

## CSN Needs Forum - February 25, 2008

Sid Gardner's facilitation included a presentation on how to assess and prioritize needs in the county based on values, measurable outcomes, strategies, and fiscal realities.

He encouraged the group to mobilize community energy, avoid "failure by fragmentation", and move toward shared outcomes. He also underscored the need to look at the causes of needs for the best, long-term use of time and resources. Specifics of his presentation follow. Click on [Interagency Collaboration Priorities](#) to see the presentation.

### Data That Could Be Used As Filters For Choosing Priorities:

- ▶ Information on client/community needs
- ▶ Information on program effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes
- ▶ Information on shared caseloads (# of my clients enrolled in or needing your agency's services)
- ▶ Information about needs over time – if not served now – then how many will have to be served later and a higher level/cost. Do we follow up?

### Suggested Priority Projects/Issues:

- ▶ SAFE
- ▶ SED (Severely Emotionally Disturbed) youth
- ▶ Community Coalitions - more recognition and greater role
- ▶ Budget/position cuts
- ▶ Affordable housing
- ▶ 0-5 kids issues (i.e. school readiness, oral health, health risk factors)
- ▶ Integrated, seamless services
- ▶ Prevention/Intervention
- ▶ Family Resource Centers
- ▶ Gang activity/prevention
- ▶ Students of color
- ▶ Students whose primary language is not English
- ▶ Students who do not do well in school
- ▶ Youth (16-22) who can't/didn't pass the high school exit exam
- ▶ Relative care-givers
- ▶ Adoption specific education/support
- ▶ Children exposed to domestic violence
- ▶ Grief & Loss services for children
- ▶ Under-age drinking/drugs/prescription drugs
- ▶ Risky behavior, teen pregnancy, teen suicide
- ▶ Parents as key consumers – participation in evaluation and planning.

## **Framing**

The term “gangs/gang activity” is an example of the limitations of labels and the need to be thoughtful when framing issues/needs for consideration. How the issue is framed can broaden or narrow the number of people at the table who feel like they own it.

Examples:

- ▶ Gangs vs. Anti-social/At-risk behavior - the latter promotes a more proactive & comprehensive youth development perspective.
- ▶ Child care vs. school readiness

## **Collaboratives & Priority Setting**

Collaboratives set real priorities & follow through if they:

- ▶ Have adequate information on needs & outcomes (what works)
- ▶ Have strong communication across agency lines (about results and projects)
- ▶ Enlist community members and key groups in the process
- ▶ Tackle sustainability challenges that involve both kinds of sustainability.

## **Projects vs. System Change**

Projects can tell us how many clients were served. Systems change would look at how many were helped or supported (not necessarily “served”). How many in the community perceive it as necessary.

## **Root Causes vs. Issues**

Sid encouraged consideration of root causes – if projects are all we talk about without a discussion of root causes, we often do not think far enough ahead and instead focus on project or agency-driven requirements. Root causes should inform program design (i.e. overlapping poverty with single parent households would inform our look at parenting, parent education, pre-parent education, and child support).

### **Root causes:**

Poverty (family self-sufficiency)

Drug/Alcohol

Non-English speaking

Mental Health issues

Illiteracy

### **Issues:**

Homelessness

Parenting Skills

Unemployment/job skills

Perinatal Drug Exposure

Premature Births

Oral Health

Teen Pregnancy

School Failure

Abuse

Crime

Obesity

Neglect

Consider the use of community (not CSN) and youth coalitions to address “economic/societal” expectations (i.e. rethinking the practice of getting a limo for the prom). The risk here is creating a coalition for every issue.

CSN needs to be able to answer:

- ▶ What percentage of all dollars goes into SAFE/FRCs?
- ▶ What percentage is available in the front end of systems?
- ▶ What are our county's top 10 children, youth, and family priorities?
- ▶ What are the individual agencies measuring and why (what's required)?
- ▶ How well do we understand the broad resources picture? What do we know about the big-ticket children's resources in our county?
- ▶ How do new funds received compare to what is already there?

CSN should produce the following:

- ▶ Annual Children's Report Card
- ▶ Children's Budget (what's being spent on our top priorities)

### **Mission/Strategy**

What is our mission/strategy? It is not a mission to have 30 projects. Our mission should be narrower. Sid cautioned against doing a "data dip" that lasts too long and suggested that we already know what we need to be working on. CSN members need to bring their fiscal information to the table to take a look at what percentage is dedicated to different strategies relevant to children, youth, and families.