

Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative
Working Together...Serving Families...Improving Lives

Collaborative Coordinator's Report
Prepared by Jane Patrick, Collaborative Coordinator
December 14, 2009

Partnership Matters

FY11 Work Plan and Budget - Based on the current status of the Biennial Planning Process and the fact that this is a critical piece of information for future planning of all the work groups, I am requesting that the Collaborative's routine budget planning cycle be delayed by one month to ensure that the Biennial Plan is available to all the groups as they determine the initiatives they will work on in FY11. Basically what this would mean is that the March 1 CEO Group meeting will include preliminary work plan and budget reviews from the School-based Mental Health and Early Childhood Work Groups, the April 19th meeting will focus on work plan and budget requests from the other work groups, and the administrative budget will be decided on May 17th based on the work plans approved for all work groups.

School-based Mental Health

Renewed energy has been sparked in creating options for school-based mental health programming in Battle Lake, Henning and Underwood, the three remaining districts where there currently is not specialized programming in place. Meetings between superintendents, mental health providers and the county are being scheduled within the next month. It is the hope that concrete plans for programming will be developed for these districts in the next few months, with programming to be initiated at the start of the 2001-11 school year.

Truancy Prevention Work Group

A total of twenty United Ways were selected to participate in the Family Engagement for High School Success planning meeting which was hosted by United Way World Wide and the AT & T Foundation at Harvard University on December 7 & 8. Fifteen sites were selected for full planning grants and five, including the United Way of Otter Tail County, were selected to participate in training with the understanding that they would likely be eligible to resubmit an RFP when additional funding becomes available. Although not guaranteed, it is also anticipated that organizations selected for planning grant dollars would also be eligible to apply for implementation dollars during the course of the planning grant cycle with implementation to begin in the fall of 2010. Other United Ways selected included those in or near: San Francisco, CA; Waterbury, CT; Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Gainesville, FL; Macon, GA; Gurnee, IL; Detroit, MI; Cape Girardeau, MO; Jackson, MS; Bozeman, MT; Greenville, NC; Winston-Salem, NC; Las Vegas, NV; Reno, NV; Lima, OH; York, PA; Nashville, TN; Brownsville, TX; and Dallas, TX.

Important Notes:

- Because the United Way of Otter Tail County was one of the sites selected for training dollars but not planning process dollars, this potentially opens up the opportunity for us to submit a revised proposal on behalf of Otter Tail County Schools. While it is not anticipated that additional dollars above the original \$50,000 would be available for planning purposes, if invited to reapply, additional schools may wish to become involved in the planning project to explore ideas for family engagement initiatives countywide.
- Race to the Top initiatives will require adequate family engagement processes and programs using research and evidence-based models.

Goals:

- 1) To cut the dropout rate in the United States in half by 2018.
- 2) To work with existing programs, services and community strengths to close gaps and connect families not otherwise engaged.
- 3) Nationwide “Cradle to Career” community norms which support that family engagement is a necessity not an option.

Core beliefs:

- 1) “Relationships” (i.e. parent-school-community) involve at least two sides of equal importance – each side has expectations and obligations.
- 2) All parties in a relationship are capable of caring, loving and/or respectful attitudes if given the opportunity. (Research shows that nationally only 9% of teachers fully support “family engagement” at high school.)
- 3) 9th grade success is the critical indicator to overall high school success. (Is the 9th grader on track for a meaningful, self-supporting career?)
- 4) One proven common denominator of school success is student attendance.
- 5) Adolescence alone is a challenging and trying time. When coupled with other stressors within and beyond the student’s control, it can be completely overwhelming.

Student perspective:

- 1) Just want someone to care – need at least one caring adult in their lives to act as a leader.

Parent perspective:

- 1) “Even your toilets are smarter than me.” ***Looking through the lens of a parent’s eyes.***
- 2) Tend to connect with services, communities and organizations that are non-judgmental and make them feel welcome; avoid those that make them feel inferior.
- 3) “I feed them, clothe them, give them a roof over their head and get them to the school door. Whose job is it to educate them?” Students benefit from “Academic Socialization.”
- 4) Feel inadequate and/or unable to help students with homework based on new teaching methods. (Note: Parents helping students can actually do more harm than good because teaching methods are much different from those parents learned as students.)

Family engagement strategies to consider:

- 1) First day of each month is family involvement day at school.
- 2) Open schools on Saturdays when families are able to access.
- 3) Ensure that communication to parents is easy to understand and clearly identifies parent and agency expectations. (What do parents need to do and what will the agency do?)
- 4) Communicate consistent information to parents AND students.
- 5) Use public libraries as meeting spaces to provide a neutral location for adolescent/family involvement especially for “hard to reach” families.
- 6) Community cafés – parents changing the lives of children through conversations that matter (thecommunitycafe@gmail.com).
- 7) Involve community stakeholders – how will each local business benefit from a quality work force?
- 8) Have parent(s) serve as parent liaison for each classroom and be responsible for disseminating information to other parents.
- 9) Teachers to talk to kids about what kind of college they went to, share a college experience, and encourage children to talk to their parents about college even at a young age.
- 10) Conduct annual “learning environment survey” for parents, students and teachers.

- 11) Purchase *Families, Schools and the Adolescent: Connecting Research, Policy and Practice* for all local schools.
- 12) Appoint parent coordinators in each school or grade level (could be a parent or other community member.)
- 13) Appoint a family engagement person in each district.

Resources:

- 1) 40 Developmental Assets Survey Tool from the Search Institute (completed by kids and parents)
- 2) Dashboard technology
- 3) snapgrades.com (web based system to track student progress, attendance, academic performance)
- 4) *Families, Schools and the Adolescent: Connecting Research, Policy and Practice* by Nancy E. Hill and Ruth K. Chao
- 5) Waterbury Collaborative Parent Engagement Initiative
- 6) Waters Foundation
- 7) *Community: The Structure of Belonging* by Peter Block (Rock?)
- 8) One Dream, Two Realities – Perspectives of Parents on America’s High Schools (October 2008)
- 9) *Beyond the Bake Sale* (Book) with practical checklist of whether or not it is family friendly.

Children’s Mental Health Local Advisory Council (LAC)

What: After School Snack Session

When: Today! Monday, December 14th 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Where: Prairie Wind Middle School
Room 703 (7th Grade House)

Presenter: Kathy Simpson, RN, BSN, CNS
Psychiatric Child Adolescent Clinical Nurse Specialist
Lakeland Mental Health Center

Topics of the Day:

- What is Bipolar Disorder
- New research and information
- Learn how you can make a difference

This session is free and open to the public. Elementary and high school teachers, students, paraprofessionals, parents, and other community members are encouraged to attend!
Certificates of attendance will be available.

Service Coordination/Community Interagency Transition Committee (CTIC)

Fall 2009 – Transition Tool Box Summary

Fergus Falls: Tuesday, October 27 from 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Attending: 16

Presenters: Deb Anderson, Vocational Rehab
Rebecca Waldera, Freedom Resource Center
Jon Kragness, M State Fergus Falls
School Contacts: Ellen Anderson

Underwood: Tuesday, November 10 from 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Attending: 14

Presenters: Deb Anderson, Vocational Rehab
Rebecca Waldera, Freedom Resource Center
Jon Kragness, M State Fergus Falls
School Contacts: Anne Stenoien

Breckenridge: Tuesday, November 17 from 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Attending: 19

Presenters: Deb Anderson, Vocational Rehab
Joyce Wolter, Freedom Resource Center
Joy Eichorn, North Dakota State College of Science
School contact: Joyce Wolter

Total presenters: 5

Total other attendees: 49

Note: One additional session is tentatively being planned in New York Mills. More details to come later. A BIG THANK YOU to everyone that made these session possible!

Chemical Health Work Group

Interest is definitely growing surrounding the topic of prescription drug abuse which the work group is currently addressing. Training and other community forums have been cropping up throughout the region which are directly related to this concerning new issue. Based on this regional, statewide and national attention, the group feels confident they have selected the right initiative to focus on during the course of this year.

Safe Communities Coalition

The multi-media safe driving campaign is again in full swing. A big thank you to Lakes Country Service Cooperative for partnering with the coalition to apply for grant funding to support the coalition's efforts. We received word in November that the coalition was successful in their grant request and has now received \$1,000 from the **Pamida Foundation** to help pay for media advertising. Other community organizations and sponsors are also being sought and will be given free advertising within the messages as part of their contribution. So far the **City of Fergus Falls**, the **Dalton Café** and the **Fergus Falls Liquor Store** have also allocated resources to help support safe driving messages.

Opportunities for Collaboration

- Someplace Safe is offering free community presentations on violence prevention and awareness. For more information contact Diane Kittelson at 218-739-3359.
- The Children's Mental Health Local Advisory Council is interested in hosting Brown Bag Lunch sessions throughout the year to raise awareness for children's mental health. If your agency is interested in working with the LAC to host a session, please contact Jane Patrick at 218-736-3458 or by email at patrick@prtel.com
- The LAC is also interested in securing additional consumer representatives to sit on the advisory council. Persons interested in becoming involved in the LAC should contact Jane.
- The Chemical Health Work Group is developing and planning community presentations and other awareness activities surrounding the topic of prescription drug abuse. If your organization is interested in working on this initiative and/or hosting a community presentation about this topic, please contact Jane Patrick at 218-736-3458 or by email at patrick@prtel.com
- Full Service Schools - contact Deb Wanek at 218-863-5910
- Children's Services funding is available for children with medical necessities. For more information contact Public Health or Shannon Erickson at 218-998-0935
- State Health Improvement Plan - contact Diane Thorson at 218-998-8320
- H1N1 Updates - contact Diane Thorson at 218-998-8320
- See other opportunities on the web at: <http://otfsc.org/>