

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S SERVICE INTEGRATION: INSTITUTIONALIZING THE VALUE

Jon Pettigrew*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Bureaucracy arising from the categorical funding streams and separate regulatory requirements common in government programs can be an impediment to effective and efficient service delivery and to achieving desired outcomes. Because service "silos" develop, there can be a lack of communication between those providing services to a common clientele. There can be duplication of effort, or worse, contradictory efforts that prevent the service recipient from achieving desired goals.

Service integration strives to address the problems of this fragmentation by bridging the gap between service delivery structures.

This case study examines the service integration effort in Santa Cruz County and attempts to identify key elements that have led to its success thus far.

SUCCESS TO DATE

Once stakeholders convened to participate in the service integration effort, a vision statement and goals were developed. A work plan was designed, outlining the proposed steps for integrating the Human Resources Agency (HRA) and Family Resource Centers. Many of the initial steps identified have been completed. Some of these include:

- Identifying and convening internal HRA stakeholders

- Reviewing history and current status to ensure knowledge and understanding of developments in the community and HRA that led up to the process
- Agreeing to a definition of service integration
- Identifying a potential target population for whom to begin to integrate services
- Determining goals for HRA service integration

FINDINGS

An examination of the crossover and service integration efforts in Santa Cruz County uncovers eight key elements leading to their success.

- 1. Leadership** - Devoting personnel to take the lead in advancing the crossover and service integration efforts.
- 2. Patience/Stability/Time** - Giving integration efforts time to grow.
- 3. Stakeholder Involvement** - Identifying key stakeholders, including formal and informal leaders.
- 4. Strategic Planning** - Utilizing careful planning and a feedback loop.
- 5. Performance Measures** - Incorporating a quality assurance component to determine whether the efforts are working.
- 6. Clear Mission** - Determining how each agency's mission overlaps and defining a clear vision and definition for service integration.

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7. **Training-** Utilizing supervisors to conduct training.
8. **Personal Relationships** – Co-locating HRA staff at Family Resource Centers to further relationships.

CHALLENGES

In addition to the key elements supporting Santa Cruz County’s efforts at service integration, this case study revealed two major barriers:

1. **Resistance to Change:** As with all change efforts, staff can be resistant to new ways of doing business.
2. **Competing Initiatives:** A concern is that staff may suffer from “initiative burn-out,” having so many different change efforts occurring at once.

IMPLICATIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALAMEDA COUNTY

Because so many of our agency’s managers will become eligible for retirement over the next few years, we cannot guarantee that those who are champions of the effort today will be here to fill that role in the future. Therefore, it becomes important

for us as an agency to “institutionalize the value” as they have attempted to do in Santa Cruz in order to ensure that all levels have buy-in.

I recommend the following be considered in Alameda County:

- There must be one person designated as responsible for coordinating the effort.
- When managers, supervisors, and administrators speak with their staff, they should make it clear that cooperation, teamwork, and coordination of services are valued by the agency.
- In planning for change around the integration of services, the concept of “maximum appropriate involvement” should be kept in mind.
- Once a specific plan is developed, regular meetings should be held of those responsible for various aspects of the plan so that they can review progress.
- Planning should include specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited goals.
- Education about coordinating services should be made a part of formal pre-service induction and orientation programs for staff as well as ongoing in-service training offerings.
- The agency should continue activities to encourage communication and collaboration.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S SERVICE INTEGRATION: INSTITUTIONALIZING THE VALUE

JON PETTIGREW

BACKGROUND

Bureaucracy arising from the categorical funding streams and separate regulatory requirements common in government programs can be an impediment to effective and efficient service delivery and to achieving desired outcomes. Because service “silos” develop, there can be a lack of communication between those providing services to a common clientele. There can be duplication of effort, or worse, contradictory efforts that prevent the service recipient from achieving desired goals.

Service integration strives to address the problems of this fragmentation by bridging the gap between service delivery structures.

Service integration, as a concept, is not new. In her 1997 book, *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America*, author, Lisbeth B. Schorr acknowledged that “Since 1971 there have been about two dozen major federal initiatives aimed at service integration.”¹ Additionally, there have been myriad service integration initiatives on the state and local levels.

Service integration is well established in theory. Historically, however, there have not been many broadly implemented system changes that have brought service integration pilot programs “to

scale.” Nor have these pilot programs and studies of best practices been widely replicated. Schorr examined what does make for successful interventions, and identified “Seven Attributes of Highly Effective Programs.”

In his own study of integrating human services, Mark Ragan, too, identified several critical factors affecting successful outcomes for service integration efforts.²

This case study examines the service integration effort in Santa Cruz County and attempts to identify key elements that have led to success thus far. The Santa Cruz model involves a number of institutions. This case study focuses on the public Human Resources Agency (HRA) and outlines implications for Alameda County's own efforts at bridging the gap between service delivery systems.

HISTORY OF SERVICE INTEGRATION IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Several efforts in Santa Cruz County provided fertile ground for service integration to grow. Within the HRA, there had been a Crossover Team that had emerged around 1998 to coordinate services for families who are involved with Child Welfare Services, CareerWorks, and Benefit Services. Crossover initially established protocols and policies for sharing information across the divisions.

In 1997, through a grant from the California Endowment, the Family Resource Network was established to develop common standards, assessment and evaluation tools, and to address the long-

1 Schorr, L. (1997). *Common purpose: Strengthening families and neighborhoods to rebuild America*. New York.

2 Ragan, M. (2003). “Study identifies multiple strategies and critical factors for integrating human services.” *The Forum: Research forum on children, families, and the new federalism*, Vol. 6, No. 2.

term sustainability of family resource centers. This grew into a network of 16 family-serving agencies that meet monthly to build a coordinated system of service provision to meet the needs of at-risk children and families.

In 1998, HRA received a grant from the state Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) to develop the Answers Benefiting Children (ABC) project, a home visiting program located in Watsonville to serve children at risk of child welfare services involvement. As a requirement of the grant, a family resource center was developed to house the ABC project. Today, this, and four other Family Resource Centers (FRCs) throughout the county, function as service hubs where families can access information and services.

In October 2000, the Children and Families Commission (CFC) convened an Integrated Services Subcommittee which conducted an assessment of the community. After a year, this group produced a report calling for a reduction in the fragmentation of existing services as well as an effort to make services more accessible and comprehensive. The CFC report served as a guide for integrating services as well as identifying many challenges and opportunities related to service integration.

The key partners in the service integration effort include the HRA's Divisions of Benefit Services, Family & Children's Services and CareerWorks; the Health Services Agency; and the five FRCs: Familia Center, Davenport Resource Center, Mountain Community Resources, La Manzana Community Resources, and Live Oak Family Resource Center.

SUCCESS TO DATE

Within the HRA, one of the Crossover Steering Committee's first accomplishments was the successful implementation of new state regulations involving family reunification services and CalWORKS participants.

Building on existing crossover procedures, the committee has strengthened internal agency communications.

Once stakeholders convened to participate in the service integration effort, a vision statement and goals were developed. A work plan was developed outlining the proposed steps for integrating the HRA and FRC services. Many of the initial steps have been completed. Some of these include:

- Identifying and convening internal HRA stakeholders
- Reviewing history to ensure knowledge and understanding of developments in the community and HRA that led up to the process
- Establishing the current status, including identifying current services and target populations, determining the underlying assumptions and beliefs behind each HRA program, and noting overlap and commonalities across HRA programs and with FRCs and other community providers
- Agreeing to a definition of service integration
- Identifying a potential target population for whom to begin to integrate services
- Determining goals for HRA service integration

Additionally, an integrated services flow chart was developed. A logic model was developed as well. The logic model starts with building a foundation for service integration. This is where the focus has been.

Another useful chart was developed showing the different types of documents that are most often required when one applies for benefits from the county. It makes it easier for clients to see at a glance what will be needed for CalWORKs, Food Stamps, Medi-Cal, and General Assistance applications.

Two resource fairs were held to allow for each agency/program to describe the services they offer, the population served, eligibility requirements, location, and so on. Following the resource fairs, “brown bag” forums were held to discuss agencies/programs in greater detail. Based upon community input, a common customer service plan and training were developed.

FINDINGS

An examination of the crossover and service integration efforts in Santa Cruz County uncovers eight key elements leading to their success.

1. Leadership: Both the HRA and First Five devoted personnel to take the lead. Evelyn Hengeveld-Bidmon is HRA’s senior analyst in charge of the internal efforts around crossover and service integration. Nicole Young is the management consultant working for First Five to lead the county-wide service integration effort between HRA, the Health Services Agency and the FRCs. Having these dedicated individuals in these lead roles has been essential for maintaining the momentum of these efforts and facilitating the process to achieve results.

Other key champions have played large roles in advancing the crossover and service integration efforts, including those interviewed for this case study. As Ms. Hengeveld-Bidmon put it, “It’s not

enough to have people at the director level or even the PM (Program Manager) level. All levels need buy-in.”

2. Patience/Stability/Time: Service integration has been given time to grow. Years before the CFC convened the Integrated Services Subcommittee, HRA had already been making efforts to coordinate services between CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services through crossover. The Family Resource Network was already established to build a coordinated system of service provision. The ABC project had also established the precedent of HRA employees, including a Cal Learn eligibility worker and a supervising social worker, being stationed at one of the FRCs. By the time the CFC’s Integrated Services Subcommittee report catalyzed the effort, service integration was a natural next step in a multi-year progression.

Coordinating the effort within the HRA, Evelyn Hengeveld-Bidmon took a realistic, long-range view, realizing that such an effort will take many years to come to full fruition. Her goal is to institutionalize the value of integrated services and make it as important for individual workers as it is to the agency.

3. Stakeholder Involvement: In Santa Cruz, leaders were deliberate about bringing a variety of stakeholders to the table – a concept referred to as “Maximum Appropriate Involvement.” They took care to identify key stakeholders, including formal and informal leaders.

Service integration values services that are as seamless as possible. The assumption was that this can best be achieved by getting services as close to people in their communities as one can. Bringing together stakeholders who have something to say

about integrated services was done in many different ways, including: surveys, focus groups, and monthly meetings.

4. Strategic Planning: The service integration effort utilized careful planning to map out where they were starting from and how they would reach their intended destination. Built in to the process was a feedback loop so that everyone could remain informed of the progress.

5. Performance Measures: Those in charge of the effort realized a need for a quality assurance component to be able to determine whether the efforts were working.

6. Clear Mission: Another contributing factor to the success of the service integration effort, thus far, has been attention to mission. Once everyone had come together, they reached agreement about why they might want to embark on a service integration initiative. Care was taken to determine how each agency's mission overlapped, and a clear vision and definition for service integration was established and conveyed to everyone. In this way, they determined a common set of expectations from which to work.

7. Training: As one manager mentioned, some programs in the HRA have hired only one or two new staff at a time in recent years. Staff development personnel were not always available to do formal induction training for these new employees when they entered the agency one at a time. This meant that these staff did not always receive a formal introduction to services outside of their immediate program. When the Crossover Steering Committee developed new procedures that incorporated a quality assurance mechanism, supervisors and policy & procedure developers conducted the

training. Panel presentations were held so that staff could share what services their respective programs offered and discuss how they could work together to help one another's clients. The training included content on the link between poverty and child abuse and neglect. Although previously well-established at one end of the county, with the new quality assurance mechanisms in place, crossover has now spread to the other end of the county as well.

8. Personal Relationships: As part of the ABC Project, HRA committed one Cal Learn eligibility worker and one supervising social worker to be stationed at one of the FRCs. The supervising social worker supervises a home-visiting program serving children at risk of child welfare services involvement. The home visitors include staff of HRA and the participating community partners. A fire in one of the county buildings displaced several HRA staff. Because of the established cooperation between the HRA and the FRCs, some of the displaced staff members were able to find temporary space in the FRCs. This serendipitously served to further the relationships which had been established. One of the family resource center employees commented regarding the out-stationed HRA staff that as a result of working side-by-side, "We've appreciated their work and they're appreciating our work."

CHALLENGES

In addition to the key elements supporting Santa Cruz County's efforts at service integration, this case study revealed at least two major barriers:

1) Resistance to Change: As with all change efforts, staff can be resistant to new ways of doing business. One manager pointed out the irony that some of those most resistant to the crossover efforts

are the ones who would benefit most from such a collaborative approach. Having the quality assurance mechanisms and supervisors who buy in to the philosophy has helped to counter the resistance.

2) Competing Initiatives: In child welfare services, in particular, several initiatives are taking place concurrently (i.e.: System Improvement Plan, Differential Response, Differential Response with Pregnant Women), but these are not brought to service integration meetings. One staff person attributes this to the continued vestiges of silo thinking.

A concern is that staff may suffer from “initiative burn-out,” having so many different change efforts occurring at once.

By conducting joint meetings of those involved in different initiatives, some stakeholder participation may drop off. Nonetheless, the trade-off is that there can be greater cohesion between initiatives and avoidance of duplication of effort.

NEXT STEPS

The road to fully realized service integration is a long one, and the journey has only begun. There are bound to be more obstacles along the way. However, Santa Cruz County’s progress and the scope of their initiative are impressive. By maintaining a long-range perspective and utilizing careful planning, they have established a solid foundation for future efforts.

All of the developments described above took place without the benefit of involvement in the Linkages Project. Linkages, also known as the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project, seeks to increase knowledge about and implementation of practices to integrate child welfare and pub-

lic assistance programs in California. HRA plans to utilize the resources of that project to market and promote the existing efforts of crossover and determine what other structural changes can be implemented to build on those efforts.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ALAMEDA COUNTY

What does the experience in Santa Cruz County mean for Alameda County Social Services Agency’s own attempt to bridge the service gap?

We have seen some attempts at service integration in Alameda County fall by the wayside in the past because the leaders of the effort left the agency and nobody was poised to pick up where they left off. The Social Services Agency has recently been implementing the Linkages Project, linking CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services.

The lessons learned from the Santa Cruz service integration efforts can be applied not only to Alameda’s Linkages Project but to all future initiatives.

Because so many of our agency’s managers will become eligible for retirement over the next few years, we cannot guarantee that those who are champions of the effort today will be here to fill that role in the future. Therefore, it becomes important for us as an agency to “institutionalize the value” as they have attempted to do in Santa Cruz in order to ensure that all levels have buy-in.

We also could benefit from adopting the concept of “Maximum Appropriate Involvement.” All stakeholders, including those who can help to make things happen and those who can stop things from happening, need to be brought in early on to any

future planning efforts. In our county, which has strong union influence, it is critical that labor, as one key stakeholder, be included in the planning early on and that not only labor representatives, but members of their constituencies, be allowed to have input in whatever ways are practical.

Clear communication and a built-in feedback loop are important for both keeping the effort in the forefront of people's thoughts and for evaluating progress. With past efforts in Alameda County, we have been very diligent in soliciting and utilizing input from various levels, but we have only recently become more deliberate about updating those who have given their input about what is being done in follow-up to their suggestions.

In Santa Cruz County, supervisors and managers conducted training of their staff regarding the crossover procedures. In our county, we should be careful not to ignore the critical role of first-line supervisors in instilling the values of service integration in their staff. We should also be realistic about supervisor workload and utilize resources such as staff development to support the work of the supervisors. We should be careful not to pull away our training personnel to perform other roles.

At its core, like good service delivery, service integration is about people. We can focus on restructuring systems, realigning resources and the like, but significant and lasting change will be the result of building relationships with one another both inside and outside of the agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the lessons gained from Santa Cruz County's service integration efforts, I recommend the following be considered in Alameda County for

the Linkages Project and whenever embarking on a new initiative:

- Although responsibility for the plan should be shared by all those involved in developing it, there must be one person designated as being responsible for coordinating the effort. Those with formal responsibility for heading up the effort should focus not only on product but on process.
- In all messages about the Linkages Project, including literature and training materials, as well as when it is talked about in the agency, emphasis should be on the idea that this is a long-term systems change effort. When managers, supervisors, and administrators speak with their staff, they should make it clear that cooperation, teamwork, and coordination of services are valued by the agency. They should talk about it often in staff meetings, in case discussions, and wherever the opportunity presents itself. Ideas should be solicited from staff at all levels as to how their particular roles in the organization can put the value into action. Those who do demonstrate the value in their work should be praised for their efforts.
- Just as the important stakeholders are invited to the table for Team Decision-Making meetings to make placement decisions for children receiving child welfare services, in planning for change around the integration of services the concept of "Maximum Appropriate Involvement" should be kept in mind. This does not necessarily mean that everyone has to attend a meeting. Input can be solicited through focus groups, written or online surveys, requests for information, and other means. The input of labor organizations within the agency should be particularly considered. Involving community partners is also important so as to align the services as closely with the community as possible.

- Once a specific plan is developed, regular meetings should be held of those responsible for various aspects of the plan so that they can review progress. Leaders of the effort should provide regular updates regarding progress toward implementation and remind stakeholders of the vision for the desired end result. Stakeholders could also be enlisted to provide feedback regarding how they view the progress from their unique perspectives.
- Planning should include specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-limited goals. A quality assurance process must be put into place.
- Education about coordinating services should be made a part of formal pre-service induction and orientation programs for staff so that, as turnover occurs, the value of collaboration does not exit the agency. Concurrently, such training should also be a part of on-going in-service training offerings to reinforce the value once newer employees have settled into their jobs and to help instill the value amongst existing staff who may be used to a 'business as usual' approach. The agency should consider requiring all staff to attend such training.
- The agency should continue activities to encourage communication and collaboration such as celebrations open to employees from across the various departments of the agency. Other activities, such as co-location of staff, could also help to facilitate communication and the development of relationships.
- Efforts should continue to integrate initiatives. Leaders of initiatives, such as the Linkages Project, should regularly meet with leaders of other initiatives. Whenever new initiatives are being developed, a key question should be asked, "Who else is involved in similar activities?" This can help to avoid duplication of

effort. Sometimes names can be misleading, for instance, with the Family to Family Initiative. Some people mistook Family to Family for a separate program and asked, "Isn't that something the Family to Family program might handle?" Although requirements placed on the agency by funders may sometimes prevent this from being possible, the agency should consider talking about how we will be doing business from now on, rather than talking about a new initiative by name.

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