



## COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

### **REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**

September 2009

Community Solutions is a process that began in 2006 in Benton and Franklin Counties for the purpose of bringing the community together to find solutions to health and human service problems. 200 community leaders participated in the development of a comprehensive regional plan with the vision of improving people's lives by creating lasting change in community conditions. Over 1,000 hours was initially invested by these leaders in studying local issues and identifying the plan's major focus areas and expected outcomes which are as follows:

#### **OUTCOMES: What needs to be accomplished to achieve the ultimate Community Solutions Vision?**

1. **Self-sufficiency**: People will have access to basic needs such as food and housing, and individuals who are able to work are self-sufficient through gainful employment with livable wages and other assets.
  - Increase the number and percentage of people who reside in stable and affordable housing.
  - Increase the number and percentage of people who are financially self-sufficient.
  - Increase the number and percentage of people who consume adequate and nutritious food.
2. **Education**: People will have access to and benefit from early education, high school graduation, basic skills training, post-high school education and life-long learning.
  - Increase the number and percentage of children ready for kindergarten.
  - Increase the number and percentage of people who graduate from high school.
  - Increase the skills and competencies of adults.
3. **Health**: People will live healthy lives through emphasis on prevention, as well as access to needed healthcare.
  - Increase the number and percentage of people who practice preventative healthcare.
  - Decrease the number and percentage of people treated for preventable diseases.
  - Increase the number and percentage of people who have access to quality, affordable and timely healthcare.
4. **Safety**: People will be safe in their homes, schools and neighborhoods, and live in a community free of abuse, neglect, violence, and crime.
  - Decrease the number of neglect and abuse incidents.
  - Decrease the number of violent crimes against people.
  - Increase neighborhood safety.

#### **COMMUNITY PROCESSES: What essential processes must the community excel at to achieve the outcomes and ultimately the vision?**

To deliver the Plan's outcomes, the community must excel at four community processes:

1. **Regional Planning – Emphasis on Prevention and Root Causes**  
Addressing the underlying causes of our community's health and human service problems is critical.
  - Engage a broad segment of the community for Community Solutions planning and implementation.
  - Increase service recipient input.
2. **Resources Structured for Effectiveness and Efficiency**  
It is essential that financial and non-financial resources be identified and leveraged in a manner that results in increased effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of health and human services. More significant impact can then occur in responding to unmet and emerging needs, as well as addressing the wide-array of issues that currently exist.
  - Increase the dollar amount saved, as well as leveraged, among the organizations as a result of

partnerships formed for the achievement of Community Solutions outcomes.

3. Formation of Partnerships and Strategic Alliances

New and emerging community-wide alliances and partnerships between organizations, programs, government entities, policy makers, etc. should be formed when appropriate. Strategic alliances foster cooperation, increase benefits to recipients and avoid duplication and unnecessary competition.

- Increase the number of partnerships and strategic alliances among organizations.

4. Availability/Awareness of Community Resources

Community resources must be available and accessible to all individuals through a highly coordinated health and human services system in which community organizations collaborate and communicate so that limited resources are used effectively and efficiently.

- Increase usage of 2-1-1 and other information resources designed to increase community awareness of services available.

Strong community processes will result in an increased likelihood that the community will deliver on the intended outcomes and realize the vision.

**COMMUNITY BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS: What needs to be changed or strengthened to achieve the community processes above?**

To support the essential processes, there are key behaviors and actions that must occur:

1. Education about Local Needs

Education among community organizations, businesses, government, persons needing services, volunteers and all other stakeholders regarding local needs and issues is critical to promoting understanding and compassion.

- Increase awareness of the community challenges in relation to the four Community Solutions outcome areas.
- Increase the number of advocates or spokespersons for Community Solutions.

2. Wide-Scale Collaboration and Mobilization

Collaborative approaches are crucial to the success and sustainability of community change efforts because they reduce duplication of services, provide integrated services, help achieve program outcomes and decrease costs. Efforts should be made to pool resources, embrace best practices and proven success, while encouraging ingenuity and innovation to address unmet needs.

- Bridge the communication and collaboration barriers caused by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996.

3. Communication and Coordination among Service Providers

Multiple forms of communication among services providers are needed and should be developed to insure cooperation, effective and efficient planning and implementation of selected strategies and to avoid duplication.

- Increase communication and coordination among service providers in Benton and Franklin Counties.

4. Diversity and Inclusiveness

The community values diversity as an asset and must seek to fully integrate and engage all groups in creating and supporting initiatives that embrace inclusiveness. No human resource should be untapped or wasted because of prejudice based on race, age, gender, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

- Increase the number and percentage of minority groups who are in leadership positions, as staff or board members of organizations.

5. Promotion of Community Involvement

All people should be inspired and have the opportunity to participate and share their talents in the vast abundance and variety of community services.

- Increase the number of volunteers and hours of service.

Effective community behaviors and actions will result in strong community processes, which therefore result in outcomes and the vision being achieved.

## **RESULTS – January 2008 to August 2009:**

The following are just a few of the numerous successes that have occurred as a result of Community Solutions, as well as some examples of the broad scope of work involved:

- 200 community leaders representing health, education, law and justice, faith, government, business, etc. continue to be engaged and participating in Community Solutions. Small and large group meetings and planning sessions occur as needed to insure coordination and collaboration.
- In order to measure progress in achieving the Community Solutions' service outcomes, objectives were identified and baseline data was collected on numerous social areas such as: kindergarten readiness, high school graduation, preventative healthcare, healthcare access, crime, domestic violence, affordable housing, etc. This information is being collected annually for comparative purposes.
- Measurable objectives and baselines were also identified for the numerous community processes, behaviors and actions that are critical to the achievement of outcomes and the vision. This information is also being collected annually.
- Surveys are being utilized to collect input from community leaders, service providers, consumers, and other community partners to improve the effectiveness of the Community Solutions planning and implementation process.
- Our Babies Can't Wait (OBCW) initiative was developed and launched in early 2009 and is demonstrating how the collaborative aspects of Community Solutions can bring multiple organizations together with a common vision and shared passion in order that long-term solutions can result in lasting change. There are over 40 organizations involved with OBCW. The initiative includes a community-wide information and education campaign to increase awareness of the importance of early childhood development. Services are also available to provide screening for new babies and assistance for parents in increasing their knowledge and practice of early learning techniques for their babies. They also receive services to connect them with local agencies available to assist them. Since the January launch of this community-wide initiative, over 100 parents have directly benefitted.
- The Community Solutions Plan is utilized by many organizations throughout the community to guide their strategic planning efforts and to obtain state and federal funding.
- Many local organizations also use the Plan to aid them in making funding decisions.
- Extensive media coverage and community-wide distribution of materials and information has occurred to foster understanding and implementation of Community Solutions' principles and activities.
- Blue Ribbon Advisors and Team Members were asked to provide feedback regarding their opinions about United Way's performance as the facilitator of Community Solutions. Respondents shared that the facilitation services have been professional, credible, organized, effective and inclusionary. Respondents also shared that there has been moderate impact in the specific outcome areas of the Community Solutions Plan. Whereas, on the Plan's Community Processes, Behaviors and Actions which pertains to elements such as collaboration, coordination, and leveraging resources, people indicated that there has been very significant impact. Overall areas needing improvement (which are receiving concerted attention at this time) in the Community Solutions process include:
  - Encouraging greater diversity in community representation for Community Solutions;
  - Increasing input from service recipients and other community residents;
  - Reporting successes and accomplishments of Community Solutions more frequently;
  - Developing a structured process for selecting future community-wide initiatives.

For more information about Community Solutions, visit [www.communitysolutions-bfco.com](http://www.communitysolutions-bfco.com) or call United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties at 509-783-4102.