



Champions for Inclusive Communities

Star Community

San Francisco County, CA

San Francisco County is a large, urban, strikingly beautiful community with many different cultures. Their population of over 745,000 is only about 50% Caucasian, with the other 50% being made up of a variety of ethnicities.

One organization in San Francisco called HRIIC (High Risk Infant Interagency Council) heads up an interagency effort in the community to improve organized services to young children with special health care needs. HRIIC was created over 20 years ago when the state of California, along with other states, received federal funding (Part H of IDEA) to implement early intervention interagency groups that would coordinate services for infants and toddlers. Although the original funding ran out 5 years later, the county believed the program to be a vital part of the community and has been funding it to ensure coordinated services. Currently, HRIIC is funded by First 5 San Francisco, an agency that receives its monies through a state cigarette tax. Today, HRIIC is stronger than ever and is appreciated by families of children ages birth to 5 with special health care needs (CSHCN) all over the county.

The Structure of a Successful Team

HRIIC reflects strong partnerships among many agencies throughout the community. The Golden Gate Regional Center, Support for Families of Children with Disabilities (a Family to Family Health Information Center), San Francisco Unified School District, and California Children Services, among others, work with HRIIC to streamline services for families (a full list of members is available on HRIIC's website). They accomplish this through a very successful model of interagency collaboration evidenced through regular interagency meetings and interagency care coordination.

HRIIC's Roundtable meets monthly and is made up of a group of care coordinators from the same agencies who engage in other interagency collaboration activities. They gather together monthly to work on behalf of families to better connect young children to services. Led by a HRIIC care coordinator, the Roundtable discusses various options for services and collaboratively brainstorms and makes recommendations for services that would be the most beneficial to the family's situation. Through this process, families are connected with services as quickly as possible while receiving help overcoming potential barriers. According to Ann Carr, Director of HRIIC, the Roundtable is known for "constantly reaching out to bring the community services to families and their child with special health care needs."

HRIIC also convenes regular General Council and Steering Committee meetings of interagency stakeholders to address barriers that families experience with accessing early intervention services and develop interagency solutions to coordinated service delivery system for families.

Encouraging and Training Family Leaders

San Francisco has a strong orientation towards recognizing families as partners in decision-making. One of their partners in the community, Support for Families of Children with Disabilities, has staff members who are parents of CSHCN. Support for Families participates in the

Roundtable and provides parents with peer-to-peer support through community resource parents (CRPs). CRPs are there for families as an empathetic guide to help them navigate the often-confusing system of services within the community. They also mentor them in their role as decision makers in the care of their children by providing information, support, and training. Most parents find this support from other family members invaluable.

Parent training also takes place through many venues in the community. Support for Families is part of a team that trains families in the community on issues such as transition into and through the school system. Training called Health Care Connections is available to help families understand how to negotiate insurance. Support for Families along with other Parent Centers throughout the state who make up the Family Voices of CA Council (the Family to Family Health Information Center) have also recently developed a 6-part training Leadership Development curriculum for parents. They are currently waiting for funding to come through that will support distribution of the curriculum and training. Support for Families also provides parent representation on HRIIC's interagency council meeting venues, thus providing another venue for parent leadership.

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Cultures

Because San Francisco has such a diverse population, they are very adept at providing families with culturally competent services. Service providers realize that being culturally competent means offering services in

What makes a Star Community?

ChampionsInC has created the Star Communities program to recognize exceptional communities.

Star Communities will show excellence in 6 Performance Measures:

- Families are partners
- A "Medical Home" provides coordinated care
- Children receive early and continuous screening
- Families have adequate funding/insurance to pay for services
- Services are organized so families can use them easily and are satisfied
- Youth receive necessary services to make the transition to adult life

read about other Star Communities at
www.ChampionsInC.org



languages that families speak and with knowledge of family customs and values. Family Resource Centers, jointly funded by 3 San Francisco agencies—Human Services Agency, First 5 San Francisco, and Department of Children, Youth, and Families—are located throughout San Francisco. They provide a range of family support services including counseling, case management, referrals, parenting workshops, family-child activities for children under 5, mental health services, and homework help for school-aged children. If a family hasn't applied for health insurance or would like to explore their options, they can go to the Family Resource Center in their neighborhood. "Here, families can enroll in insurance programs and gather information about a variety of other services such as food stamps, income taxes, and access to other services" explained Laurel Kloomok, Director of First 5 San Francisco. Each center is tangibly unique as it adapts to the neighborhood and cultural climate. One center may be responsive to the predominant Latino culture in their neighborhood, while another may be more responsive towards families of Asian descent. Support for Families focuses on CSHCN and works with these Family Resource Centers to provide a circle of support for the families citywide.

HRIIC's website also contains translations of all resources in both Spanish and Chinese. This is in response to the large number of citizens in the community who speak these languages; however, they are just threshold languages. If HRIIC were to meet the needs of every English-as-a-Second-Language speaker in the area, resources would have to be translated into 118 different languages.

Providing Adequate Insurance and a Medical Home

San Francisco is happy to report that close to 99% of children in the county have health insurance. They receive these benefits through either the Healthy Kids or the Healthy Families program. Luckily, the city has the support of the mayor behind it. He has committed to making sure every child has adequate health insurance.

HRIIC is working closely with the medical community and early intervention providers to help support the medical home concept. Judy Higuchi, Associate Director of HRIIC, says that two physicians are members of the Roundtable to help address medical questions about subjects that are brought up by families such as health issues, testing, and assessments. She says, "This has been a really good partnership that is going to continue and grow." Physicians throughout the community regularly refer patients to HRIIC for services. Young children who attend the state's universal preschool program or other early childhood programs are also connected to a medical home if they don't already have one.

Screening Strategies

San Francisco is currently working on strengthening the universal developmental screening system. Although a number of pediatricians and other medical providers, including the physicians that attend the Round Table, regularly use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to screen the children in their pediatric practice, the city has not quite achieved universal developmental screening yet. "All children who attend universal preschool programs that are funded by First 5 San Francisco are screened using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire by a member of the preschool

staff and we are currently in the process of implementing this in the Family Resource Centers as well," explained Laurel Kloomok.

Coordination for Families

Care coordination is a well-developed practice in the community of San Francisco. HRIIC has full-time staff members who provide care coordination for families in English, Spanish, and soon Cantonese. They are especially concerned with families who are experiencing multiple psychosocial stressors such as mental health issues and extremely low income. HRIIC provides short-term care coordination services to families while their children are in the initial phase of first being identified as having a special need as well as when families are struggling to negotiate a number of agencies.

The care coordinators also work closely with service providers on the Roundtable to problem solve linkage issues the family may be experiencing. Janice Polizzi, Early Childhood Special Education Director for San Francisco Unified School District, says that the Roundtable makes it possible for families to coordinate with service providers and agency representatives to come up with service plans and hopefully make services more accessible for children ages birth to five.

Transition Experiencing a Bump in the Road

When it comes to transition to adult life, San Francisco has experienced some bumps in the road recently. Just months ago the community was addressing transition issues successfully through the Improving Transition Outcomes Project (ITOP). ITOP is an interagency council developed to address transition outcomes for youth with special health care needs in the community. Unfortunately, the program recently lost almost all funding. Despite disappointment throughout the community, the group continues to meet and hopes to soon pinpoint the right funding to give the program the jump-start it needs.

An Interagency Success Story

Gloria Anthony-Oliver, Education Liaison at the Human Services Agency, remarks how helpful it is to be able to call the Roundtable at HRIIC to keep the ball rolling for families. Otherwise, she says, they would often fall through the cracks. She describes the quality of Support for Families' peer parents by saying, "It's just wonderful when I go out into the community and I meet one of the Support for Families peer parents. I don't have to worry about these children after they're referred because there is good follow up."

When asked how they are able to sustain their efforts over time, the community gives credit to the city government funders who recognize the importance of the work and are willing to make it a priority. Janice also says, "I think we have a willingness to look at issues as they arise and figure out ways to bring partners together to address those issues."

All of this combines into one very impressive model to look to for maintaining successful interagency services that clearly benefit both families and service providers alike. Juno remarks, "If one agency left, it wouldn't work so well." HRIIC and its partners would continue on and be successful, but the collaboration between agencies is strong now – many of them have been working together for 20 years. They hope to continue to strengthen the community and families with CYSHCN by sticking together for many years to come.

Community Contacts:

Ann Carr, Director
High Risk Infant Interagency Council
415-206-7743
acarr@hriic.org

Juno Duenas, Director
Support for Families
415-282-7494
jduenas@supportforfamilies.org