

FUTURE PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Our direction is clear – our Lane County community, in partnership with the state, must lead and that leadership will require character and courage. It will demand that we be inventive, flexible and willing to team with multiple sectors in the state and local communities. It is one thing to feel the need for change, it is another thing to create and manage change. That is our charge and our challenge – to develop actions and strategies that will create a future where we give as much priority to promoting children’s potential as we do to ameliorating problems.

Lane County Values (SB555 Systems Planning Consortium Vision List):

- Blend system pieces without looking at money
- Put children and families first
- Learn to play together and view it as an opportunity to learn together and have fun
- Remember Teamwork – “The longer the trail, the longer you have to walk to work the next day.”
- Pay attention to diversity, always remember that our community is constantly changing
- Listen to the children and youth
- Balance the power in our community
- Planning process should lead to funding services that actually work
- Value best practices
- Listen to the children, they are crying out to us everyday in many ways. Stop and think about their daily lives

What does it take for a community like Lane County with its rich and diverse history of collaborations and connections to have truly successful systems change? There are seven key principles or elements that if integrated in all systems serving children, youth and families will result in real system reform:

- **Collaborative Decision Making** – All collaborative efforts must involve a diverse and representative group of participants.
- **Public Education and Community Support** – On-going efforts to educate and involve the entire community to gain commitment to collaborative goals, with this process contributing to accountability.
- **Parent, Consumer and Neighborhood Participation** – Services, supports and opportunities that focus parent, youth and consumer participation in all aspects – from development, to implementation to assessment of results – have the best chance to address underlying needs in a productive manner, to achieve meaningful outcomes, and to be accountable to the community.
- **Accountability for Results** – This requires clarity about vision and goals, and effective means of measuring outcomes and holding all participants accountable.
- **A System of Effective Services, Supports, and Opportunities** – To ensure that children, youth and families succeed at high levels requires effective services to meet individual needs; a nurturing community with a rich array of

natural supports; and economic and social opportunities for growth and development.

- **Financing and Resource Development** – Strategies to finance system reform must consider redirecting existing resources; gaining maximum benefit from federal and state funding sources; leveraging private and community resources; and securing new funds when needed to achieve results. Multiple community assets, such as neighborhood and community volunteers, existing facilities, civic and religious institutions, must also be mobilized.
- **Leadership/Professional Development and Capacity** – Provide leadership development opportunities for all participants in the collaborative efforts, which would include line staff, parents, consumers, neighborhood leaders, and professional staff. All need to change the way they think, work, and act and many may require new skills in order to contribute to effective collaboration.

The potential of SB555 is to first identify how existing agencies from the different arenas fit together and where activity in one arena can inform the others. Our challenge is taking the time to sort through the work and learn the language of each other, thus the first task has been to form a foundation of information from which we can build, revise, reconstruct and reconfigure our system of supports and services. An example of a “real” system reform would be that wherever a family or individual goes and asks for help, it would be the “right place.” No questions, no long discussions, they would be offered help and assistance, treated with respect and made to feel welcome. The system would be flexible and accommodating.

Some of the results of surveys we conducted or reviewed highlight some of areas we may want to consider in the next phase:

- In the **United Way Household Survey** respondents ranked ensuring the well-being of children and youth as the #1 social issue. This would indicate some level of community support for countywide efforts.
- The Success by 6 **Parenting Norms Survey** indicates lack of awareness of many of the programs available to assist children and families. This points to areas of improvement in outreach to raise awareness of services available in the community.
- The Lane County **Linkages & Communication Survey 2000** (see Appendix H) highlights ways that early childhood services are currently linked and how they could work more effectively. A seamless system of supports that is based on a family’s strengths would be a good place to start the community discussion of future priorities.

In anticipation of the next Phase II guidelines, Lane County will take the time from September 15th to June 30th, 2001 to:

- ➔ Conduct youth mapping
- ➔ Conduct a 40 developmental assets survey
- ➔ Develop an evaluation strategy for our planning and coordination efforts

- ➔ Thoroughly involve our communities of color by ensuring representation on all planning bodies, going to individual groups, gatherings, communities, etc where people will be most comfortable
- ➔ Initiate conversations with parents, family groups and individual members as appropriate
- ➔ Host multiple community conversations
- ➔ Complete a thorough county wide mapping by community/region using zip code, school attendance areas, etc

This additional information gathering will lead us into the next step in the planning process, which will occur in the 01-03 biennium. The information will be specific to the needs of Lane County's rural and non-English speaking children and families. It will include a thorough look at existing services to determine whether they are best practice and/or research-based. It will include a comprehensive examination of system and program strategies to assure that families find access to services no matter where they begin their effort. Future information collection methods will include community forums and focus groups to solicit opinions and perceptions from specific segments of the community, interviews with key individuals such as service providers and policy makers, and targeted consumer surveys. The process of gathering and assessing information vital to planning for services will be ongoing, and each new biennium it will build on the accumulated knowledge gained in the previous planning effort.

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