an understanding of the work-related values and skills of entry-level employees.

Social Service Agencies as Catalysts for Private Action: Social service agencies need to expand their roles as catalysts for change in order to ensure that communities do not abandon the neediest families.

Promoting New Public Policy Directions: The unfinished business of welfare reform will require new, more targeted public policies to increase the income and assets of low income families and address the inequities of the private market for those who are working to support their families (e.g. earned income tax credit, child or family allowances, and asset development or micro-investment programs).

administrative and leadership levels of social service organizations needed to expand their roles as catalysts for change in order to ensure that communities did not abandon the neediest families.

BASSC Vision for 2015:

TRANSFORMING HUMAN SERVICES SYSTEMS INTO LEARNING ORGANIZATION NETWORKS

In order to take into account the ongoing complexities of service delivery, the third vision statement (2007) envisioned possible changes in 2015 related to transforming human services systems into networks of learning organizations. It was envisioned that this could be accomplished by revisiting the agency commitments, their enduring values, and current trends impacting the agencies. The commitments included the previously stated service values of self-sufficiency and protections for children and adults, the promotion of healthy environments, and serving as advocates for change in the public and nonprofit sectors. Learning organization networks were defined as capable of promoting knowledge management by gathering information to enhance problem-solving, experimenting, learning

from the past, learning from promising practices, and transferring knowledge through investments in training programs. The enduring values included the commitment to ongoing organizational assessment and renewal, strengthening communities through partnerships, engaging in evidence-informed decision-making and policy development, and empowering those being served who are capable of significant change. And finally, the impact of current trends included the substantial change in the relationship between agencies and community interests (advocacy organizations, businesses, universities, and other human service organizations) and the increased accountability for government funds along with the increased use of technology.

As illustrated in *Figure 3*, the previously noted commitments, values, and trends continued to provide a foundation for identifying a set of three principles for transforming human service agencies into learning organizations. These principles included: 1) making *community-oriented client-centered services* a top priority in order to integrate services and increase client involvement, 2) creating a *supportive organizational culture* to enable staff to focus on client-centered services related to increased involvement in agency

decision-making, collaboration, and teamwork in support of evidence-informed practice, and 3) restructuring agency operations to promote *knowledge sharing and management* in collaboration with universities.

Reflecting upon Works-in-Progress

Each of the four vision statements crafted over a twenty-five year period sought to capture the highlights of discussions carried out by BASSC members seeking to project their thinking into the future. The emerging themes reflect the impact of major pieces of national legislation (Welfare Reform in 1996 and Health Care Reform in 2010) as well as the major changes in the national economy (boom of the 1990s and bust of the Great Recession in 2010). The themes also reflect the impact of emerging technology on communications, public perceptions, and changing federal government priorities. Other emerging themes are more internal to human service organizations in the form of expanding and contracting funding resources, changing priorities of locally elected officials (county boards of supervisors), and the demand for organizational efficiencies emerging from organizational restructuring and job redesign.

In the midst of all this change, each vision statement seeks to define a future state that can address current challenges. While some statements are more visionary than others, they all reflect the considered views and experiences of senior organizational leaders struggling to make sense of current realities while also searching for new directions. This is why all the vision statements represent “works-in-progress”. While the development of Vision Statements in the future will call for new leadership, the rationale for developing these statements include the following:

The value premise for periodically developing a BASSC Vision statement includes:

- thinking about the future using provocative, energizing, and futuristic language,

- developing brief and accessible vision statements for public presentations (Executive Team discussions, Community Presentations, Faculty meetings, BASSC EDP, etc.

- distinguishing the difference between a county strategic plan and a regional BASSC Vision Statement while building upon past vision statements

BASSC Vision 2025:

STRENGTHENED SERVICE DELIVERY PRACTICES AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The most recently developed BASSC vision statement (2018) returns to a focus on service delivery issues while

significantly expanding a vision of the agency-university partnership as well as the values and principles that guide practice. For example, the service philosophy influenced, in part, by the 2010 Affordable Care Act relates to access to health care and the integration of behavioral health perspectives into social services helps to redefine the process of care; namely, from “whole person care” (health and behavioral health) to “whole family care” (health and social services) to “whole system care” (all aspects of the human services including housing, education, etc.). Each of these elements should become fully defined and operational by 2015. Similarly, the language of service delivery could be redefined within the context of continuing care; namely, moving from the previous service goals of self-sufficiency in welfare to work services and child safety in child welfare services to a major focus on prevention related to sliding into poverty or experiencing child abuse and neglect. Looking across the spectrum of public social services, a new set of core practice principles will be reflected in all service sectors, drawing upon the earlier work on core practice principles in child welfare.

Building upon the service principles are a set of organizational processes that will guide the management of social service agencies. These principles include: 1) balancing the pressure to standardize accountability measures with a growing interest in data-informed service outcomes based on the increased use of technology, 2) increased use of technology, 3) increased attention to enhancing flexibility in the relationships between state-level administrative and legislative leadership and local county policy implementation, 4) creating healthy and thriving workplace cultures that feature the incentives needed to promote staff retention, and 5) new mechanisms for amplifying the voices of service users inside the organization and in the community.

As illustrated in *Figure 4*, the second key element of the 2025 vision statement relates to the partnerships inherent in an intermediary organization like BASSC as it seeks to strengthen the relationships between universities, agencies, and foundations. This three-way partnership features a shared commitment to strengthening the investment in workforce development where staff core competencies are linked to university education competencies that reflect new models for funding and supporting both pre-service and in-service training and education. The shared investment also includes agency-university collaboration in promoting practice-informed curriculum redesign and research in order to prepare future leaders and life-long learners. Similar efforts will be apparent on campus and in the agency with regard

FIGURE 3
Transforming Human Services Systems into Learning Organization Networks:
An Evolving BASSC Vision Statement for 2015 (adopted in 2007)

AGENCY CONTEXT

Agency Commitments

- Improve the health and safety of children, the self-sufficiency of families, and protection of vulnerable adults and the aged in our communities
- Improve our ability to assist people in their efforts to make life better for themselves and their children
- Assist communities to increase their capacity to support families, children and adults in order to enable communities to provide a healthy environment in which their residents can prosper;
- Serve as a catalyst for change in the governmental and non-profit sectors
- Strive to become learning organizations to promote knowledge management by gathering information and problem-solving, experimenting, learning from the past, learning from promising practices, and transferring knowledge.

Agency Enduring Values

- People are capable of significant change when treated with respect and involved in defining their own hopes, dreams and goals;
- Communities can be strengthened through partnership efforts with public and private entities and the shared commitment to measure outcomes over time;
- Public and private agencies are committed to organizational self-assessment and renewal in order to better meet client and community goals
- Social policies and practices are informed by disseminating and utilizing administrative data and evidence from the research community.

Current Trends that Impact the Agency

- **Substantial change in community-agency relations** (based on changing client demographics, increased need for inter-agency collaboration, increased demand for outreach and prevention services, increased involvement of nonprofit partners in service delivery, and the increased impact of advocacy organizations)

- **Increasing accountability for public funds** (due to increased competitive and categorical funding, demand for revenue blending and leveraging, demand for documenting performance outcomes, and to engage in community planning to address changing client needs);
- **Increasing use of technology to manage and improve organizational operations** (based on the increased demand for identifying and using promising practices, the need to retain the workforce and engage in succession planning, the challenges associated with managing the transition of an organizational culture from reactive to more proactive, and the need to assist with capacity building among nonprofit partners)
- **Increasing need to strengthen agency-university partnership related to workforce development and applied research** (based on the need to link program evaluation expertise with the increased demand for service outcome measurement, to monitor and improve the transfer of learning outcomes of pre-service student learning and in-service staff development programs, the need to strengthen the role of agency-based field instruction, and to promote knowledge management related to disseminating and utilizing evidence to inform practice).
- **Increasing interaction with the business community** (based on the need to promote workforce development for welfare-to-work participants as well as children aging out of foster care).
- **Increasing interaction between human services, health and mental services, and criminal justice services** (based on the need to develop a seamless, integrated network of services that reflect the values and commitments of human service agencies).

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to learning and engaging in inter-professional practice. The BASSC research program will serve as one of the primary resources for promoting the development of agency-based knowledge-sharing systems that support evidence-informed practice as well as practice-informed research.

Reflecting upon Works-in-Progress

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FIGURE 3 (continued)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Principle #1: Make *community-oriented client-centered services* a top priority in order to:

- Integrate services across programs using comprehensive screening and evaluation tools;
- Involve clients across generations in developing multi-disciplinary service plans that strengthen families
- Create mechanisms for consumer input, complaints, and feedback.

Principle #2: Create a *supportive organizational culture* to enable staff to focus on client-centered services related to:

- Promoting more participation in agency decision-making
- Promoting team functioning across service programs
- Increasing collaboration with community nonprofit partners
- Engaging in evidence-informed practice.

Principle #3: Restructure agency operations to promote *knowledge sharing and management* in collaboration with universities by:

- *Maximizing IT resources:*
 - track evidence and integrate it into programs and operations (knowledge management);
 - utilize technology and information to increase effectiveness and improve outcomes (continual quality improvement); and

- incorporate research generated by practice and informed by client and community outcome improvements into in-service and pre-service curricula (evidence-informed practitioners).

- *Improving planning processes:*

- develop mechanisms for communicating and educating communities, partners and public officials
- engage in service planning with other county departments including community-based agencies
- enhance financial claiming mechanisms to maximize funding
- establish research priorities to improve practice and service outcomes, including the use of agency-university proposals to foundations.

- *Improving training processes:*

- develop systems for leadership and career development for agency managers and staff
- incorporate evidence-informed practice principles into pre-service and in-service curricula
- evaluate outcomes by capturing the changing nature of practice in infuse pre-service and in-service training programs (especially community-oriented client-centered practice).

also reflect the impact of emerging technology on communications, public perceptions, and changing federal government priorities. Other emerging themes are more internal to human service organizations in the form of expanding and contracting funding resources, changing priorities of locally elected officials (county boards of supervisors), and the demand for organizational efficiencies emerging from organizational restructuring and job redesign.

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- developing *brief and accessible* vision statements for public presentations (Executive Team discussions, Community Presentations, Faculty meetings, BASSC EDP, etc.
- distinguishing the difference between a county strategic plan and a *regional BASSC Vision Statement* while building upon past vision statements
- defining annual regional goals that are linked to implementing the BASSC 2025 Vision over time

A second value premise is to take into account the ever-changing context of delivering human services by:

- reaffirming our *focus on poverty* and housing amidst changing client demographics
- addressing *staffing demands* related to diversity, turnover, and organizational restructuring
- promoting *inter-organizational relationship building/maintenance* (across public sector departments, nonprofit partners, and university partners) – “It still takes a village”
- managing both expanding and contracting *funding sources*.

FIGURE 4
BASSC Vision 2025: Strengthened Service Delivery Practices

SERVICE PRINCIPLES

- Shifting *service philosophy* from “whole person care” to “whole family care” to “whole system care”
- Redefining the *language of service delivery* for continuing care (moving from self-sufficiency or safety to creating access and resources with a focus on prevention and school-linked services)
- Continuing the search for *new ways* to address poverty, housing insecurity, and homelessness
- Integrating *core practice principles* into all forms of current practice

ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES

- Balancing *standardization* (accountability measures) with flexibility (innovative practice)
- Increasing the *use of technology* in service delivery to improve data-informed outcomes
- Increasing the attention given to *engaging the state* (both executive and legislative)
- Addressing the link between *staff retention and healthy/thriving workplaces*
- Amplifying the voices of *service users* and the larger community

STRENGTHENED AGENCY-UNIVERSITY-FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIPS

- Addressing shared *workforce development issues* (linkage between pre-service education and in-service training), linking agency staff competencies to university educational competencies and developing *new models of funding* educational programs
- Promoting practice-informed *curriculum redesign and research* in order to prepare future leaders and life-long learners engaged in *inter-professional practice*
- Using BASSC research to build agency-based *knowledge-sharing systems to support evidence-informed practice and practice-informed research*
- Collaborating and learning from other regional consortia in California SACHS, CASSIE, etc.)