

Marin County's Health and Human Services West Marin Service Center: Collaborating Direct Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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“Neighborhoods can be bridges, or barriers, to lives of freedom and opportunity.”

The West Marin Service Center is an example of integrated services and a “front-to-back” mentality. This particular case study of the West Marin Service Center is a demonstration of how to be successful with different divisions collaborating to better serve the community, families, and individual clients in need. To help the increasing rural

and Latino population of Marin, the West Marin Service Center is bicultural and bilingual and all staff is knowledgeable of the divisions and can guide clients. The West Marin Service Center is an outstation that serves the clients of West Marin and offers resources to sustain them in their lives with collaborative services.

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In today's uncertain economic climate, more families are relying on social programs, such as Medi-Cal, food and employment assistance, and housing programs, just to get by. Yet, in many communities, social programs like these still exist in isolation because of the locations and disconnected outreach.

Sonoma County Human Services Department is comprised of five different divisions: Economic Assistance, Employment and Training, Adult and Aging, Family, Youth and Children, and Office of the Director. When a client qualifies, the outreach unit is able to open a case for CalFresh and/or Medi-Cal; however, if a client wants services from another division, a general phone number of another division is given to the client for assistance. Sonoma County recognizes that integrating services is essential and more effective for the clients; division collaboration simplifies and speeds up the service delivery and helps the clients anticipate their needs. Currently, Sonoma County Human Services has an outreach unit in the Economic Assistance division that goes to different communities in Sonoma County to educate people about the CalFresh program and The Affordable Care Act during open enrollment.

The purpose of this case study is to see how Sonoma County might use this model of integrated services to better serve clients in not just rural communities but the whole county.

Background of West Marin Service Center

The West Marin Service Center, known to the community as "la casa blanca," the white house, was established in 1972 in Point Reyes Station due to the need for clients to be served in rural Marin: located off of the Shoreline Highway, a 20-mile span between hoof shaped Muir Beach and Tomales Bay. West Marin Service Center serves seven unincorporated communities: Point Reyes Station, Olema, Stinson Beach, Bolinas, Tomales, Dillon Beach, and Inverness. In the rural area of Point Reyes in West Marin, the service center has seven social service divisions under one roof. The place base service is managed by Marin County's Department of Health and Human Services, with their main office located in the historic Civic Center in San Rafael. The Marin Health and Human Services mission statement is "The Mission of Health and Human Services is to promote and protect health, well-being, self-sufficiency and safety of all in Marin County," which is clearly reflected by their relationship with the community they serve. Beneficial for their clients in the rural area, West Marin Service Center offers services in one location, which is more convenient for their population. The poverty in Marin County can be deceptively invisible due to this area being a tourist attraction and beautiful scenery, which is why there is a great need for the West Marin Service Center. Many families who reside on farms and other rural

FIGURE 1
Marin County Population 2000

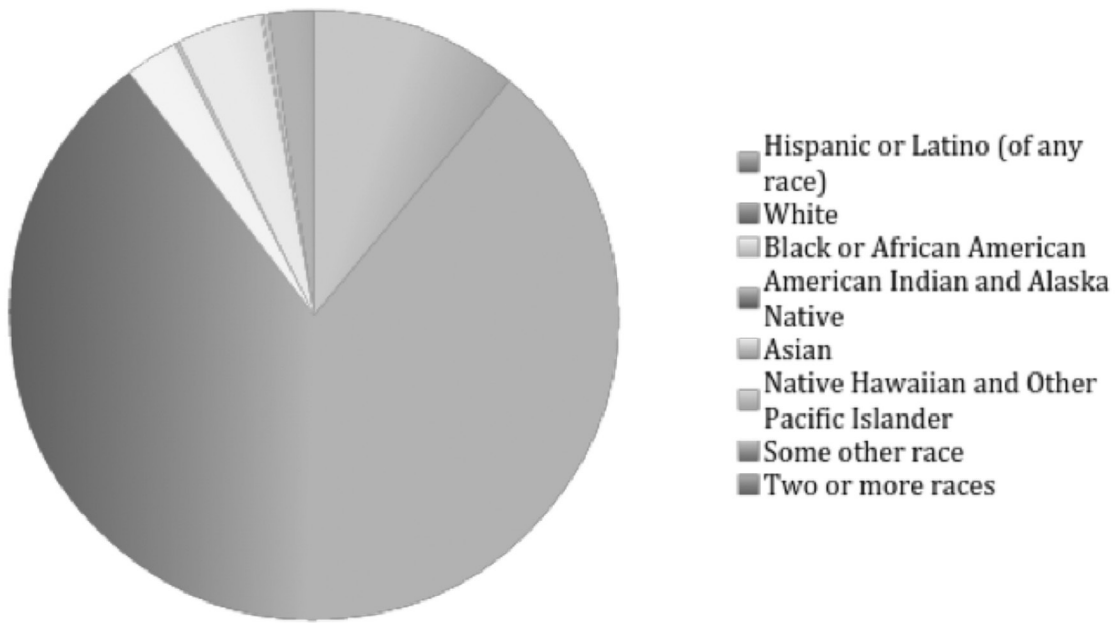
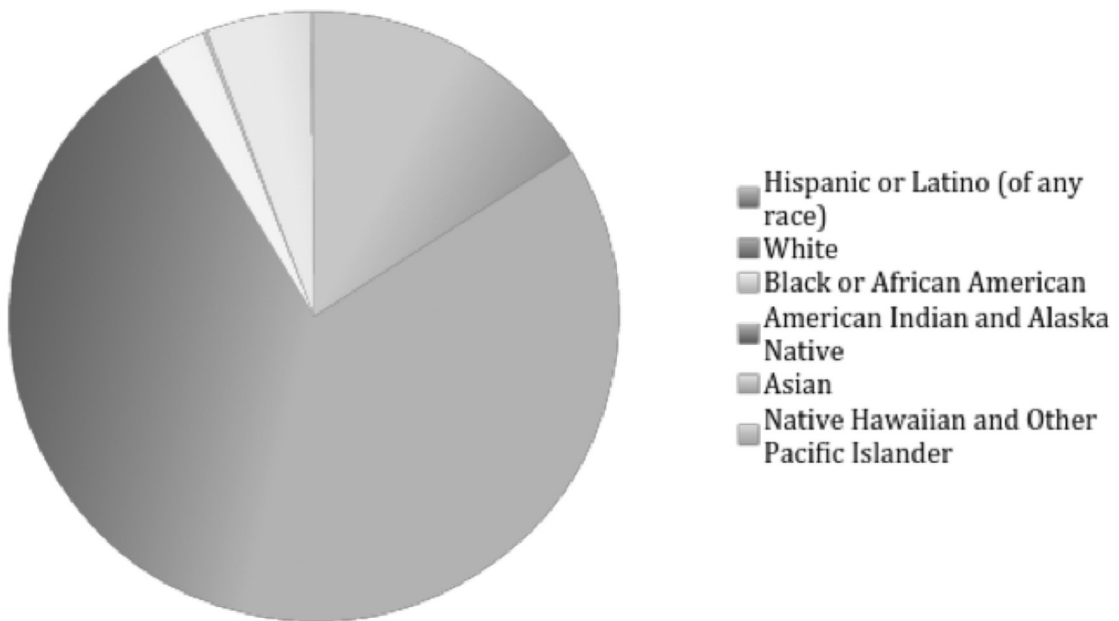


FIGURE 2
Marin County Population 2010



residences cannot readily access urban services. The service center's goal is to gain the trust in the community and be seen as an ally and resource for these rural residences.

The service center offers a variety of services and programs for their clients. The provided programs are:

- Economic Assistance (Medi-Cal and Cal-Fresh)
- Adult and Aging Services
- In Home Support Services
- Children and Family Services
- Mental Health Services and Substance Use Services
- Public Health Nursing
- Information and Referral Services

Each area has specialized services to support the community; the relationship between staff and client is genuine and helpful. When clients enter the service center, staff greet clients with knowledge of programs and are able to guide them to the appropriate service needed. A program manager oversees the staff. Staff includes:

- Office Assistants
- Eligibility Workers
- a Child Welfare Worker
- a Senior Public Health Nurse
- Social Service Workers
- a Psychiatrist
- a Licensed Mental Health Practitioner
- a Psychologist
- Pre- and Post-Doctoral Interns

In recent years, the Latino population in Marin County has increased. As a result, West Marin's staff adjusted to reflect the population they serve and are bilingual and bicultural to reflect the change in Marin's demographics. Although some in the Latino community in West Marin remain unaware of the services available, the service center has increased its outreach to the rural areas, including the farms and ranches, with bilingual staff to bring the knowledge of the services to the people.

Marin Demographics

The pie graph in *Figure 1* shows Marin County's demographics in 2000 with a race breakdown; graph in *Figure 2* shows changes in the same groups between 2000 and 2010; the population went from 11% to 15%, an overall increase of 42%. This increase in population drove the change to West Marin's staff culturally and linguistically.

Marin County's increasing Hispanic or Latino population demographics are comparable to the changes seen in Sonoma County where there is also an increasing Hispanic or Latino population, informing the need for additional Health and Human services for this growing population. Observations at the West Marin Service Center outstation provided a number of ideas to possibly incorporate at Sonoma County Human Services, but also generated ideas to increase efficiency in service delivery for rural clients.

The first thing one notices when entering the Service Center is the welcoming feeling and environment. The staff greet clients with a smile and are the navigators of the Center. They discuss the client's need and direct them to the service the client is interested in or needs. Daily, one might find health-related giveaways, such as toothbrushes, for the clients and families they serve.

West Marin Service Center Partners

Point Reyes is a small town with one post office. Clients and community members that partner with West Marin Service Center are welcome in the community and make use of the various resources at the Service Center which provides space for these community partners:

- Coastal Health Alliance
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- Self-Help Groups
- West Marin Senior Service Collaborative
- Office of the District of Attorney –Victims of Crime
- Classes for parenting, mental health, etc.
- Legal Aid of Marin

- National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI)

The post office is located next to the only grocery store in town, the Palace Market. The Palace Market is not an ordinary market; the market has an art gallery in the rear and a chef in the deli. The average client that comes to the service center cannot utilize the grocery store due to the expense of most of the specialty items. This beautiful area is a food desert, which means an area with a lack of healthy produce for the population that resides in the community. West Marin Community Resource Center (WMCRC) is a partner in the area that helps people with their food needs by working closely with county, state, and nonprofit organizations, such as the Marin/San Francisco Food Bank, to provide services to those who are unable to find assistance through other means. Its mission is no one in the community should go hungry. WMCRC helps with other aspects, such as Latino Engagement, emergency assistance for utilities and clothes, and referral services. The Service Center works together with the community to help the clients get services.

West Marin Challenges

The Service Center is unable to help with the General Assistance population as well as full

access to CalWORKS services at this time. The office is going to be re-modeled, and the department is considering more services to add to its center, which will also include more storage room. Confidentiality is another obstacle the office faces on a daily basis due to presence of various divisions and community agency partners and limited private space.

The budget affects every aspect of the service center. For the budget year 2012-13, it took \$1.6 million to run the center. The budget consisted of salaries for 9.4 FTEs, CBO contracts, a psychiatrist that comes once a week, and other operating costs. Of the \$1.6 million, a little over \$600,000 was county funds; federal and state government funding covered the remaining amount.

Findings

Sonoma Human Services should be able to adopt many aspects of the West Marin Service Center model. In order to adopt this model Sonoma Human Services would have to do the following:

- hire four eligibility workers to have a full outreach unit.
- start collaborating with the different divisions within the department to get liaisons to get involved in place-based services,
- write an MOU with the Health Department to expand services to mutual clients, and in the MOU set timelines, such as 3, 6 and 9 months, to measure the progress and/or address any changes that are needed, and
- once the staff and the MOU is in place, set up a team with representatives from each division and the Health Department to work together to get services to clients. The team will provide outreach to settings, such as health fairs, mobile home parks, schools, community centers, or other places clients who need the services may be

Sonoma County Human Services would become more efficient and would be able to reach more people in the rural communities by making its department an all-encompassing station for services. By increasing outreach, the department could reach more people in need. By collaborating across all divisions, more knowledge and efficiencies would occur throughout the department, making it easier for clients to navigate a range of services.

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