

## Community Networks and Review of Community Efforts Technical Assistance Grant

### Mason Community Network

1. In June 2003, the Mason Community Network (MCN) sponsored a “Children, Youth and Family Summit.” The focus of this event was to identify system changes necessary to improve the health\* status of Mason County’s (MC) families. 1) System service integration and 2) access to basic services (like food, housing and medical care) were identified by the community as top priorities. During the 2003-2005 MCN work plan, system service integration was targeted as a vehicle to **reduce incidents of child neglect and abuse**, under the working hypothesis that if families-in-crisis could get crisis-intervention and preventive services in a timely and reliable way, then the impact of family crisis on the children’s well being would be reduced. Once system integration (services across ‘silos’) opportunities are more fully developed, then the community will be in a better position to identify and address real gaps in service.

(\* the definition of health is based upon the WHO’s definition: health includes physical, social, economic, and emotional health)

Since July 2003, MCN has aligned its Work Plan with other agencies’ work plans (Mason Matters, CHOICE Regional Health, and Readiness to Learn grant -RTL) to establish the foundation to complete a community review of family services and systems with the purpose of developing more effective service integration across agencies. The purpose of this Technical Assistance Grant is fund necessary staff support to complete the community review process on service integration.

The Community Review Process will be built upon the commitment of the RTL consortium members and the Mason County School Superintendents. The key policy markers and local program administrators are committed to listening and responding to the needs of/suggestions from families-in-need. By combining these two groups, the key local leaders are ‘at one table.’ They will be able to respond to the community and to identify opportunities in their programs/services where their resources and/or policy actions may be adjusted to better meet the identified needs. We envision a process whereby those most directly affected by the current service systems (families and children) are able to tell their stories, articulate their needs/suggestions for improvement and be heard by the program administrators. The program administrators will be responsible for reframing the family’s stories/suggestions into actionable recommendations that will be brought forward to the Family Policy Council and other relevant planning/governing bodies.

The one-year process will include a number of back and forth conversations and negotiations between the families and the program administrators, until both stakeholders can agree upon a set of actionable and meaningful recommendations.

The main question to be answered in this review is “How can we adjust our current service systems so the service integration opportunities are maximized, allowing fewer families to fall through the cracks and getting the most efficient use of limited community resources?”

This review process is initially based upon the following assumptions:

- i Since the school systems (including private and home-schooling) are the only systems that touch all families’ lives in a consistent and long-term manner, it is the natural “core” service provider around which other services can be wrapped.

- ii The current ‘silo’ approach to service delivery is not the most efficient or effective investment of current community resources.
- iii Some perceived gaps in services are actually gaps in ‘care coordination’ across agencies.
- iv All ‘problems’ with the current formal systems are not inherent to these systems; some ‘problems’ are due to misunderstanding/wrong assumptions.
- v Not all non-fiduciary suggestions can be able to responded to; there will be a need to prioritize.
- vi It is possible for the community to make decisions based upon the ‘best interests of the client’ and ‘best stewardship of public dollars,’ and let go of ‘best interests of my agency.’”

The Community Review Process will be based upon information from four main perspectives:

- i families-in-need or who are at-risk who rely on our community safety net (formal and informal services) in times of crisis,
- ii lay-advocates for these families who help navigate the systems in times of crisis,
- iii front line service providers who advocate for their clients within the formal systems, and
- iv program administrators who know how current program requirements/regulations impend their staff’s ability to help clients.

The Community Review Process will use the following approaches/resources to collect needed information:

- i Families-in-need. The RTL, front-line service providers, and AmeriCorps VISTA staff will help identify and organize ‘dialogue groups’ with families willing to tell their stories and/or offer their suggestions. They will also collect their stories from individuals, on a one-on-one basis.
- ii Lay-advocates. Families participating in the ‘dialogue groups’ and front-line services providers will identify these people, and staff will be directed to collect their stories and recommendations. Additional information will be gathered from Parent-Teacher Organizations, faith community advocates, and business advocates as they are identified. AmeriCorps VISTA staff will facilitate this activity.
- iii Front-line service providers will be asked to complete joint 360 degree reviews with other ‘partner’ service providers, focusing on those service providers from whom their clients receive concurrent services. Front-line service providers will also be asked to review their program guidelines/policies to identify internal program opportunities for improvement. Grant-funded staff will facilitate this activity.
- iv Program administrators will be asked to identify opportunities where current program guidelines/policies can be adjusted/modified necessary to allow their staff to provide better services by maximizing service integration opportunities. Grant-funded staff will facilitate this activity.

All data will be analyzed qualitatively, first finding common ground between the program administrators and the other perspectives’ results. Secondary data analysis will identify the 1) most frequent and 2) most impactful/meaningful (in terms of improving clients lives and maximizing service integration) opportunities for improvement. This analysis will be based upon the families,’ lay advocates’ and front-line service providers’ information. All stakeholders will then be involved in prioritization processes, and then come to agreement on a set of final of recommendations. The grant-funded staff will facilitate these activities.

2. a. Network membership. The Current MCN Steering Board includes Jayni Kamin (MC Commissioner), Pat Cusack (Shelton School District), Steve Kutz (MC Health Department), Ed Boutwell (United Way), Marilyn Sayan (community), Diane Cooper (community), Terry Oliver (community), and Diane Goldy (community). We are also developing two affiliated networks: Union Cares and North Mason Community Action Network (NMCAN); these groups are largely non-fiduciary in membership. The 2005-2007 budget has limited staff support for the affiliated networks, so their activity levels have waned a little since July 2005. This will be resolved once the two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers begin in January 2006.

Majority non-fiduciary leadership in Community Review Process. The basis for the final recommendations will be the families' and their advocates' stories/suggestions. The data analysis will look for common ground among these 'stories' and bring them forth to program administrators, who will in turn, look for opportunities in their programs to respond to these suggestions. The program administrators will be tasked to reframe these suggestions into action and meaningful recommendations. If strongly held community suggestions cannot be responded to (due circumstances beyond the control of state programs e.g. union restrictions), then the program administrators will provide non-fiduciary community with appropriate explanations.

- a. Role of Board. A joint meeting was held on October 28 with the MCN Board and the RTL Consortium. At that meeting, an update of the community process and alignment of various work plans were presented so that attendees could 'see the big picture' with all the pieces organized for system integration efforts. The FPC'S RCW 70.190.110 was discussed in great detail. At that time, the participants agreed that a FPC Technical Assistance grant was necessary to support the on-going effort. The grant application was drafted by the Network staff, and sent to MCN Board members to review and comments. A public meeting was set for December 12, 2005 when the Board approved the grant application (see attached)
- b. Capacity to engagement customers. Four school districts have RTL staff who have direct contact with families-in-need of services and at-risk families. They will help organize 'customer dialogue groups' with targeted population. The Grapeview PTO is a strong supporter of the project (2003-2005 Work Plan) and, as a member of the RTL consortium, they will be tasked to help bring other school PTO's into the review process. Mason County is a small enough community, so that professional front-line service providers have the capacity to bring their customers into "dialogue groups." The two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers will provide the additional capacity to organize their 'dialogue groups' throughout the community on an on-going basis. Mason County also has other grass-roots action groups, like North Mason Community Voice, that can be included in the engagement activities.
- c. Commitment of Partners: The larger Review process will be organized through the alignment of three local initiatives: MCN Board of Directors, RTL consortium [grant application includes signed letters of support from local state agency leads – DSHS (Economic Admin) Employment Security, Department of Health, CTED (RSVP), four RTL School Superintendents, ESD 113 (Nurse Corps), and Grapeview Demonstration Project

Partners (PTO, Lions Club)] and the remaining four School Superintendents (including private schools). At the Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> Mason County Superintendents meeting, agreement was reached to merge the RTL and MCN meetings as part of the regular Superintendents' meeting (extended agenda every other month). All seven school district superintendents are interested in participating in the process. See attachment for Superintendents' letter of support, list of the RTL Consortium members and a description of Consortium responsibilities.

- d. Lasting Impact. The Service Integration Review process addresses two impact areas: 1) Strategic Problem Solving and 2) Development of Thriving. The ConneXions system will provide the MC Community with tools/infrastructure to that will allow service integration and coordinated care planning to continue after the Review is completed. The outcomes of the Review Process should result in system changes that allow maximum utilization of the ConneXions capacity. Commissioner Kamin is interested in establishing a Children and Youth Commission. Follow-up efforts for on-going system improvements could be part of this group's mission.
  - e. Budget. MCN is applying for a Technical Assistance award of **\$5,977.20** to pay for 170 hours of staff time (\$35.16/hour including salary, payroll taxes and employer benefits). Mason Matters will continue to contribute the office and administration expenses associated with these efforts, as part of their in-kind contribution. The 170 hours will only purchase 14 hours/month toward the year long Review Plan. It is anticipated that the staff time needed to support an effective review process is at least 384 hours (4 days/month). The current network budget includes some staff time that can be directed toward this project. The AmeriCorps volunteers will also provide some of the local community support. This resource is currently funded in the MCN 2005-2007 Work Plan. The additional staff support resources will be included in the Mason Matters work plan/budget as part of their commitment to implement ConneXions, and count as match contribution to the Technical Assistance Grant.
3. Currently (2005-2007), the MCN is able to provide only 15 hrs/month for staff support for the Network. This budget item covers some, but not all the of staff time needed to support the Network Board, complete Family Policy Council (FPC) reporting requirements, and participate in FPC training events, and supervise the two AmeriCorps positions currently funded by FPC dollars as part of the current work plan. **The Community Review Effort/process WILL NOT happen in Mason County if these Technical Assistance funds are not granted to the MCN.** The MCN has made a commitment, pending availability of financial resources, to Mason County Community that if we could get critical the work plans aligned, the right pieces in the 'puzzle box' and the right people to the table, then we would use the FPC's RCW 70.190.110 as leverage point to restructure a service system that meets the needs of families in this community.
  4. MCN is committed to document the Community Review Process using the formative and summative report guidelines provided by FPC.
  5. The Community Review Process in Mason County will be led by Kimberley Klint, Executive Director. Mason Matters, PO Box 1580, Shelton, WA 98584, 427-9670 ext. 543.