

CULTURAL COMPETENCY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

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BACKGROUND

This case study discusses the progress made in Santa Clara County in addressing the problems of disproportionate representation of ethnic groups in the child welfare system and the need to diversify and establish assurances of cultural competency among its staff.

The cultural competence model considered in this study is borrowed from "Toward a Culturally Competent System of Care: A Monograph on Effective Services for Minority Children..." Cultural competence is defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or amongst professionals and enables the system, agency or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Cultural competence may be viewed as a goal toward which we in social services can strive, and is therefore, a developmental process.

"A culturally competent system would: 1) Value diversity; 2) have the capacity for cultural self-assessment; 3) be conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact; 4) have institutionalized cultural knowledge; and 5) have developed adaptations to diversity. There would be evidence of these five elements functioning at every level of the organization. Attitudes, policies, and practices must be congruent within all levels of the system. Practice must be based on accurate perceptions of behavior, policies must be impartial, and attitudes should

be unbiased."

The topic for the case study is Consumer/community input in child welfare services and issues of CWW cultural competency. The learning objectives are

To learn about effective ways of informing, planning with and integrating community and consumer input into program planning and change in Child Welfare Services.

To learn about the process of assessing cultural competency and certification for cultural competency among Child Welfare Staff.

There are recurring issues and concerns in Alameda County which warranted a review of the creative ways that Santa Clara County SSA has met the challenges of cultural diversity and community partnerships. Some of the key issues and concerns in Alameda County are:

Disproportionate number of ethnic children in care

Community dissatisfaction

Cultural Competency of staff questioned

Ethnic staff dissatisfaction

Reorganization, restructuring and redesign efforts

The County of Santa Clara has grappled with some of these difficult and complex issues for far longer. The County of Santa Clara served as the placement

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and review for this case study.

HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM OR PROCESS - SANTA CLARA COUNTY

The first sentence in the Mission Statement of Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency is the statement that it is culturally sensitive. The Core Values of SSA speaks first of "values and respects of the diversity, dignity, strength and self determination of the residents we serve and the staff who serve them" over thirty years ago, in 1967, with the creation of El Comitè. The group was formed from among social workers and clerks in SSA. This group was committed to the principles that Spanish-speaking clients would have access to quality services. In 1990, El Comitè set out to develop a strategic plan to further influence the policies and practices of the SSA.

INTERNAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

Latino/Hispanic's represent roughly 50% of the total population in the County, however, Latino/Hispanic's represent roughly 75% of the Child Welfare clientele. This was a concern of El Comitè. Early on there was a recognized need for greater diversification of the staff and management in the Social Service Agency. Also, there was little recognition that there were actually five distinct ethnic and cultural groups that were classified as Latino/Hispanic. In fact, the Latino/Hispanic group was really multi-cultural.

The Social Services Agency needed to do something different to service this population. El Comitè worked on a strategic plan in 1992, and a Family Resource Center was an outcome of the process. The resource center would utilize the Family

Preservation funds, coming to the agency in a creative way.

Nuestra Casa (New Estra Casa) is Spanish and means "Our Own Home". The effort, which resulted in Nuestra Casa Family Resource Center, started over 30 years ago. Many of the issues addressed at that time are still prevalent today. A group of social workers formed a club or group called El Comitè.

Nuestra Casa Family Resource Center started out of a need to serve this multi-cultural community that was over represented in the Child Welfare system. The social workers were giving these families service plans and timelimits to accomplish things. The services were not available. Those that were available cost money that the families did not have or the programs were not in the language spoken by the parents.

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Utilizing the medium of a Family Resource Center as a way to meet the unique needs of the Hispanic/Latino community was risk-taking and very consistent with the agency mission and the needs identified in the Strategic Plans.

Ujirani Center started after the Hispanic Family Resource Center. Ujirani (Woo ja romme) is Swahili for a Safe Place in the neighborhood. It is one of the Social Services Agency's Family Resource Centers. The Resource Center planning started in August 1994. The center opened in December

1994. One of the biggest accomplishments of the African American strategic planning was the development of the Ujirani. The committee for the African American staff is ongoing and meets regularly.

The African American Child Welfare staff was trying to address the disproportionate number of African American children and families in the system. Currently, approximately 4% of the population in Santa Clara County are African American, yet 20-24% of the African American Children and families is involved with Child Welfare.

The Community had concerns about the under utilization of African American foster homes. There were concerns about the foster-adoption homes and the lack of ethnic or cultural matching of the children. Since the formation of the group, now there is a committee person present when discussion and planning is occurring for foster adopt placements. This review has sparked an awareness of the importance of cultural competency and ethnic matching. These issues are still being considered for the families in the system.

To reach the African American community, town hall meetings were held. From the meetings it was clear that there was under utilization of African American foster homes. The data was reviewed and the facts gathered. This data supported the recommendations in the strategic plan. More follow-up and attention needs to be given by the African American committee to reviewing the data to discern the impact of all of their efforts.

The Asian Pacific Family Resource Center started out of a commitment of the Former Director of SSA. The Former Director was committed to starting the family resource centers for the Asian Pacific and

the African American populations.

The center started in February 1995; in fact it opened its doors on February 14, 1995. At that time some child welfare staff transferred to the site to deliver direct services. These staff members have caseloads.

Unlike the three Family Resource Centers's mentioned earlier, the Gilroy Family Resource Center started as a grassroots effort. Its origin was entirely external to the Social Services Agency. The Gilroy Family Resource Center started with a person at the helm that knew the community and had a background in community organizing. The person had the ability to bring people together.

The Family Resource Center started because families in Gilroy asked for a place where they could come together. A collaboration of agencies and individuals came together to support the idea. The collaboration started first in the School District. The group searched for funding to support the Family Resource Center. Grant funding became available from the Office of Child Abuse Prevention.

The Social Services Agency, SSA, knew that if it was going to work with families in the Gilroy area, it needed to work with the Collaborative. A thorough need assessment was conducted. All members of the Collaborative participated in the distribution, collection and review of a survey that went out to area residents. The need assessment and the survey process were successful. There was an over 80% return and response to the survey.

The Family Resource Center started 3 years ago. Child Welfare was an integral part of the Family Resource Center. Now the Family Resource Center

has been operating as a standalone center, apart from SSA.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER DEFINED

A Family Resource Center is a vehicle for engaging local residents and community organizations in the identification and resolution of community concerns. Family Resource Centers have the dual focus of improving the lives of individuals and families as well as changing the communities in which they live and the systems that serve them.

Family Resource Centers, by definition, are unique to the communities of which they are a part and the families with whom they are engaged. They can have many “looks” and locations, involve different populations, and engage in different types of activities. However, what they have in common and define them, as Family Resource Centers are a set of unifying characteristics.

Family Support Principles - relationships based on equality and respect, affirm and strengthen families cultural, racial and linguistic identities

Resident/Parent Involvement - integral involvement of local residents and parents at all levels of FRC operations, particularly assessing needs, identifying resources and developing strategies for change.

Community Based- located in a place that is visible and easily accessible to a group of people, who share something in common, often described as neighborhood based.

Self-help and Mutual Aid- encourage families’ natural abilities to help themselves and each other and facilitate opportunities for families to inter-

act in unstructured activities

Volunteerism- fostering volunteer involvement of parents, youth and local business is a key strategy for success and sustainability

Affirm Diversity- recognize the similarities and differences among the ethnic and cultural populations and value the strength of such diversity.

Service Design- emphasis on prevention, education and access to information, universal versus categorical programming, flexibility to meet the changing and emerging needs and wishes of families, and builds on existing family strengths.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY EXEMPLIFIED - FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Since the late 1960’s Santa Clara County has seen the class, culture, and the color of people in the workforce and those they serve change. The workforce changed from white middle-class to a diversity of cultures and a myriad of colors. Small groups of culturally specific groups formed with agency sanctioned and began to develop strategic plans for their culturally specific group. Now thirty years later, after working inside culturally specific groups to affect change for the diversity of cultures served, the groups are coming together in a coalition to address cultural competency jointly.

The Cultural Competency Council decided to be called Coalition for Effective Services. This group is comprised of representatives from every cultural group existing among the staff in the SSA. The group formed for two reasons, The Director wanted to have contact with each of the groups without meeting with each individual group, and the groups felt that more could be accomplished since many of

their items were on similar agendas.

The chairs for the Council would be from the represented groups. Each meeting the chair would rotate.

Though, not on the agenda, the meeting opened with a spiritual expression from the Native American Representative. The talk was about God and Respect and how God was in each of us; therefore, the bases of the meeting needed to be one of honor and respect for each of us. Then there was a moment of silence for the Gay man brutally slain in San Francisco. The representatives from the Gay and Lesbian Group called this for the moment of silence.

PRESENTATION OF “MEETING BY CONSENSUS”

The basis for decision making in the coalition would be by consensus. It was impressive to see so much time spent on discussing the decision-making process. The consensus model was built on the premise is Can You Live With It. The meaning is will going along with a work or decision cause great pains or harm.

It was expected that it might take longer but the group would continue to talk about an issue until consensus was reached. There would be frequent polling of the group. There would be the group meeting in a circle. The rules or conditions are that no one leaves until consensus is reached. Once consensus is reached no one is to sabotage the decision outside of the room. Everyone must take ownership outside of the room. The polling involves those that can live with a decision, sharing what they like about the decision, those that cannot live with a decision, share what they would need in order to be able to live with the decision. The con-

sensus model, it was decided, would have a backup just in case decision could not be met. There would be a vote that would require at least 80% acceptance before it would be carried.

RELEASE TIME FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Director strongly supported release time for all staff working on the Cultural Competence Coalition, the department Committees and the sub committees. The idea and the how-to would be discussed with the Executive Staff.

CREATE A VISION/ MISSION STATEMENT

The group brainstormed ideas and phrases that they wanted included into the mission statement for the Cultural Competence Coalition. Cultural, Excellence, Employees the group wanted to use.

To provide leadership to ensure the values, attitudes, policies, practice skills and structures.

To successfully provide services to culturally diverse populations with respect and dignity.

The Council of Cultural Excellence was a suggested name change for the group.

The vision was tabled and assigned to a sub committee to work on and present at the next meeting.

BRIDGES ASSESSMENT TOOL DISCUSSION/ADOPTION REVIEW OF “CULTURE” DEFINITION

The tool “Bridges” was reviewed. It was believed that the tool was funded by government funds and therefore falls within the public domain. This is the tool that will be utilized to audit the SSA for cultur-

al competency. The Cultural Competence Coalition will use the tool first to be sure that it is internalized for its true intent. The Cultural Competence Coalition does not want the tool used simply as busy work but for its intended purpose.

COLLABORATION AS A START FOR PLANNING AND CHANGE

The strategic planning process for Asian Pacific Families started with the gathering of 40 staff members concerned with the services provided to Asian Pacific families. The group was composed of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Filipino and Chinese staff members. The group met for four weeks and had all day offsite to do planning.

The group formed four workgroups: Human Resources, Program Development, Needs Assessment, and Community Partnership.

Human Resources

HR sub committee looked at the percent of Asian Pacific clientele and the staffing pattern. The goals are to bring parity between the percent of Asian Pacific clientele and the percent of Asian Pacific staff, represented at all levels from line staff to administration.

Program Development

The criteria for this sub committee was to look at the lack of cultural competency in programs, feasibility, urgency and timelines and urgency, time lines, measurable objectives. Careful review of the Comprehensive Program Measurements CPM. This committee would look at the Seniors to CalWorks.

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment sub committee found 13 ethnic groups and 21 different languages that exist

among the Asian Pacific Family clientele of DFCS in the SSA. Early on it was found that there was underreporting, in that the data collection does not acknowledge all of the different ethnic groups that exist among the Asian Pacific groups.

Community Partnership

The community partnership would look at 1) education and 2) Collaboration, utilizing Staff Development and Office of Community Relations. The community partnership addresses the multicultural, which would look at evaluation of 5-10 indicators; 3) Domestic Violence programs to address the high incidence of death from Domestic Violence among Asian Pacific population; 4) CALWORKS

The Asian Pacific Youth Forum is utilized to get ideas and needs identified from the community.

The chairs of the sub committee forms the steering committee and meet to plan next steps and give reports on the progress of each group.

May 4, 1998, the group of forty people will reconvene to review the reports of each sub committee. A contract consultant will facilitate the group. The group will come up with a strategic plan, action steps and recommendations.

The staffing for the strategic planning effort for Asian Pacific Families is provided by a social worker on loan for six months for this effort. The person receives no additional compensation, but is relieved entirely of all other duties. The person competed for this six-month project position, which allows for staff development opportunities.

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Asian Pacific Youth project added an additional feature to the planning process, not previously formally considered. The feature was Community Partnerships. Adding the Community Partnership feature into the planning is consistent with the agency's intent to formalize its response to the public's right and need to know. The community partnerships were formalized through the development of the Office of Community Relations and Community Development. Therefore the Office of Community Development and Community Relations was formed to be the agency's response to impact the community's view of the agency and to assist the support network development for families.

The Office of Community Development and Community Relations has three major service components. The service components are Media Relations, Community Development and Public Education.

Media Relations

SSA is a public agency, so the public has a right to know what the agency does, how the agency does it and what it cost. The Office has a process for putting out the information so that not just anyone will speak for the agency.

The media has been told that the first call for information about or regarding the agency should first be made to the Office of Community Development and Community Relations. When the office is called, the media is referred to the right person. The protocol allows time for the Manager of the Office of Community Development and Community Relations to research the incident, get a status, review laws, rules and procedure and refer to the

agency spokesperson on the issue or the director. Therefore, when the designated spokesperson or the Director responds to the media, they are informed on the incident, the applicable laws and agency rules, policies and practices. The most recent update is known to the spokesperson, so that an informed response is given to the media and the story can be complete.

Community Development

One of the community development efforts of the Office of Community Development and Community Relations is the Parents Institute for Quality Education. The effort behind this effort was Lee Perez, the organizer for helping parents learn how to work with the schools. Office of Community Development and Community Relations monitors the contract that the agency has with the Parents Institute. The office worked to gather county and city funding to support the grant to the organization. The officer will monitor the grant and work to get the program into all of the school districts in the county. Another Office of Community Development and Community Relations community development effort is the 24/7 Hotline for kids throughout the county. The office will make the necessary connections to gather resources and support for a project like the hotline. The Office of Community Development and Community Relations is the place to call if there are community development ideas.

Office of Community Development and Community Relations makes sure that all agency publications are in multiple languages and that providers are knowledgeable about parent education guides. Culturally competent providers are matched as much as possible and are able to be sensitive and relate.

Public Education

The aim of public education is to educate the public on what the SSA does. At some point in time every family will have some need for services from the SSA. Either when they have small children or for the aging family members. With Welfare Reform the public perception was that hard earned tax dollars was going to lazy people that do not want to work. The truth is that the majority of the people on welfare are only on for 2.5 years. Also, that 25% of the parents receiving welfare worked. The other folks on welfare, were children and they could not work.

The Office of Community Development and Community Relations has a Public Information Officer. This staff person prints all newsletters, brochures, and fliers for programs and departments in the agency. This person writes the news releases, collates packets for assemblies or conferences, or trainings.

Every department has a commission in the SSA. The Board of Supervisors appoints the commissioners. The commissions are staffed with an Office of Community Development and Community Relations special event coordinator. This staff person coordinates presentations to the commissions.

Success to date and obstacles overcome

Each Family Resource supervisor reported a great deal of job satisfaction for the staff and that the aims, and objectives of the centers were being met or surpassed. The Asian Pacific Center is felt to be successful because of what people say that has used the center. Also, people keep coming back for services. There was one man in particular that was court ordered for treatment services. This individual started off saying he was not going to get anything out of the center's services. This person had a

real attitude change after coming to the center. Now he is a major advocate for an ongoing parent support group. The center is most accessible to the Southeast Asian Community.

The Nuestra Casa Resource Center is meeting the needs and fulfilling the aims for which it was started. The program services primarily a multicultural Latino/Hispanic population. Some of the population that frequents the resource center is of Chinese descent. Services are provided both in English and Spanish. Childcare is provided on site, with contracted staff providing child supervision while parents are participating in program onsite.

Nuestra Casa is not a translation service for Spanish-speaking families, but assures that the needs of the client is known and those needs are met in a respectful, culturally competent way.

Currently Ujirani is not offering programs specifically for African American Families. The Decorum of the center is Afro-centric, professional and inviting. The center's programs are attracting a diverse population of the department's clients. All of the classes, groups and programs are offered in English.

The Center believes it is achieving the aims because of the feedback that is received from the consumers of the services. Referrals are received from other agencies and many services are done collaboratively with other agencies.

Regionalization will impact the Gilroy Family Resource Center. The larger space now available in the Gilroy Family Resource Center will now house Child Welfare Staff. A full array of child welfare services will relocate to the facility. There will be CWS/CMS hookup. Both voluntary and court

ordered case management services will be carried in the Gilroy Family Resource Center.

The report on regionalization reports,

“In July, 1997 the Management Team of the Department of Family and Children’s Services, with the assistance of Interaction Associates, initiated the planning process for redesigning our service delivery system with the goal of being located in the community by June of the year 2000. Our commitment to this organizational change is grounded in the belief that as our effectiveness in communities increases, prevention of child abuse and neglect will be more likely. The success of our work with families and children is built upon quality relationships that offer open and honest communication, trust and respect. Our goal is to strengthen these relationships and to build a stronger network of support with the community to improve our effectiveness in protecting children and preserving families.”

The emphasis in Regionalization has shifted from the high level planning to the distinct planning in the various regions. The Program Managers for the regions will lead a staff and community team in developing the unique manner in which services will be delivered in the region.

To assist each program manager in refocusing on community involvement, a special training is planned. The program will be the pulling together of Resident Experts from each region advising the Regional planning teams on the best ways to approach the community and engage the community in program planning.

IMPLEMENTATION FOR HOME COUNTY WITH RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED ACTION STEPS.

Continued Recruitment Retention Managing Diversity/Valuing Differences/and Style

Efforts need to continue with the diversifying the staff at all levels of the Children and Family Services Department. As the staff is being diversified more effort needs to be used to manage that diversity. African American managers when being promoted are faced with a staff that is not ready to accept their leadership. African American managers are faced with questions concerning their competence which are either asked overtly or covertly. Open door policies are used to undermine and create end-runs which can hamper the effectiveness of the African American Managers. African American managers and line-staff alike are held in higher levels of scrutiny when diversity is not managed appropriately.

Cultural shift and emphasis on Cultural competency

The standards of a cultural competent agency need to be reviewed and applied to operations, practices and policies. Does the department have a way of assessing the degree of cultural competence? Are policies being considered insight of the standards of cultural competence. For instance, policy decisions of not approving support letters for Foster Family Agencies in Alameda County, may serve to negatively impact the development and or utilization of African American Foster Family Agencies. Was any consideration given to the impact or the perceived impact on African American Providers? It is therefore, recommended that Alameda County Children and Family Department, investigate and

implement a process of auditing policies and services for cultural competency. Certification should be developed for staff that evidence training, experience and skill with providing services to African American Families. Compensation should be afforded these staff for being able to work BI-culturally.

Externally building on pilots to quality cultural competent programs

Institutionalizing Community Partnerships, i.e. system of care, commissions

The Child Welfare services have been restructured in the last decade from two divisions down to one divisions. The same reasons that justified the consolidation are now being used to restructure services again. Clearly, the internal staff dissatisfaction with the lack of diversity among the staff and few promotional opportunities for staff of color has merged with the external concerns of the African American Community. What is left to review is how does an agency, be proactive, creative and responsive to the concerns of Cultural Competency? How are the agency's intentions demonstrated to the community that is served? How is the agency's commitment to developing a culturally competent workforce translated into the decisions to once again restructure and redesign child welfare services as we know it? The outcomes for African American children in Alameda County and the growing and continuing need to diversify the staff at all levels mean that diversity and cultural competency must become an integral part of our agency's culture, decisions and program development.

Alameda County has developed a number of partnerships through school-linked services and neighborhood staff. These programs have worked and

functioned as pilots. The experiences learned from these programs should be expanded to develop a cohesive system of care. Family Preservation funds and service can be looked at to design culturally identified neighborhood based one-stop centers of prevention and family preservation services that reflect the cultural communities that are intended to be served. The Family Resource Center Model of delivering service is fascinating and should be given careful consideration.

A community outreach and community development and partnership capacity should be considered in any efforts to reorganize in Children and Family Services. The Children and Family Services has a dire need to put forth a positive image to influence the perceptions the community has of child welfare services. Formalized citizen commissions should be formed and staffed to allow a place for disgruntled citizens to have a place to share their concerns and have those concerns investigated by their peers.

In summary, cultural competency must be looked at like a developmental process. Cultural Competency is a goal that we should be constantly striving to achieve. Santa Clara's experience offers Alameda County tangible examples for how to become a culturally competent agency.