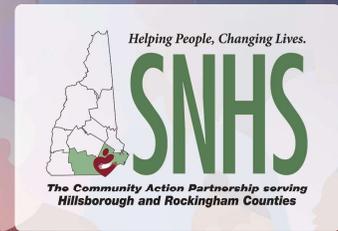


WHOLE FAMILY APPROACH PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

by Southern New Hampshire Services (SNHS)

Region 1 • Manchester, New Hampshire
snhs.org



Whole Family Approach

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

The “Two-Generation” approach to delivering social services has existed within the Head Start program for more than 50 years. Southern New Hampshire Services (SNHS) is building on and expanding this model beyond Head Start by developing a Whole Family Approach to delivering services, which aims to break the cycle of generational poverty. This initiative involves changing the service delivery model within the agency, moving from siloed departments and services to a wholistic approach. Each participating family will work with a “coach” who will provide intensive case management support in helping the family develop goals and plans to achieve them within realistic time frames. Support services from within SNHS, as well as partner organizations in the community, will be utilized to overcome the barriers which prevent families from moving beyond their current circumstance.

LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED BY INITIATIVE

In the 2020-2021 program year, SNHS served more than 4,400 families with children, including 8,710 children under the age of 18. Families face many barriers to accessing services and positively changing their circumstances, including lack of transportation, technological capacity, literacy and reading skills, the ability to take time off from work to attend appointments, lack of knowledge as to how to navigate the social service delivery network, and more.

The Whole Family Approach is designed to work with families in a holistic way and improve access to services by streamlining the paperwork process,

eliminating repetitive office appointments and paperwork, and actively engaging community partners in addressing needs beyond those SNHS can meet. Rather than just making referrals, SNHS’s coaches serve as the go-to person for their family, helping families make connections with other service providers and ensuring that they have access to what they need. This approach also engages the family in achieving their own success instead of reinforcing their role as a passive recipient of services and benefits.



The Whole Family Approach helps parents develop the skills to advocate for themselves and their families, engaging them in developing goals and planning for their family’s future. The family can move forward at their own pace and achieve their goals when they are ready. It is a labor-intensive, long-term process, but it is vital to changing the fortunes of families, and in turn, communities. People need to know they have strengths, and that they are capable of being in a better place than their current circumstances would lead them to believe.

In turn, focus group discussions and input from current service recipients have confirmed that service delivery needs to change. Duplicative paperwork, siloed service delivery and disjointed efforts within the agency and community all contribute to frustration on the part of clients and impede them from moving forward with SNHS's services. This initiative, written into the agency's strategic plan, intends to address those issues and provide greater opportunities for success.

ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

CSBG Funds are used to pay for staff and some supportive infrastructure (software, staff training, professional expertise needed, etc.).

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

The agency's service delivery system was reconfigured to ensure that it is client-centered, as opposed to making the client fit within the structure of a strict grant-management model. The client's experience, as well as the outcomes from interactions with the agency, was transformed. The client is now supported in developing their own goals and will have a better customer service experience with the agency as a result. The agency, in turn, underwent changes in staff roles, organizational structure, and overall culture.

Another component of this Whole Family Approach is the development of peer support groups, in which current or former participants interact with other participants, especially newer families or ones who are struggling, in a structured way. Support from others who share a similar lived experience and who are going through the same process is a powerful tool for motivating people to stay engaged and working to build a better future for their families.

EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

Studies by the Aspen Institute and other organizations have demonstrated that children do better when parents do better, and vice versa. The Urban Institute has conducted studies demonstrating the positive impact of Whole Family

models. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard has conducted significant foundational work on understanding how poverty, stress and other factors affect childhood development.

A research team at the University of Pennsylvania collected survey data from 138 families served by two collaboratives applying the Whole Family Approach in the New York City metro area. Initial findings revealed the following:

1. Child well-being is improving, and young people are more optimistic about their future.
2. Relationships between parents and children are improving.
3. Financial competence and the employment rate among parents are significantly increasing.
4. Parents' mental health, especially mothers', is improving.

Additionally, the Whole Family Approach has also enjoyed a long history of success and positive impact in Head Start programs.

Addressing the needs of the whole family produces more lasting positive outcomes for clients and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the organizations that serve them.

EQUITY LENS

The initiative makes service delivery more client-centered: Each family has a voice in the process. In this sense, unique needs can be addressed in a way sensitive to specific demographic and cultural circumstances. People are more empowered when ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and other barriers are reduced or eliminated. While New Hampshire is not a very racially or ethnically diverse state, SNHS tracks demographic data and will be able to analyze the initiative's impact on different racial/ethnic groups in the community.

CUSTOMER VOICE

Client input has been solicited through various means, including a forum with agency staff and other partners, focus groups, and the community assessment process. An advisory group of

participants has been discussed and will be explored as the initiative develops. Additionally, clients have the opportunity to provide input and suggestions at all stages of the process.

SNHS recognizes that customer feedback is critical to the success of this initiative. SNHS began the planning process by soliciting information from customers on what works and what doesn't regarding service delivery. Customer input will continue to be central to the initiative and will inform the development and ongoing implementation of the Whole Family Approach.

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