

KEEPING LINKED

A PUBLICATION OF CFPIC'S FEDERAL LINKAGES PROJECT
LINKAGES: CALWORKS AND CHILD WELFARE COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

OCTOBER 2008

Leadership Session

The sun setting over the Sacramento River and the beautiful view of the Capitol from the John Q Ballroom at the Holiday Inn in Old Town Sacramento couldn't compare to the presentations by the Leadership Panel consisting of **Ana Pagan**, Director of the Merced County Human Services Agency, **Julie Hornback**, Director of the Fresno Employment & Temporary Assistance, and **Cathi Huerta and Howard Himes**, Director and Deputy Director of the Fresno Department of Children and Family Services in Fresno County.

In conjunction with the Linkages Fall Convening, a separate Session was planned for Agency Directors and Program Directors to emphasize the important role that their leadership plays in moving Linkages forward in the county. Project staff shared with the thirty-five attendees from over twenty counties the analyses of the "Snapshot" project from last Spring, including a profile of the target populations being served, highlights of counties' innovative practices, and a brief overview of the statewide evaluation being conducted by Harder + Company. The participants in the Leadership Session learned that it is critically important for the Agency Director, the CalWORKs Director, and the Child Welfare Director to promote a joint vision of Linkages as a practice that serves both programs and promotes better outcomes for vulnerable families and children.

Ana Pagan delivered an inspiring and entertaining presentation that focused on her efforts to move her Agency from silos to one in which outcomes are shared and families are served holistically. The animated PowerPoint kept us all on our toes and with the music that accompanied the animated slides, we think it should be considered for an Academy Award. Ana stressed the importance of vision, perseverance, and having a sense of humor that allows leaders to move practices and

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Leadership Session

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initiatives forward even when staff might be resistance to the change. Linkages is a major strategy that moves the vision for her Agency forward, a vision that is captured in the motto “We fight poverty and abuse” .

Julie, Cathi, and Howard from Fresno demonstrated how two separate agencies can come together across different organizational structures to find common goals that benefit both the CalWORKS program and Child Welfare program and more importantly the children and families they jointly serve. One of the strengths of their Linkages initiative is that is integrated with other change strategies incorporated under the Leadership Team and the Family to Family Steering committee. Lead coordinators for Team Decision Making, California Connected by 25, Birth to six, Linkages, and other strategies have responsibility to report to their Leadership Team their progress in implementing their specific strategies and for integrating their efforts



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As we indicated at the May Min-convenings, it is important for Coordinators to think about how to bridge initiatives and to make sure there is an executive sponsor in the Agency who provides the authority and oversight that is necessary to ensure success for the Linkages strategy. One way of keeping Linkages in the forefront in both CalWORKs and Child Welfare is to make sure that Linkages is designed to meet outcomes from both programs, to make sure that there is an evaluation plan, and that progress is regularly reported to upper management. During these difficult budget times, “it just makes sense” to maximize resources, including staff time, by collaborating and coordinating your case plan and services across both of these important social services programs.

All of these points were underscored by the excellent presentations provided by Ana, Julie, Cathi, and Howard. The panel demonstrated how successful Linkages can be as an approach to improving the lives of children and families when it has the highest level of Agency support.

We are truly grateful to the panelists and to the agency and program directors who took time out of their busy schedules to reflect on how leadership truly makes a difference!