



WAHKIAKUM NETWORKING CAFÉ
MONDAY SEPTEMBER 8, 2008 6:00 – 8:00 PM
MINUTES

September's Networking Café began at 6:00 with a working dinner and networking opportunity.

Attending were:

Kari Schillios	Wahkiakum School Board
Beth Hansen	St. James Family Center
Susan Schillios	Charlotte House
Carole Lewis	Community at large
Karen Fleming	Wahkiakum School District
Erin Wilson	Wahkiakum County Drug Crimes Steering Committee
Judy Bright	Wahkiakum Health & Human Services
Abby Burns	Wahkiakum High School youth
Lisa Ridout	Public Education
Jeff Fithen	Wahkiakum Sheriff's Office
Chris Holmes	Wahkiakum Human Services
Kassy Burdick	Faith community
Colleen Theisen	Washington State Department of Social & Health Services
Tammy Peterson	Wahkiakum Community Network
Lia Sealund	Wahkiakum Community Network

FOCUS OF EVENT: FAMILY RETENTION

Following networking opportunities, presentations were delivered, focusing on the September theme of **Family Retention**. This includes both formal and informal supports systems for families in Wahkiakum County. Written reports focused on answering the important question, "Are we doing the work *right*?" To answer that question, several pieces of information were necessary; including the following elements:

- ❖ *What are the identified goals of the service's provided, as intended by the legislature?*
- ❖ *What is the current status of the families, children and the community as it relates to the goals of the services provide?*
- ❖ *How is the service provider collaborating with other agencies within the community and state to achieve its goals? What agencies do you collaborate with?*
- ❖ *What options are available, or that you would like to see in place, to address specific barriers to success or to make improvements?*
- ❖ *What are your current successes?*
- ❖ *What are your current or anticipated challenges you would like to present to others for brainstorming?*

PROGRAM REVIEW

Family preservation and support and Crisis residential care:

Reports were received from the following agencies serving Wahkiakum County both formally and informally:

St. James Family Center

Department of Social & Health Services

Wahkiakum Community Network presented data trends for Births (Mothers age 10-17) and Victims of Child Abuse and Neglect in Accepted Referrals. Both data was obtained

from Research and Data Analysis, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services county report, Community Outcome and Risk Evaluation GIS, July 2008 report.

Teen Pregnancy: Outcome trends suggest there has been a sharp decline in births by teen mothers, reaching a peak of 12.35% (per 1000) in 1998 and currently at 0% in 2006. However, discussion among healthcare providers and youth attending the local 2007 Healthy Youth Summit reflects a growing concern that the data does not reflect the number of actual teen pregnancies due to the high number of pregnancies ending in abortion. Youth attending the summit reported sexual activity and teen pregnancy as their number one concern. Equally concerning is the continued problem behavior of underage drinking. Efforts have been increased as a result, focusing on reducing underage drinking and improving community laws and norms favorable to substance abuse.

Child Abuse and Neglect: Outcome trends indicate there has been a steady decline in accepted referrals of victims of child abuse and neglect in Wahkiakum County, with 61.6% (per 1000) in 1998 vs. 30.4% in 2006.

Reductions in the above outcomes may be the result of the launching of the Family Support Services program in 1999 by St. James Family Center. This agency implements programs like evidence based home visiting, developmental screenings and parent education and collaborates with local service providers such as Wahkiakum Health and Human Services, ECEAP Parent Policy Council, Wahkiakum County/DSHS Child Protective Team and the Cowlitz/Wahkiakum Coordinating Committee. Statewide, collaboration includes the Council for Children and Families, Parent Trust of Washington. Nationally, they coordinate with Circle of Parents.

Additionally contributing to the reduction of these outcomes are services offered through Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). This agency serves Wahkiakum County to provide the following services: intake, child protective service investigations, child welfare services, child welfare services court unit, adolescent unit and family team decision meetings. DSHS collaborates with community partners for any child considered to be at moderately high to high risk for abuse or neglect. The staffing offers suggestions as to necessary services and to whether it is necessary to file a dependency. Law enforcement staff, educators, mental health professionals, treatment providers and public health staff participate in child protection team meetings.

There has been a past concern for lack of Family Preservation Support services available for Wahkiakum County due to services housed only in Olympia or Vancouver. If services were needed in Wahkiakum County, most of the funds available were consumed in travel time between sites. However, services are now based in Longview as well, ensuring increased services available to our rural community.

Foster Care

Reports were received from the following agencies serving Wahkiakum County:
Department of Social & Health Services

Wahkiakum Community Network presented data trends for Out of Home Placements for 2000 - 2007. Data was obtained from Family Policy Council of Washington State. Wahkiakum Community Network relies on this data, rather than total count of youth in foster care in Wahkiakum County due to the unusual number of licensed foster homes in

the community. Currently there are 5 licensed foster homes and 19 beds available in the community serving youth from multiple surrounding counties. Data reported below focus only on youth removed exclusively from zip codes within Wahkiakum County.

Out of Home Placement: Since 2000, data suggests there has been a steady decline in out of home placement for youth residing in Wahkiakum County with 7 youth removed in 2000 vs. 3 removed in 2007, but cases reached an unusual high of 13 youth in 2006. Extensive time was spent examining any unusual circumstances that may have resulted in higher numbers in 2006; representatives from DSHS and law enforcement believe this may have been a result of steady case development that resulted in removal of youth from 3-4 families, culminating in the results of 2006.

There is an upcoming concern for the loss of student support services to youth in K-8 of Wahkiakum School District as of July 2008, because of the reduction in staff of the counselor due to a lack of funds. The counselor has traditionally served as a primary contact for the youth if they had personal safety concerns, as well as a contact point to offer referrals to students and their families for counseling services and local resources. However, as of September 2008, additional services have been extended to the elementary and middle school by the current Student Resource Officer, and limited services will be offered by the high school counselor. Time will tell whether this proves sufficient for the needs of the students and teachers.

Employment Services

Reports were received from the following agencies serving Wahkiakum County:

Representative not in attendance

Wahkiakum Community Network presented data trends for Unemployment Persons (Age 16+). Data was obtained from Research and Data Analysis, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services county report, Community Outcome and Risk Evaluation GIS, July 2008 report.

Unemployment: Data reports indicate unemployment was on the rise between 1998 and 2002 where it reached an all time high of 9.9%. Since that time, it has slowly been declining, reaching 6.6% in 2007.

BRAINSTORMING CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following three challenges were presented to the Networking Café for brainstorming:

1. St. James Family Center has been repeatedly challenged to attract qualified staff and reduce staffing turnover. Results of brainstorming resulted in the following recommendations:
 - a. Resource through temp job services before hiring permanently
 - b. Develop employment package that offers coordination with Wahkiakum on the Move
 - c. Effective advertisement through use of local websites
 - d. Research subsidies to offer living wages for employees
 - e. Perhaps collaborate with other local agencies to pool costs to offer better benefits
 - f. Collaborate with other agencies like school district to get referrals
 - g. Develop internal tools to improve and strengthen morale such as:
 - i. Annual anonymous employee survey to gauge employee frustrations, reduce employee conflict with coworkers and management and increase employee satisfaction

- ii. Provide in-service workshop trainings to build bonding. Could use this to present some feedback received from survey and brainstorm, kind of like the Networking Café among employees. It could be done with minimal cost, perhaps once annually on the clock for 2 hours. For a cost of under \$1000, morale could be improved and turnovers can be reduced, as well as a chance to reduce operational costs, supply costs and improved efficiency of staff
 - iii. Implement employee feedback form/comment box. This can offer a chance for employees to comment by name or anonymously if they see possible solutions to problems in the workplace. Making changes based on their feedback will empower employees and increase the feeling of a vested interest in success of St. James Family Center
2. What options are available, or that you would like to see in place, to address the rate of unemployment or services related to retraining, including needs of older youth?
- a. It would be great to offer a job fair; this could include components such as job skill requirements, connection to technical and community colleges and apprenticeships to obtain skills, interview training, business clothes donation and trading and resume writing
 - b. Begin in high school by offering a variety of services to expose youth to value of education, job training and career exposure, but in particularly focusing on the type of jobs that are available within the community to encourage youth to return after schooling to raise a family in Wahkiakum County. This could include:
 - i. Being held as a school career day and include opportunities for youth to sign up to complete portfolio projects such as video editing, historical projects related to Wahkiakum and technical skill development
 - ii. Have it held at the beginning of the school year so youth can sign up with local agencies to “shadow” or intern with businesses during their early release or late arrival to expose youth to jobs within Wahkiakum County and help them plan their educational needs. Perhaps the Network can fund for a coordinator for this position or use existing staffing
 - c. Hold a satellite office for Lower Columbia College in Wahkiakum County
 - d. JARC and Made in Wahkiakum transportation services – offer more information and advertisement for access to, and eligibility for use of services
3. How can St. James Family Center improve outreach for families in rural areas of Wahkiakum County?
- a. Offer meals and food for those who are attending
 - b. Provide flyers and information and collaborate with WIC, public health nurse and school personnel as an invitation to utilize resources rather than referral
 - c. Offer temporary or one-time free childcare for job seeking families to encourage them to use daycare services in the future

UPCOMING WAHKIAKUM NETWORKING CAFÉ’S

*December: Intervention/Prevention Services
December 1, 2008*

*March: Community and School Services
March 2, 2009*

Consolidated Juvenile Services	Community Mobilization
Violence Prevention	Childcare
Community-Police Partnerships	Early Intervention & Educational Services
Victims Assistance	Drug & Alcohol Abuse Prevention & Early Intervention in Schools