

## **EXPERIENCING NAPA COUNTY**

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What should you experience while spending two weeks in Napa County, California? I would suggest: the hands of Igor, a masseuse, after the mud and mineral baths of Calistoga; Victorian or Tudor homes turned to 'Bed and Breakfast' establishments; inexpensive movies where friendly folks are eager to talk about artistic attractions in their beautiful area; lazy drives along mustard lined roads including frequent stops to taste the fruit of the Valley and a visit to Napa County Health and Human Services Agency. Since there is a Visitor's Bureau in Napa and numerous books and pamphlets already exist about the first items on this list, I will spend the remainder of this paper on the last item.

How did the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) make its way onto this list of experiences to be shared? It is filled with friendly knowledgeable people who are developing innovative programs during times which are both fiscally and programmatically challenging.

Napa County HHS has become a combined agency. At the direction of the County Board of Supervisors, Napa has joined the previously separate departments of Social Services, Drug and Alcohol, Mental Health and Public Health into a single agency. The vision of this Agency includes that it is to be "a single system of health and human services for our community ... a system that includes, incorporates, integrates the resources of the community for the betterment of the whole." The system is to be proactive not just reactive; merge public, private non-profit and private sector thinking and creativity; include the client/customer in decision making which will help them to be less dependent upon the system; and to provide for the safety of children, families, disabled and elderly. Such a vision involves searching for funding sources, pushing for change on the state and federal levels, collaboration on a regional scale and constant evaluation.

Napa, and other counties which have combined numerous departments into a single agency, still have hurdles to overcome in order to become a truly integrated agency. The hurdles are not the fault of the county or its personnel, but are a result of regulations and categorical funding/claiming mechanisms which do not adapt to the new ways of doing business. The State and Federal levels of government talk about collaboration, integration, innovation but continue to overlay such talk with rules regarding client confidentiality which inhibit the sharing of information when a client requires multiple types of services and claiming methodology which require the tearing apart of integrated activities in order to know where and by whom each portion of the activity was provided so that the correct pot of money can be billed. All counties, integrated or not, must join to press for the redesign of such outdated methods and rules. Until changes can be accomplished HHS, in order to continue with their innovative approaches, has been proactive in developing collaborative proposals with either surrounding counties or within their own county's other public or private sector agencies to successfully secure many grants. It was through taking an in-depth look at the beginning stages of these projects that I feel I will be able to enhance my performance in Santa Clara County.

Napa County HHS in conjunction with Napa Valley Private Industry Council, Napa County Training and Employment Center (TEC) and many national, state and local partners, has developed the OPTIONS Project. (OPTIONS stands for: Opportunities for Participants To

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Identify Options for New Self-Sufficiency.) This Project is to be an innovative and replicable approach to "change the culture of welfare". It is to create a cultural shift from dependency to self-sufficiency. Fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) of federal grant money has been received for the 9/95 - 9/96 planning portion. A multi-component approach is being utilized in order to address all of the essential audiences: the HHS and its employees, the community and agency partners, and the recipients and applicants. Currently there are five inter-agency teams working on the areas of language and attitude; lobby redesign; application flow/diversion; public relations and conversion. The teams include representatives from many employee classifications and programs including clerical, eligibility workers and supervisors, employment technicians, training and fiscal personnel, etc.. The teams are still trying to get a fuller representation from other sections of the Agency such as mental health and social workers and client input. The team leaders have been chosen from and by the team members and are not necessarily those in supervisory classifications. The Project has defined their overall goals in a format which will be easy to evaluate. In addition each change team has defined a mission statement complete with goals and timelines. As the Project evolves the community will be continue to be informed of the changing culture through presentations by HHS, TEC, and appropriate partners to civic organizations, religious groups, and social clubs along with the local media carrying the message.

The lessons I will try to implement or be more aware of since learning about OPTIONS and its planning process include:

1. How important it is to include people of all classifications and experiences in the planning process this leads to professional as well as personal growth of all members; enriches the exchange of ideas; and helps to develop new or stronger leaders.
2. The bringing together of representatives from various program leads to an increased understanding of how all of the functions can form a comprehensive whole when dealing with our clientele.
3. When applying for grants we need to have an understanding of budgeting and resource allocation in order to be able to analyze what regulations need to be changed so that the pro gram will continue to function after the grant has terminated.
4. I am more aware of the steps involved in project development and how important it is to have a structured but flexible approach with defined goals and timelines-any of which can be revised as necessary.
5. That in any major culture change we need to begin the process internally with our own attitude and the language. Instead of starting change from outside, trying to change just the applicants or recipients, projects of this nature need to start with the employees, their language and attitude and role.

Another program that Napa County HHS is implementing through a five year federal grant joining Napa and Sonoma Counties is a comprehensive System Of Care (SOC) for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances. This is a result of a broad based planning effort in both counties which includes parents, providers, community agencies, California State Department of Mental Health, U.C. San Francisco and others with the mental health component of each county taking the lead role. The overall goal is to develop systems and methods of service to maintain seriously emotionally disturbed children in their homes or in the least

restrictive, most homelike setting that is therapeutically possible. In addition to being the most humane and effective approach for the children, this strategy is intended to reduce costly residential care and allow additional resources to be put in early identification and treatment.

The essential characteristics of the SOC include: 1) early, comprehensive screening and assessment, 2) strategic case-management centered interventions to maintain the child in the least restrictive environment, 3) system wide accountability for positive client outcomes and fiscal economics, 4) fiscal mechanisms for retaining cost savings to enrich the capacity of the system of care, 5) special efforts to involve parents, minority groups and the larger community in the system and, 6) close collaboration at all levels with schools, the juvenile justice system, social services and community-based organizations. Together these elements constitute a new way of doing business in mental health programs for children.

This new way of doing business has caused a paradigm shift for integrated services. The new focus is broad and collaborative, strength based, culturally competent, includes both the home and the community, is outcome driven and dependent upon flexible funding.

The purpose of the program is to provide added support for stabilization in crises situations which would have led to hospitalization and/or group home placement without the additional services. The program is open to all children in the County Mental Health system, but there is referral criteria and enrollment priorities. Any child found to be a -priority is eligible for wrap-around services and funding.

The assessment process is extensive and involves two SOC staff members. If found appropriate for SOC, a team is formed to serve the family and its needs. ("Needs" include but are not limited to: counseling, housing, car repairs, tutoring, day care, one-to-one supervision or any other services that will keep the child in the home.) The team is comprised of two SOC staff members, parents and/or foster parents and other identified as significant service providers or significant relatives or other support people. The cross county elements of the program include the evaluation team, crisis residential care providers, information system development and consultation services.

The components of this program that bear further examination and adaptation to programs in Santa Clara County are the statistical data gathering questions and the evaluation components. Both were found to be extremely extensive. The studying of this program has helped me prepare to implement some new data gathering tools in the Foster Care Eligibility Bureau and the our wrap-around program.

This case study has only highlighted a small portion of the things I learned. Along with a great exchange of ideas came the realization that no matter the size of the county, the number of employees, the configuration of the programs and departments we all have so much in common. We have either been `there', are currently `there' or will be `there' shortly. So when you are really there, take time to experience all of Napa County.