Person-Centered Thinking Culture Change Initiative

Approximately 2 years ago, the Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC) Leadership Team made a commitment to fully support person-centered thinking and planning at the individual and organizational level as a means of enhancing support for every person served by the agency. In this effort, we are closely examining our policies, procedures and practices to identify where we can be more effective and efficient, using a person-centered perspective. This organizational change initiative has changed the way we operate internally and externally.

Why are we engaged in this effort? It is based in a deep and passionate commitment to the work that we do. Central to our thinking is a belief that the people we serve and their families deserve nothing less than the best and greatest we have to offer. Additionally, advocates and self advocates are exercising and assuming leadership roles like never before: They are taking responsibility for what matters to them and are demanding great from us, rather than just settling for good. A "good" organization in our system is one that consistently and successfully meets basic assurances, i.e., those clear, non-negotiable requirements around keeping people safe, healthy, and protecting their basic rights. A "great" organization is one that achieves the right balance between basic assurances and a person-centered thinking culture – a culture that incorporates the sum of the ideas, skills, actions and practices that support each person's vision of their future.

There has been a noticeable shift in emphasis among those who receive services from the regional center system. The change is from a "consumer" mind set to an "informed and active citizen" mind-set. Increasingly, as people tell us what they expect, it is that meaningful and individualized results are paramount. Person-centered thinking (PCT) and planning is essential to achieving these outcomes.

At TCRC, we piloted systematic and systemic person-centered thinking and planning with two service coordination teams. The purpose was to more thoroughly and deeply test the implementation of person-centered thinking, planning and supports over a period of time to learn about the challenges and supports needed in successfully implementing person-centered thinking and planning at a systemic level. We also formed a task force to review recommendations from the pilot for implementation throughout the agency, as appropriate. Membership of the task force started with TCRC staff and management and now has been expanded to include interested service providers and Area Board IX. Their principal purpose is to coordinate PCT efforts and initiatives throughout the organization and now in the community.

TRI-COUNTIES REGIONAL CENTER

TEAM	TOPIC
	COLLABORATION
Service Providers, Service Coordinator, Managers of Consumer Services, Assistant Director Community Development, Peer Advocate, Quality Assurance Specialist	Additional service providers working the PCT team.
	Regularly scheduled meetings with service providers and TCRC.
	Shared Plan. One plan circulating among the team. Shared plan will be the standard.
	Agencies share trainers between each other.
	Collaborate with ELARC to share learning.
	Present our work to/at Supported Life Conference.
	Service providers to share best practices at TCADD Vendor Advisory Committee (VAC).
	TRAINING
Manager Organizational Development, Service Providers, Assistant Director Community Development, Managers of Consumer Services	PCT Training is available to providers, generic agencies, TCADD, Area Board, VAC, and TCRC staff.
	New Service Provider Orientation has focus on PCT and use of tools.
	Identify trainers (external) and internal) and provide them with time to train - coaches model.
	People First will provide training to TCRC staff
	Service coordinators have resources. The TCRC home page has links/stories.
	Orientation and education program about PCT for all persons served and families new to TCRC.
	TOOL USE AND APPLICATION
Service Coordinator, Managers of Services and Supports, Assistant Director of Consumer Services	Contact Pathfinders and bring them to TCRC.
	Involve adults in families in PCT tools/use.
	Train Families Planning Together in Spanish.
	Tools are available on the Internet.
	INFRASTRUCTURE
Director Community and Organizational Development, Director Consumer Services, Manager of Organizational Development, Executive Director of Area Board IX,	Revisit and revise competency model. Recruiting and personnel development to be consistent with PCT.
	PCT and People First language in TCRC Policies and Procedures.
	Vendor contract and program designs make a commitment to PCT and doing.
	Establish a research component for PCT data - LQA; Learning Log; University collaboration.
	Positive and Productive meetings format used for all TCRC operations and staff meetings.
	SCHOOL-AGE SERVICES
Service Coordinator, Manager of Consumer Services, Assistant Director of Consumer Services	PCT process blended into Early Start process.
	Parents understand that conservatorship is not the only solution.
	IEP Process uses PCT tools.
	Young adults have a chance for employment.
	Children teams will understand how PCT and tools apply to work they do.
	Foundation work in building more meaningful collaborations with SELPA.
	Review/apply transition-age work done by H. Sanderson.
	Meetings are arranged by the person and their circle of support (who, how and where).
	Expectation of meeting. SCs are comfortable in creatively assisting person to be in charge of their own meeting.
	Develop "best practice" guidelines - listen to what the person wants.
	POTPOURRI
Manager of Community Placement Plan, Manager of Consumer Services, Service Coordinator	Alignment with advocacy groups - progression in this area.
	More encouragement and enthusiasm across departments and levels
	Revisit good ideas - keep process going
	Planning teams learn about new services as they become available.
	4% rule of thought is presented to People First before moving forward
	(Added 1/22/07) Contest for renaming "Consumer Services Department".
	Bring a friend!

PROGRESS 11/2/2006	PROGRESS 1/22/07
Work up a training for the Vendor Advisory Committee.	Working on a presentation for VAC. Will be developing a PowerPoint presentation for training/information purposes
	Most areas have SLS/TCRC meetings. Will check status of other areas too.
Shared the Quarterly Reports within the SLO County SLS meeting.	Still working toward one-plan
	PCS/WTP are training. Work with MBL to coordinate
ELARC and TCRC would like to hold a Gathering, including Far Northern RC, ELARC is starting with vendor community.	ELARC to attend 2-day next week.
Use the lunch time to meet as sub groups.	See above.
Training Task force is including PCT.	2-day with Amanda George next week in Ventura. She will also train Board/Area Board IX on 2/3/07
New resources for staff training is being shared to support the learning.	
Letter of intent for a grant application.	More Train the Trainers next week. To discuss structure of support with mentors, Amanda/Michael .
	Training has been scheduled, provided in 2-offices so far.
	Some invited to training. Part of strategic plan.
Pathfinder is wanting to come to TCRC!	People First of SLO has contact info. And are interested.
	FRCs attended PCT training in Buelton and will attend in VTA.
Recruit SC and Providers interested becoming Trainers, as well as the Family Resource Centers.	On hold for now.
Dave is connecting with Michael Smull and IS Department.	
Starting work with HR Dept.	Review in progress.
Starting to revise procedures be CS Managers.	Work in progress.
COD is reviewing contract boiler plate.	Work in progress.
Exploring an agency wide learning log on the G Drive.	Contact to be made with UCSB re: research.
TCADD Board is beginning to consider the use of the People First Language as well as the positive and Productive Meeting .	"TCADD Consumer Services" committee renamed to TCADD Services and Support Committee.
Edith to begin to explore.	Part of Strategic Plan.
Consider Training for Conservatorship for Schools and Families.	Client Rights Advocate willing to provide training in each area.
Priority 1	Part of Strategic Plan. Some committee members may work on that section of the plan.
	Part of strategic plan. Committee members may work on that section of the plan. SLO SELPA planning re: 18-22 year old transition group.
Continue to explore tool use and design of tools with consideration of the in put from the Children's Team.	
Priority 2	Part of strategic plan. Some committee members may work on that section of the plan.
Complete in this planning session.	Work in progress.
Service Providers working on this.	Draft recommendations submitted/discussed. They will review with CS Managers, people served, providers, OPS.
Service Provider is revising forms to ensure the meetings are about what is important to the individual. Look to develop best practices.	
Continue to recruit for future Pathfinders in our area!	
Look at OPS and SRC meetings to advance the PCT.	
Create ways of learning and sharing the learning across the agency and providers.	

Highlights of Our Learning

Training. Person-centered thinking training material teaches sound critical thinking skills that can be used by everyone in the agency. All TCRC staff have attended two-day training on Person-centered Thinking and these trainings were also open to families, service providers and other community partners. Recently, the Board of Directors and Area Board IX participated in a briefer version of the training. Person-centered thinking training is being incorporated into our new employee training to ensure that all staff have a common understanding of the concepts and tools. As a follow-up to the training, we are now also teaching staff and service providers to coach others in the use of the skills with the goal of supporting consistent, habitual use of the tools throughout the community.

Language. We are mindfully working to eliminate labels and to use respectful language when referring to people receiving services. We are in the process of revising our policies and procedures to eliminate the term "consumer" and other labels.   In this work, we are guided by materials developed by the San Luis Obispo chapter of People First and have adopted their suggestions for our internal practices. That group has provided a one-hour training to TCRC employees to ensure that the message is clear to all. Additionally, it has been incorporated into our New Employee Welcome so that new staff will also understand the importance of respectful language. We are now in the process of changing the name of our largest department, currently called "Consumer Services", to be consistent with the message.

Technology support.   Our intranet is now being used to facilitate work done by the service coordination staff.   Most of the forms that they use are available on the intranet, organized in a fashion designed by them.   Forms are linked to relevant policies and procedures for reference. Many of the forms used by staff have been revised, based upon their suggestions, to create a smoother flow of work. Having the forms on the intranet allows us to ensure that the most current, approved forms are used by staff. Material used to prepare for planning team meetings has also been automated to further save time for staff.   Additionally, the person-centered thinking tools and reference materials are available on the intranet for their use. We are working with providers to develop "one plan", a document that can serve the needs of everyone on the planning team.

Strategic Plan.   The TCRC Strategic Performance Plan for 2007-2009 was developed by and with input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the community using person-centered thinking techniques as well as other strategies. The plan specifies that the agency will continue with person-centered thinking activities, particularly in the area of services to school-aged children and as we build on relationships with educators.

Systemic Changes. We are working with community partners to change the service delivery system to be more responsive to the needs of people receiving services. SB 1270 provides a recent example of that collaborative approach. With the implementation of this legislation, employment and meaningful day services will be more available in our communities. We are also participating in collaborative efforts to implement a system of care for Early Childhood Mental Health services and in the development of an assessment center for children under the age of five.

Evaluation.   Evaluation of the use of person-centered thinking is important if it is to be supported systemically, and to this end, we have approached UCSB to develop an evaluation process with us.   Helen Sanderson, a renowned leader of Essential Lifestyle Planning in the United Kingdom, has recently published her research supporting the notion that person-centered thinking is sound, evidenced-based practice.

These efforts have all been done in collaboration with our community partners. They have trained with us, planned with us, and are working on grant applications with us. We are all committed to continuing this work with an eye toward achieving better outcomes for the people we serve. Our change process will continue indefinitely as we will always be aligning and realigning, and striving to improve. As we work toward preserving our core purpose and values, it is with mindful attention to the need to align and realign with that core purpose.

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