

**LESSONS IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT:
SAN MATEO COUNTY'S SUCCESS MODEL
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SAN MATEO COUNTY IN A NUTSHELL

San Mateo County is the state leader in getting people off welfare. Its SUCCESS model, promoting self-sufficiency through employment, has had dramatic results in the last 5 years. Caseloads in the county have been reduced 57 percent since 1994, compared with a 27 percent drop statewide. Early reports from 1999 indicate that recidivism is down and that the income of former welfare recipients is on the rise. 87 percent of clients find jobs, 79 percent stay off welfare and the average starting salary is \$7.75 an hour. It is no coincidence that San Mateo also has the lowest unemployment rate in the state, hovering around 2 percent.

In 1994, San Mateo County had 1,200 adults without children on welfare. Today they have 288. In 1994, 5,700 adults with dependent children were on welfare. Today only 1,050 receive aid. Workers' caseloads have dropped from 150 to just 50, allowing close attention to detail. County welfare offices have been transformed from dreary and institutional to upbeat and inspirational.

These remarkable changes are the result of many factors:

- A Board of Supervisors committed to transforming its Health and Human Services delivery system.
- A Director who operationalized and refined the vision.
- A community that collaborated with the Agency in developing a new way of doing business.
- Waivers from the State allowing full family sanctions.

Self-sufficiency through employment is the foundation of the SUCCESS model. San Mateo County adopted the Dean Curtis model for its Work-First curriculum. The guiding belief is that in order to become self-sufficient one must "get a job, a better job, a career." San Mateo County experimented briefly with the state-sponsored program, Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), but was dissatisfied with the poor placement rates and high cost associated with each success. The county then built a Work-First foundation, with the important addition of mufti-disciplinary teams to assess and manage each case. This has been key in preventing families from being sanctioned prematurely or unfairly, as the work requirements are tougher than the statewide system.

Clients In San Mateo must spend 40 hours a week working, or looking for work, compared with the statewide requirement of 35 hours a week for twoparent families and 32 hours a week for one-parent families. In addition to these tougher work requirements, San Mateo also has a harsher sanction policy; the full family is removed from aid if the parents) fail to complete their Welfare to Work plan. The state requires only that the parents) are removed from the grant for non-compliance; children continue to receive aid. San Mateo has found both the carrot and the

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stick to be effective in helping adults find and keep employment. However, personalized service from staff, improved access to services through community and neighborhood based service sites, and improved automated Systems have also aided clients in their quest for self-sufficiency.

A DIRECTOR'S VISION

"Change is change; it doesn't matter if it's big or small" is the motto of San Mateo County Human Services Agency Director. Maureen Borland. She was hired in 1992 to head up the newly established Human Services Agency, which blended services from the Health Department, Housing Authority, Probation, JTPA, Community Services and the Social Services Agency. She understood the need for change. The changes were prompted by negative client and community outcomes, public discontent with the current system, reduced funding, increased demand for service and the promise of changing legislation in the near future. She has spent 7 years creating a common culture by "balancing the long term vision with short term projects." She operationalized this methodology in a concise Process Plan, a step by step guide for moving the agency to a new vision.



Looking back over the past 7 years, Borland believes there were key issues that informed the Agency's progress and indicated areas in need for ongoing improvement:

- Asking for and using community expertise in designing the SUCCESS model, (For example, the county hosted a one day forum titled "What if we could start over?")
- Encouraging executive and senior managers to see themselves as planners.
- Compilation and use of data and statistics to improve and strengthen arguments for change.
- Paying attention to the organization's development by getting input from staff at all levels.
- Practicing "Transformational change not incremental change."
- Using staff's understandable resistance to change, to encourage creativity in herself and in others

CONSIDERATION FOR THE PROCESS PLAN

Borland worked closely with senior managers, consultants and the community to do a thorough Needs Assessment AKA the "Where are we now?" portion of the Process Plan. This illicited the existing Best Practices from the Agency, community based organizations, other county departments, and other county and state models. The 300 participants, including legal advocates, contractors, labor representatives and consumers, have supported the SUCCESS model since its inception in part because of their contribution to the design.

Forging new ground presented many challenges from which other county managers could learn as they prepare to reinvent their agencies and to prepare Process Plans:

- The importance of advocacy for staff concerns.
- The importance of data and technology in supporting change.
- The importance of the inclusion of all staff in all phases of planning.
- The importance of assessing all existing positions and reclassifying them to reflect the new way of doing business. (For example, in 1992 there were numerous unfilled management positions that were reclassified to Director of Planning, Director of Organizational Development, Regional Manager and Director of the Business Systems Group.)
- Moving from a categorically driven system to one based on Performance Outcomes.
- Focusing on the shared vision and purpose during conflict.
- Garnering support from elected officials.

The monitoring and evaluation phase of the Process Plan is key in learning from the change process. Examples of how San Mateo is doing this include:

- The Organizational Development Director is to complete over 40 focus groups with key stakeholders, highlighting lessons learned and recommendations for continued improvement.
- The Planning Director developed a planning matrix that coordinated all the strategic plans in San Mateo County to reduce duplication and encourage cooperation.
- The Community Information Project's comprehensive database geomaps key characteristics of clients, service usage "hot spots", office locations and transportation.

The success in San Mateo County is not only a reflection of the pioneering spirit of the Board of Supervisors and director but in the methodical process they employed in their Process Plan to guide the stakeholders to new solutions for old problems.

THE SUCCESS MODEL IN ACTION

The SUCCESS model is surprisingly simple. The primary goal is to improve the self-sufficiency of families and individuals, emphasize prevention and early intervention, and improve accessibility to services. The agency now offers integrated services in three regional areas. These services are:

Alcohol and Drug Prevention and Recovery
 Child Welfare Services
 Community Development Block Program
 Family Self Sufficiency
 Food Stamps
 General Assistance

Housing Rehabilitation
Housing Authority
Job Training Partnership Act
Media-Cal
Mortgage Credit Certificate Program
Office of Homelessness
Temporary Aid to Needy Families
Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Once a client is determined to be eligible for any of the above, a Benefit Analyst (BA) is assigned to manage the family's Welfare to Work Plan. There is a heavy emphasis on employment and the services needed to encourage self-sufficiency and job security. If the family is experiencing barriers to self-sufficiency they are referred to one of three interdisciplinary teams to discuss family problems and solutions. There are three teams available to the Benefit Analyst for help in developing an in-depth psycho-social assessment of the family. Each emphasizes unique aspects of the case and different disciplines:

Family Self Sufficiency Teams (FSST)

The Benefit Analyst refers and presents most cases. Standing team members from other agencies come prepared to develop a case plan and offer services.

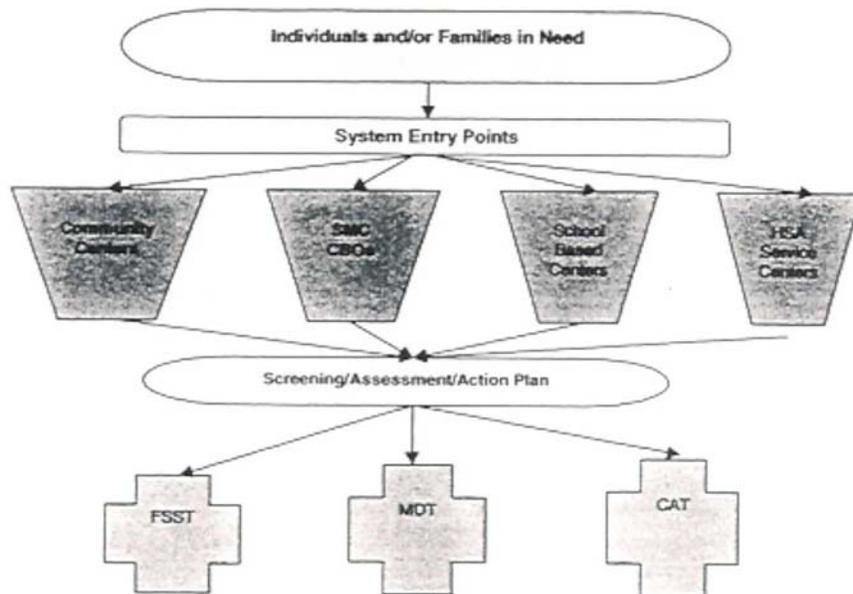
Muulti-Disciplinary Team (MDT)

The schools and Healthy Start Sites refer most cases.

Case Assistance Team (CAT)

The cases usually have a mental health component or are System of Care cases. Multiple agencies attend.

In 1996, San Mateo County applied for waivers from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) requesting permission to implement the key to the SUCCESS program: full family sanctions. The waivers were approved in 1997, allowing San Mateo to be the only county in California to remove aid from the entire family if they failed to cooperate with their Welfare to Work Plan. The emphasis on community based, muulti-disciplinary service integration is not only to promote self-sufficiency but to prevent the family from being sanctioned and dis-



Income levels for Employed, Unemployed and Uncooperative Parents

Family Type	Income	TANF/FS Grant Amount	Total
1 Parent and 2 Children	0	565/260	825
Non Coop Parent and 2 Children	0	Refer to FSST	0
1 Parent and 2 Children	618	565/142	1,325
1 Parent and 4 Children	824	767/139	1,730

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continued from aid. The following table compares the impact of sanctions on employed and unemployed clients.

In order for San Mateo to manage the decentralized nature of SUCCESS they had to simultaneously develop a new information system that would talk to CDS, be user-friendly, be accessible from remote locations, organize information from numerous sources and track case management activities. The result is SMART, a Windows(based system developed by EDS. There is consensus among managers that SMART had to be developed at the same time as SUCCESS to ensure compatibility and effectiveness of the new model. SMART is now available to all CDS consortium counties. In addition to SMART, San Mateo has developed an agency Intranet that holds state regulations, handbooks. meeting minutes and procedures.

SUCCESS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY?

Alameda and San Mateo are similar in some basic ways. Both are Bay Area counties required to deliver Federal and State safety net programs to their indigent residents, geographically both urban and suburban, linguistically and ethnically diverse, and willing to be innovative in service

delivery methods. The differences are worth noting also. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors embraces welfare reform, while the Alameda County Board of Supervisors has taken a "wait and see" approach. Even though San Mateo County is urban and diverse, it is much smaller and more homogenous than Alameda County. Lucrative employment opportunities are more plentiful in San Mateo, although housing is more expensive. Each county works closely with labor unions to reach agreement on how to change working conditions, although Alameda has reached impasse more frequently on issues such as reclassifying staff, non-traditional work hours, caseload size and implementing mandated changes.

Despite these differences, there is much that Alameda can learn from San Mateo in developing its upcoming Service Integration and Innovation Program (SII). SII is part of the Agency's five year strategic plan to move to a more integrated, multigenerational, neighborhood based, prevention focused system for CaIWORKs families at risk for child maltreatment due to sanction, time limits or other factors.

The following features of SUCCESS have already been implemented to some degree, and could be increased in Alameda County:

- Being neighborhood-based
- Integrating Agency services
- Regionalizing
- Emphasizing the Work First model
- Focusing on prevention
- Strategic planning

The following features of SUCCESS could be implemented in Alameda with ample lead-time and consensus among the stakeholders:

- SMART
- Blending of Child Welfare and TANF staff
- FSSTs/MDTs
- Reduced caseloads
- Non-traditional work hours and locations

The following feature of SUCCESS would be extremely difficult to implement in Alameda due to a lack of support by key stakeholders:

- Full Family Sanction

Alameda County should continue to build on a number of its existing programs and practices to ramp up for a move to agency wide service integration. The great diversity and size of the county (1.4 million residents and over 2,500 square miles) have demanded decentralization and smaller, more neighborhood-specific offices. Alameda has 24 offices offering different combinations of services; none integrates all the services in the agency. There is a school-based child welfare services unit, a System of Care child welfare services unit in addition to several Medi-Cal outreach units, and eligibility staff outstationed at schools and hospitals.

The Alameda approach to decentralization has been piecemeal and largely at the request of other agencies. San Mateo made one large change and set the stage for other agencies to follow. The difference in approach is the result of many factors. In Alameda, for example, the caseload size (58,000 CalWORKs children, 100,000 Medi-Cal cases, 3,000 Emergency Response reports per month) has caused a scarcity of resources, a crisis-oriented work culture, and obsolete computer systems. These obstacles have, at times, discouraged even the most optimistic.

In an effort to reverse the trend of dealing with the "here and now" to "where do you want to be in 5 years?" Alameda County secured a Strategic Planner. They convened an interagency planning team to focus on the agency's previous accomplishments and gaps in service delivery and to make recommendations for ways to move forward toward a new model. The Service Integration and Innovation program will build on the Agency's momentum to become prevention-focused, neighborhood-based, and outcome-oriented.

The following aspects of SUCCESS will be the most difficult to replicate in Alameda County:

- Implementing SMART Experts agree this could take at least one year.
- Reducing caseloads for Welfare to Work staff by 50% to encourage personalized service. Alameda recently moved to a banked case management system for eligibility to deploy more resources to intake staff; however the benefits of this have been offset by difficulty in recruiting experienced intake staff.
- Integrating eligibility and employment functions into one classification. Labor Management meetings have been ongoing, with no resolution.
- Using a full family sanction. Among those involved in Alameda County's Welfare Design Team, there was no interest in pursuing sanctions harsher than those of the state.
- Increasing the access and frequency of multidisciplinary teams for the use of CalWORKs families at risk of sanction.

CONCLUSION

Fortunately, there is far more to be learned from San Mateo County than just the specifics of SUCCESS. The bigger lesson is how to plan and manage change. First and foremost there must be personal and political will on the part of key community leaders. The change has to reflect a response to the needs of the community and clients. Staff experienced in strategic planning, data analysis and organizational development must "hold" the process of change by providing facts, vision and attention to process. Staff from all levels must be included in all phases of planning and implementation so the system reflects their experience and expertise.

Alameda County and San Mateo County will eventually arrive at two systems that look similar, yet reflect the individuality of their respective communities. This is precisely what the Personal Work Opportunity and Responsibility of Act (PWORA) of 1996 and the CalWORKs program of 1997 intended: to release states and counties from rigid categorical funding and allow them to design new programs that achieve better outcomes for those in need. Both counties have a wealth of experienced and dedicated staff and managers. The involvement of articulate and involved

advocates and clients and most importantly a willingness to look outside their system for different models and best practices.