



Supporting Collaboration among Youth Service Providers

Youth Council: San Benito County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Coordinating Youth Services, Staff Development

The Challenge: The San Benito County Youth Council was facing a lack of funding. The WIA can only accommodate a certain number of youth, yet there are more youth in the county who need services. If they cannot be assisted, they are referred to a partner agency. They use the One-Stops as the place where they refer to a partner agency. The challenge was that not all of the agencies were aware of each others' services.

The Practice and Evidence: The Youth Council organized regular meetings for agencies to meet. During the school year, they have a quarterly meeting with all the agencies that provide youth services in the community. "At the meetings we share information," said Maria Fehl of the One-Stops Career Center/CSWD. "We iron out the bugs."

In the year prior to setting up the meetings, forty youth were served. Once the system of meetings was in place, over a hundred youth were served.

The Details: According to Fehl, every agency is short staffed. There may be some concern that joining together with other agencies will create more work, or people may be unclear about how partnering with other agencies will help them accomplish their mission. Fehl notes that they make a point of addressing these issues. "At the first meeting, we identify what's in it for each agency. We also talk about how it is going to benefit the youth they serve," she said. Fehl also recommends that the organizers talk to the partners involved, "so they get an idea of what was their initial reaction, feeling, when you approached them."

Once the agencies have made contacts with one another, they begin to work together to serve particular youth. Fehl gave an example: "We can work with Probation and have two individuals [one from their office and one from ours] who are constantly counseling the youth. It results in a better rate of success for the partnering agencies." The collaborations that emerge support a shared sense of purpose. Fehl said that partnering service providers tend to work from the perspective of "they are our youth."

Breakthrough Moment: For Fehl, the breakthrough came "When the referrals started coming in and we started sharing names of the youth, and the [youth] actually started coming in and we shared information with the service providers. You have other agencies, including the courts.

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That is a great feeling when you know the program is successful. The judge wants to have the agency come in for minor offences, using a Deferral program approach. Our view is the youth is still salvageable and maybe if we keep the youth busy, he or she will focus on the future, on career preparation. We refer to ROP or to ILP, depending on the youth. We might send them to Gavilan College.”

What’s Next for this YCidea? Adding the Superior Court; the Youth Alliance, a gang prevention program; and having Juvenile Hall juveniles being released to their agency. They are also talking with the YMCA about financial arrangements.

Where to Go for More Information

San Benito County Youth Council

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