



KEEPING LINKED

A Publication of CFPIC's Federal Linkages Project

LINKAGES - Calworks and Child Welfare Collaboration to Improve Outcomes

November 2010

Fresno: Taking Advantage of an Opportunity to Sustain Linkages

Many of you might know that Fresno county is one of the Phase II counties (those starting in 2005) participating in the Statewide Linkages Project. But what most of you probably don't know is that Fresno County has been going through a major sea change around how their social services are organized in their county. Until recently, similar to Los Angeles County, Fresno's CalWORKs/Welfare to Work and their Child Welfare programs were in separate Agencies. Their Linkages Team was given the opportunity by their new Agency Director, **Cathy Huerta**, formally the Children and Family Services Director, to review their Linkages processes and make recommendations for improving the collaboration between CalWORKs and Child Welfare.

On September 27, 2010, the statewide Linkages Director and CFPIC Director were invited to a full morning presentation of Fresno's recent Linkages activities. **Danny Morris**, Program Manager and Coordinator for Fresno's Linkages initiative, along with other members of the Fresno Linkages Team, provided an overview of Linkages to their Executive Team, including Director Huerta. They also used the new Linkages video shared at the Fall Convening, "Meeting the Linkages Challenge" as a way of introducing just why Linkages is important for families.

To plan their expansion, Committees were formed around various topic areas; Fiscal, Central Services Desk, REACH Team, AB 429, and Data/Evaluation. Each committee provided the Executive Team with an overview of the committee's work, which outlined what could be done to improve services to vulnerable families who are served by both programs. Recommendations are being considered by the Director and Executive Team.

- **Fiscal:** By serving Linkages CWS families needing Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Emergency Housing and other services through the CalWORKs/WTW allocation they were able to save \$1,399, 494.35 in services and staff costs to the CWS allocation.
- **Central Services Desk:** This desk previously consisted of a Billing Coordinator and Office Assistant whose primary responsibility was overseeing and tracking expenditures from different funding streams. The Committee's goal is to improve the resource capacity and functionality of the Central Services Desk by developing a Handbook to let staff know what services are available for families as well as to recommend that a position be added that is responsible for Resource Development.



Fresno Linkages Team at Fall Convening

Con't on Pg. 2

Fresno: ... Sustaining Linkages

Con't from Pg. 1

- REACH Team** (which stands for Refer, Employ, Assess, Challenge, Heal): This Team assists clients in addressing the barriers of obtaining employment by linking the client and family to the appropriate resources and monitoring progress. The Committee is recommending that the staffing be modified and increased so that staff can be more available to the clients and be available for Team Decision Making which will serve the Linkages clients.
- AB 429:** The Linkages team proposes working with the Family Reunification families and has developed a Flow Chart outlining the process. This will involve staff collaborating with the Central Services Desk to identify AB 429 parent(s) and address client's needs. It also will involve the development of a Coordinated Case Plan.
- Data/Evaluation:** This Committee was assigned the task of gathering the Outcome data being requested by the Statewide Linkages Projects evaluator, Harder + Co. They used a comparison group of 50 families that received Voluntary Family Maintenance in June 2009 matched with families receiving services in 2010. The sample survey is in process and will be reported on when the next round of Outcomes are being requested by Harder + Co. The other objective of this committee is to review the Linkages Report that is being used by Fiscal staff to identify cost shifts from CWS to CalWORKs/WTW to insure they are identifying clients appropriately.



The most powerful part of the morning's program was the testimony of the families that told their stories about how they had made drastic changes in their lives because of the services they received from the Department. A young couple talked about how getting involved in the work activities required by the Welfare to Work program helped the husband to see that he could get a job to support himself and family. He was able to get clean and sober so that he could concentrate on what was important in his life, and sitting by his side was his wife, and entertaining all of us by his curiosity and active joy for exploring everything around him was his toddler son. A young mother with her baby on her lap shared how she had been able to get out of a very violent relationship because of the support and services provided to her.



Cathy
Huertes
&
Howard
Hines

Linkages could have become lost in the many organizational changes taking place in the merger of two Departments. However, much to Fresno County's credit, they used this change to further enhance and sustain their Linkages initiative. We commend their Linkages team and the Agency's Administration for their forward thinking and vision for serving multi-system families in a coordinated approach.