

FAMILY PRESERVATION/FAMILY SUPPORT PHILOSOPHY AND FUNDING

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INTRODUCTION

This case study attempts to briefly describe Santa Clara County's experience in the implementation of the Intensive Intervention Unit and its process, which later became part of the Family Preservation Program.

Santa Clara County Social Services administration and staff became alarmed at the continually increasing numbers of children entering foster care in 1990. Also, they observed a trend of these children to be younger and children of color. This issue was presented to the County Board of Supervisors, and a resolve made to contain this startling growth by the implementation of a unique and innovative endeavor of a locally funding Family Preservation Intervention Unit.

The Intensive Intervention Unit was designed and implemented as a model to assist families in helping themselves. The referral criteria was designed to encompass several critical elements in order to be successful:

- Families must be at imminent risk of child removal; Families must be kept together in their own homes;
- In order to truly achieve intervention and meet reasonable efforts requirements, the services must divert families from involvement with the Juvenile Court
- Service delivery must be centered around teams of Clinical Social Workers and Case Aides with small caseloads;
- Services must pay for themselves by reducing foster care placement.

The success of the Intensive Intervention Unit was described in a detailed report, issued by Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, June 1991, entitled "Preserving At-Risk Families: The Intensive Intervention Program." That report concluded that Intensive Intervention Services have proven to be a highly effective, fiscally responsible strategy for keeping families together and preventing the removal of the child. Approximately 95% of the approximate 200 families that entered the program remained intact upon completion of the service plan.

BACKGROUND

In 1991, an expansion of the program occurred when the Board of Supervisors furthered its goal of preserving families and keeping children out of the foster care and court system. The Board of Supervisors authorized the agency, Department of Family and Children's Services to implement Family Preservation Services.

Upon presenting the report to California State Department of Social Services and after its review, the county's plan was accepted for the provision of the States Family Preservation Services. The county was granted \$1.2 million to implement the program. Family Preservation Services were expected to save at least that amount in foster care payments for the program year of 1991. Family Preservation Services approach the problem of child abuse and neglect as a family issue that may be resolved within the family setting, rather than a reason to "rescue" children from their families and place them in foster care.

There are six basic components of Family Preservation Services: safety of the child; immediate response; specific limited time; services are homebased; small, manageable caseloads and connecting family members to the community.

Family Preservation Services are a coordinated set of services and resources provided to families within the child welfare system. Family Preservation Services and resources are available to:

- Families who are at imminent risk of having their children removed from their care due to child abuse or neglect;
- Families whose children are in foster care, and who could have their children returned to them if criteria were met.

Intensive services are provided by skilled and dedicated social workers and their supervisor, who are committed to providing Family Preservation Services. In working with these families the worker had to complete a written Family Assessment and Case Plan. The Family Assessment discusses the strengths, problems, concerns, and needs of the family members and whether it appears that safety of the child will not be at risk if the child remains in the home. The Case Plan identifies the problems which are endangering the child, and the proposed solutions to those problems. These are mutually agreed upon by the parents and their social worker. The case plan contains specific activities to be undertaken by the social worker and the parents, the timeframes in which those activities will occur, and the anticipated results.

The Department of Family and Children's Services provides an array of services which make up Family Preservation Services: Intensive Family Maintenance, Intensive Family Reunification, Community-Based Family Resource Centers, Parent Education Classes, Substance Abuse Counseling and Treatment, Respite Care, Mental Health Counseling, Periodic Child Care Services and the Family Assistance Fund.

PROGRAM GOALS

The overall goal of the Intensive Intervention Unit was to keep children safely in their homes and with their parents, and enhancing the well-being of the family. The key term is safety. The unit

must ensure that the child remaining home will not be abused, will be nurtured and will be protected by his or her parents.

The overall goal can be stated in the following four statements:

- To strengthen the family's ability to resolve their own problems, and locate and accept professional assistance when they need help with problems they *cannot resolve on their own*;
- To reduce out-of-home placements of children;
- To reduce Juvenile Court involvement in the lives of families;
- To focus on reduction in the rate of out-of-home placements of minority children.

OBJECTIVES OF THE INTENSIVE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

- Eliminate the behaviors that caused the intervention;
- Provide the necessary services that prevents recurring destructive behaviors;
- Stop the cycle of abuse and/or neglect;
- Improve family functioning;
- Enhance each family member's communication skills;
- Increase coping skills;
- Develop parenting skills;
- Ensure the safety of the children.

In 1993, new federal legislation, the Family Preservation and Family Support Program (FPFS) was enacted to promote family strength and stability, enhance parental functioning, protect children and improve coordination of services. It offers an opportunity to improve outcomes for children and families through new community-based services and broader changes to delivery systems. To realize the potential of this legislation, a broadly inclusive planning process is being utilized to guide the strategic decisions about how the federal funds will be used and how services are to be designed and delivered to children and families. The program's focus on family-centered services and community linkages will require changes in vision, philosophy, design, and delivery of child and family services.

Federal law requires that the five-year State plan be developed in consultation with a wide array of State, local and community agencies, parents, consumers and other interested individuals and organizations.

Local requirements to meet the federal program mandates and receive FPFS (Family Preservation/Family Support) funds each county is required to:

- Develop a one-year FPFS plan describing how FFY (Federal Fiscal Year) 1994 funds will be spent;
- Establish a local planning body to develop the county five-year plan;
- Develop a five-year FPFS plan describing how FFY 1995 through FFY 1998 funds will be spent.

The planning process is a critical component of the program. The board's leadership and involvement are necessary to ensure that the broad range of community interest are represented in the planning process which may result in ideas on improving or modifying services. Involvement of the board assures that the scope of planning will include all required participants and others based on special community needs.

The federal program instruction outlines the following principles for FPFS services:

- The welfare and safety of children and family members must be-maintained while strengthening and preserving the family whenever possible. Supporting families is seen as the best way of promoting children's healthy development.
- Services are focused on the family as a whole; family strengths are identified, enhanced and respected as opposed to focusing on family deficits or dysfunctions. Service providers work with families as partners in identifying and meeting individual and family needs.
- Services are easily accessible (often delivered in the home or in community-based settings, convenient to parents' schedules) and are delivered in a manner that respects cultural and community differences.
- Services are flexible and responsive to meet family needs. Linkages to a wide variety of services outside the child welfare system are generally crucial to meeting families and children's needs.
- Services are community-based and involve community organizations and residents (including parents) in their design and delivery.
- Services are intensive enough to meet the family needs to keep children safe. The level of intensity need to achieve the goals may vary greatly between preventive (family support) and crisis services (family preservation). Family Preservation and Family Support can be viewed as comprehensive, interrelated activities or services which preserve and support families.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

PREVENTION

Services which promote community awareness and help families develop knowledge, skills and ability to nurture and protect children. These services are also designed to alleviate stress and promote parental competencies and behaviors that result in strong families.

SUPPORT

Services to families which are necessary to keep children safe while keeping the family together or reunifying the family. Services are provided to families with children at home or in out-of-home placement. These intensive services are designed to strengthen family functioning.

TRANSITIONAL

Services which support and monitor families' independent efforts to care for, protect and nurture their children. These services are designed to transition the family out of family preservation.

They can also be used to preserve and support alternative families for children who cannot safely return to their biological families.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

MAINTENANCE / AFTER-CARE

Services which help families maintain acquired knowledge, skills and abilities. After-care services are designed to ensure that children are able to remain with their families after receiving family preservation services.

FUNDING

The approximate cost of this program administered by Santa Clara, during the project period with local funds was \$1.2 million dollars. The reduction in foster care placement costs offset the cost of providing intensive intervention services, but a cost saving was actually realized. For every \$1 spent on the program, \$1.72 was saved in AFDC-FC Federal, State and local funds. The program realized a laudable family preservation rate of 95% from among a difficult group of approximately 200 families, most of which had prior history of contacts with the child welfare system.

Santa Clara County will receive approximately \$3 million dollars over the next five year period to implement the Federal Family Preservation and Family Support Program. –

The Federal Program instruction outlines that the beginning of these funds will take place in the FFY (Federal Fiscal Year) 1994. California is eligible to receive a total of \$6,925,694 in FPFS funds for the above-mentioned year. California's estimated federal FPFS allocations for FFY 1995 through FFY 1998 are as follows:

FFY 1995	-	\$16,631,924
FFY 1996	-	\$25,023,389
FFY 1997	-	\$26,822,863
FFY 1998	-	\$28,622,330

During this learning process of participating in my county and the host county and hearing reports of the fiscal focus groups, it appeared to be the norm for public and private agencies to speak to the advantage of collaboration and the need to combine efforts and resources to best achieve the plan outcomes and maximize revenue. Counties will integrate Federal, State and local funding resources to the extent possible, to leverage available federal funds.

In San Francisco County, Title IV-E Emergency Assistance (EA) funds will be used to maximize community resources for Family Preservation Services. Family Preservation Services are currently funded through county general fund dollars through the San Francisco Department of Social Services budget or through the Mayor's Office of Children Youth and Their Families (MOCYF). Over \$2 million dollars is expended for services which may potentially leverage Title IV-A-EA \$.50 on the dollar.

Manage Care Implementation should be integrated in the plan. Priorities for manage care planning should include a focus on AFDC families in addition to foster children. This will assist in developing a delivery system which does not provide incentive for removal based on richer health and mental health services for foster children. Rather, the system of care will focus on healthy families and preventative care and early treatment. Mental Health would receive Title IV-E funded training to improve the ability of the Mental Health System's response to families with children at risk of abuse and neglect.

Above are a few examples of how the counties could integrate the Federal Funding Sources. Again, it is important for public and private agencies to collaborate and combine efforts and resources to best achieve a plan outcome and to maximize revenue.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency hosted a planning symposium for FPFS at which over 150 people from diverse community organizations provided ideas and input to the development of their local child and family services plan. The information gathered was reviewed by a broadly inclusive Steering Committee. It was made up of representatives of local government agencies and commissions, nonprofit service providers, advocacy organizations, parents, foster parents, and youth. The responsibility of the Steering Community is to develop the plan by utilizing the information gathered from the community organizations, to make the strategic selection of those services which will have the greatest impact on improving the well-being of children and families in the County of Santa Clara.

The Steering Committee developed the following vision statement: "The well-being of children and families and support for their achieving maximum potential are top priorities for everyone in Santa Clara County."

"To realize the vision, we have an inclusive network of support and advocacy to enhance the strengths and healthy development of children, adults, families, and communities so that each person has the opportunity to achieve maximum potential. We have relationships and services in which respect for diversity and individual worth is demonstrated, nurturing is a priority, and empowerment is encouraged. Our communities strive to provide safe and hopeful living environments that reflect a spirit of unity, cooperation, and shared responsibility."

As the agency moves toward implementation of FPFS several questions have to be addressed by the various focus groups:

- Given the limited funds available for FPFS (\$600,000 next year, \$800,000 each of the following three years), which need area could be most impacted by this program?
- Which need area could have the greatest impact on people's lives and the development of healthy families be achieved?
- As a group, which two need areas do you agree should be addressed by the program?
- Should our Family Preservation and Family Support Program focus on one or two of the priority need areas presented by the Community-Based Services Subcommittee?

Santa Clara County has implemented three Family Resource Centers, Nuestra Casa with a focus on Chicano/Latino families, Ujirani with a focus on African-American families and Asian/Pacific with a focus on Asian and Pacific Islander families. These centers provide an array of services to their families. I had the opportunity to participate in various meetings and other activities at these centers.

CONCLUSION

The Family Preservation Project was conceived in Santa Clara County when the agency was selected to conduct a Family Preservation pilot project in 1991, whereby 10% of the State share of AFDC foster care placement funds (Title IV-E) were advanced to the county to carry out various intervention and support services to families. The county is committed to Family Preservation as an effective strategy for serving families who would otherwise have their children placed in out-of-home placement for up to 18 months, while they receive the required services that would allow their children to return home safely. Santa Clara County seeks to expand their current efforts by the implementation of the Federal Family Preservation Family Support Program and tracking child welfare services. The Family Preservation track would be for families with significant problems in the care and treatment of their children, but with a commitment from the parent to work with the social worker and other professionals in an effort to change the problematic behavior. For those families who recognize their problems honestly and follow through on the commitment to improve their problem-solving skills, supportive services are available for home supervision, intensive counseling, after-care services, parent education, GAIN and pregnant and parenting teen programs.

The Department of Family and Children's Services has demonstrated its ability to design and implement the Family Preservation and Family Support Program by providing Family Resource Centers in the various communities (which is required in the federal legislation). The Resource Centers were established realizing when families are in crisis they need immediate and effective services in their language, geography accessibility and affordable cost. The centers provide an array of services: counseling, parent education, life skills training, drug and domestic violence counseling, self-esteem workshop and support groups. Staff provides child supervision while parents are attending support groups. These centers are staffed and run by line workers, with one worker designated to be the lead worker. Most importantly, these workers carry no cases. The Program Manager supervises the staff at the centers.

Santa Clara county will receive about \$3 million dollars over the five year period for the Family Preservation and Family Support Program. At least 50% of the funds must be used for Family Preservation Services. The county must have its plan to the State by April 15, so that the State can submit its plan to the Federal Government by the June deadline.

The overall conclusion is that this demonstration project has, in fact proven highly successful in all phases of its implementation.

My major learning goal was to enhance my knowledge regarding Family Preservation/Family Support and Funding and to bring back to San Francisco, my home county possible new

information from Santa Clara, the host county. I want to thank Zonia again for that enhancement. As I recall in an interview with Ms. Zonia Waldon she noted that "it is important to make sure that the programs and service are culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate and that everyone is included whatever their background or lifestyle may be."

This experience has been a very good learning experience, which will enable me to be of greater assistance in the development of the San Francisco Department of Social Services, Family and Children's Services Family Preservation Family Support Program.

The most impressive and rewarding learning experience was to witness Ms. Zonia Waldon's passionate commitment to the service delivery of family and children.

Preserving At-Risk Families.

The Intensive Intervention Program

1st and 2nd *Annual Reports*, 1990 and 1992