

October 26, 2006

Judge Dolores Briones
Principal Investigator
Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative
500 E. San Antonio
Suite 301
El Paso, Texas 79901-2427

Dear Judge Briones:

Enclosed is the Center for Mental Health Services, Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch report of the federal site visit to the Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative (BCMHC) in September 2006. We trust that it accurately and fairly represents the project.

We want to thank you and all the others from El Paso who participated as part of the site visit. We recognize the hard work that goes into planning such a meeting. The site team appreciates the openness with which they were met and the cooperation and enthusiasm shown by all of the System of Care partners.

This site visit helped provide clarity about the significant challenges you face in implementing the cooperative agreement as well as the tremendous dedication and passion of staff, system partners, families and community advocates.

Key considerations

The Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative has many strengths, including effective wraparound services provided by dedicated care coordinators, a very creative social marketing effort, committed interagency partners, and an emerging and promising youth program. Those strengths will be especially important in the next two years as the El Paso Collaborative embarks on a move toward becoming family driven and develops plans for sustainability. At the same time, however, the issues identified in this site visit report are considerable. The lack of evaluation data, the movement of care management without involvement of the federal project officer, the lack of progress on family partnerships and issues with personnel create significant concerns, and unless addressed in a timely manner, may jeopardize the ability for El Paso to continue receiving federal support.

Priority recommendations

- *Postpone the shift of care management to interagency partners to occur no sooner than March 31, 2007, to allow time for the development of a detailed work plan*

El Paso Children's Center (EPCC) has done an outstanding job during the past two years in implementing an excellent service delivery system that is highly praised by families receiving the service. The plan to shift responsibility for care management services to the interagency partners (Probation, Child Welfare and Mental Health) is a good idea for long-term sustainability. Wraparound services that are housed within partner agencies are more likely to integrate systems of care values and principles. Successful integration of care management is, however, a complex undertaking and needs to be carefully planned. A workgroup with membership from the three agencies and family members should be created and charged to develop a detailed work plan of how this shift would occur with timelines so that the quality and integrity of a unified service delivery system is maintained. This shift does change the scope of work of the cooperative agreement and the developed work plan needs to be reviewed and approved by the federal project officer before implementation.

The Evaluation Component of the Collaborative must regain and maintain compliance with Federal Requirements under the Guidance for Applicants (GFA).

In 2005 a decision was made to RFP the evaluation component of the Collaborative. Prior to 2005 TriWest had been responsible for the evaluation component and had met all the federal requirements. LKG was awarded the contract for evaluation in the fall of 2005. Since then there has been no data collection because of difficulty in obtaining IRB approval. IRB approval was obtained in June and it is anticipated that data collection will resume soon, although it will be impossible to retrieve the data lost during the last year. Data regarding successful outcomes is a key component of sustainability and it is unfortunate that data from the past year were lost. Additionally, the LKG contract is larger than the TriWest contract and it is not clear what new services are being performed with the additional monies. The contract lists specific reports of monthly deliverables. These deliverables were requested by the federal site review team, but not received. Finally, the current evaluation staffing pattern is not in compliance with federal requirements, the Collaborative RFP expectations and the LKG response to the RFP. The site review team recommends that the leadership of the Collaborative work with the federal project officer to clarify these issues and work to get this important component of the Collaborative back on track quickly.

- *Develop a workgroup to plan for sustainability focusing on influencing state policy to allow access to Federal Title- IVE and Medicaid Funding Streams.*

The site review team recommends that the Collaborative create a workgroup to develop strategies that would allow access to these funds. Technical assistance can be made available to educate the workgroup about the intricacies of these funding streams and to share how other states access these funds. In addition, the leadership of the

Collaborative has many relationships with key policy makers and legislators in Texas, and could join forces with other communities to develop integrated approaches.

- *Ensure a smooth transition of leadership between Judge Briones and Judge Cobos as Principal Investigator for the Collaborative.*

Judge Briones' term as County Judge ends as of January 1, 2007. County Judge Elect, Anthony Cobos will fill her seat and, it was the understanding of the site visit team that he will therefore become the Principal Investigator of the Collaborative. It is very important that there be a smooth transition of leadership responsibilities during this critical point in the Collaborative. The agreement that creates the Collaborative is with El Paso County and, unless otherwise negotiated, the presiding County Judge is the Principal Investigator. Judge Briones and County Judge Elect Cobos are encouraged to facilitate a smooth transition.

- *Establish an interim plan for the administration of the Collaborative subsequent to the recent resignation of the Project Director. Put in place a plan to permanently replace the Project Director.*

Morale is low among Collaborative staff and there is confusion and anxiety about what to expect and how to keep the Collaborative operational with the vacuum in leadership. The site review team encourages the current leadership to move forward on an interim and permanent plan to replace the project director. It will be important to keep staff informed and involved in plans and progress in this area. Approval from the federal project officer is required before the position is filled.

- *Strengthen Family and Youth Voice at all levels of the Collaborative.*

The effectiveness of the Family Partnership has been compromised by personnel conflict within the Collaborative. Family Involvement is a cornerstone of systems of care development and the Collaborative is strongly encouraged to establish mechanisms to mediate staff conflicts so that the development of family involvement can move forward. The parent liaison is encouraged to develop a work group and work plan outlining specific strategies to energize and establish family involvement at all levels of the Collaborative. Technical assistance is available through the Regional Technical Assistance Coordinator. The draft work plan should be forwarded to the federal project officer by November 15, 2006.

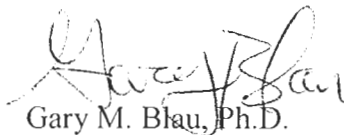
- *Explore ways to maintain the Youth Coordinator position and sustain the emerging Youth Voice.*

Last year the Collaborative received Hogg Foundation funding to develop a Youth program. This funding will end in December, 2006 and the emerging youth program will be impacted. The Collaborative is encouraged to explore options to continue funding of the Youth Coordinator position so that this valuable program is not lost.

Summary

There is much to celebrate in El Paso Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative. Passionate and dedicated staff and partners, outstanding wraparound services and award winning social marketing are examples of the strengths of this effort. Those strengths will be especially important in the next two years as the El Paso Collaborative embarks on a move toward becoming family driven and develops plans for sustainability. At the same time, however, the issues identified in this site visit are considerable. The lack of evaluation data, the movement of care management without involvement of the federal project officer, the lack of progress on family partnerships and issues with personnel, including the Project Director position vacancy, create significant concerns, and may jeopardize the ability for El Paso to continue receiving federal support. We very much hope that these issues will be addressed in a timely manner, and look forward to working with you to see your vision of a comprehensive system of care for children, youth and families realized.

Sincerely,



Gary M. Blau, Ph.D.
Chief
Child, Adolescent and Family Branch



Michele Herman
Project Officer

Enclosure

cc: Judge Alfredo Chavez
County Judge Elect Anthony Cobos
SAMHSA Grants Management Office
National Evaluation Team
Technical Assistance Partnership
National Social Marketing Team
Key Family Liaison

**COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES PROGRAM
Child, Adolescent and Family Branch
Center for Mental Health Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U. S. Departmental of Health and Human Services**

REPORT OF VISIT TO SYSTEM OF CARE COMMUNITY

Project location: El Paso, Texas
Project name: Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative
Date of visit: September 25 -28, 2006
Report date: October 26, 2006
Principal Investigator: Judge Dolores Briones
Project Director: Vacant

Site visit team:
CMHS – Child, Adolescent
& Family Branch: Michele Herman, Federal Project Officer
Site Visit Coordinator: Ruth Ormsby
Family Consultant: Tina Mata
Regional Technical Assistance
Coordinator: Stephany Bryan

Purpose of the Federal Site Visit

Federal site visits to communities funded through the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program are conducted as part of the technical assistance requirements in The Public Health Services Act, Public Law 102-321 as amended, Part E, Sections 561-565. These site visits typically occur in the second and fourth year of the grant/cooperative agreement and are intended to determine the status of project implementation and to identify areas that would benefit from quality improvement activities. The site visits also provide an opportunity for the community to highlight policies and practices and to demonstrate their work in developing a community based system of care for children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbance. This site visit was conducted in the fourth year of the grant.

Between March 15, 2005 and October 15, 2005, twenty-three youth with serious emotional disturbance and their families were enrolled in the system of care. Of the youth enrolled in the system of care services and supports, 14 youth were placed by Family and Protective Services, 8 youth were placed by the Juvenile Probation Department, and 1 was placed by El Paso Mental Health and Mental Retardation. Care Management provided intensive services and supports to the enrolled youth. The services provided included mentoring, therapy, psychiatric or medication monitoring services, behavioral aides and tutoring.

Process Used to Develop Observations

The site visit team conducted a series of focused discussions with staff and community partners to develop the observations and recommendations detailed in this report. Recommendations were formed after a series of meetings that took place over the course of the four days. Each meeting had a specific focus that corresponded to the ten categories detailed in the site visit protocol.

Key considerations

The Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative (BCMHC) has many strengths including effective wraparound services provided by committed care coordinators, a very creative social marketing effort, committed interagency partners, and an emerging and promising youth program. Those strengths will be especially important in the next two years as the El Paso program embarks on a move toward becoming family driven and develops and implements plans for sustainability. At the same time, however, the issues and challenges identified in this site visit are considerable. The lack of evaluation data, the proposed movement of the care management function without involvement of the Federal Project Officer, the lack of progress on family partnerships and issues with personnel, especially the vacancy in the Project Director position, create significant concerns, and, unless addressed in a timely manner, may jeopardize the ability for El Paso to continue receiving federal support.

Priority recommendations

- *Postpone the shift of care management to interagency partners for, at least, several months, no sooner than March 31, 2007, to allow time for the development and approval of a detailed work plan*

El Paso Children's Center (EPCC) has done an outstanding job during the past two years in implementing an excellent service delivery system that is highly praised by families receiving the service, as well as partner agencies. The plan to shift responsibility for care management services to the interagency partners (Probation, Child Welfare and Mental Health) is a good idea for long-term sustainability. Wraparound services that are housed within the partner agencies are more likely to integrate systems of care values and principles. Successful integration of care management is however, a complex undertaking and needs to be carefully planned. A workgroup with membership from the three agencies and family members should be created and charged to develop a detailed work plan of how this shift would occur, with timelines, so that the quality and integrity of a unified service delivery system is maintained. This shift does change the scope of work of the cooperative agreement and the developed work plan needs to be reviewed and approved by the Federal Project Officer before implementation.

The Evaluation Component of the BCMHC must regain and maintain compliance with Federal Requirements under the Guidance for Applicants (GFA).

In 2005 a decision was made to RFP the evaluation component of the Collaborative. Prior to 2005 TriWest had been responsible for the evaluation component and had met all the federal requirements. LKG was awarded the contract for evaluation in the fall of 2005. Since then there has been no data collection because of difficulty in obtaining IRB approval. IRB approval was obtained in June and it is anticipated that data collection will resume soon, although it will be impossible to retrieve the data lost during the last year. Data regarding successful outcomes is a key component of sustainability and it is unfortunate that data from the past year were lost. Additionally, the LKG contract is larger than the TriWest contract and it is not clear what new services are being delivered with the additional monies. The contract lists specific reports of monthly deliverables. These deliverables were requested by the federal site review team, but not received. Finally, the current evaluation staffing pattern is not in compliance with federal requirements, BCMHC RFP expectations and the LKG response to the RFP. The site review team recommends that the leadership of the Collaborative work with the federal project officer to clarify these issues and work to get this important component of the Collaborative back on track quickly.

- *Develop a workgroup to plan for sustainability focusing on influencing state policy to allow access to Federal Title IV-E and Medicaid funding streams.*

The site review team recommends that the BCMHC create a workgroup to develop strategies to access that will allow access to these funds. Technical assistance can be made available to educate the workgroup about the intricacies of these funding streams and to share how other states access these funds. In addition, the leadership of the Collaborative has many relationships with key policy makers and legislators in Texas, and could join forces with other communities to develop integrated approaches.

- *Insure a smooth transition of leadership between Judge Briones and Judge Cobos as Principal Investigator for the Collaborative.*

Judge Briones' term as County Judge ends as of January 1, 2007. County Elect Anthony Cobos will fill her seat and, it was the site visit team's understanding that he will therefore become the Principal Investigator of the Collaborative. It is very important that there be a smooth transition of leadership responsibilities during this critical point in the Collaborative. The agreement that creates the Collaborative is with El Paso County and, unless otherwise negotiated, the presiding County Judge is the Principal Investigator. Judge Briones and County Judge Elect Cobos are encouraged to discuss how to facilitate a smooth transition.

- *Establish an interim plan for the administration of BCMHC subsequent to the recent resignation of the Project Director. Put in place a plan to permanently replace the Project Director.*

Morale is low among BCMHC staff and there is confusion and anxiety about what to expect and how to keep the Collaborative operational with the vacuum in leadership.

The site review team encourages the current leadership to move forward on an interim and permanent plan to replace the Project Director. It will be important to keep staff informed and involved in plans and progress in this area. Approval from the Federal Project Officer is required before the position is filled.

- *Strengthen Family and Youth Voice at all levels of the Collaborative.*

The effectiveness of the Family Partnership has been compromised by personnel conflict within the collaborative. Family Involvement is a cornerstone of system of care development and the Collaborative is strongly encouraged to establish mechanisms to mediate staff conflicts so that the development of family involvement can move forward. The parent liaison is encouraged to develop a work group and work plan outlining specific strategies to energize and move forward family involvement at all levels of the Collaborative. Technical assistance is available through the Regional Technical Assistance Coordinator. The draft work plan should be forwarded to the federal project officer by November 15, 2006.

- *Explore ways to maintain the Youth Coordinator position and sustain the emerging Youth Voice.*

Last year the BCMHC received Hogg Foundation funding to develop a Youth program. This funding will end in December 2006 and the emerging youth program will be impacted. The Collaborative is encouraged to explore options to continue funding of the Youth Coordinator position so that this valuable program is not lost.

Site Visit Protocol Categories

The following ten sections of the report correspond to the ten focus group categories detailed in the Site Visit Protocol, which forms the basis for discussion during the Federal Site Visit. Each section lists strengths, challenges, and recommendations.

Strategic & Sustainability Planning

The site review team met with the leadership of the Collaborative including interagency partners from Juvenile Probation Department (JPD), Child Protective Services (CPS), and Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR). Parent partners and representatives from contract agencies were also present. The Collaborative is encountering significant budgetary problems and loss of key staff. Because of these challenges Judge Briones emphasized the importance of this year's strategic and sustainability planning retreat to be held in October 2006. She suggested that the recommendations of the site visit serve as an organizing focus for this retreat.

Strengths

Strategic planning retreats that include representation from all Collaborative partners are held annually to review progress toward stated goals and to chart new directions for the

Collaborative. The current strategic plan is publicized in the BCMHC newsletter so that there is broad dissemination of goals. Governance meetings and other Collaborative activities reference topics in terms of progress toward strategic plan goals. A strategic planning retreat is scheduled to take place in October to outline a blueprint for the next three years.

The leadership of the Collaborative governance shares a common vision of serving El Paso children and families in the community rather than in residential programs located far from home. There is also a shared belief in the effectiveness of intensive wraparound services. Because of these shared views there has been a significant reduction in residential placement of children and youth.

The leadership of the Collaborative has many relationships with key policy makers and legislators in Texas and could join forces with other communities to develop integrated approaches.

Challenges

Significant fiscal challenges are impacting the Collaborative as it moves into the fifth year of the cooperative agreement. Efforts to access Federal Title IV-E placement funds to use for wraparound services have not been successful. Currently, El Paso Children's Center is not allowed to bill targeted case management for wraparound services because of state Medicaid policies.

Although local businesses have made small contributions to the Collaborative, there may be an opportunity to increase local funding through a more targeted focus on local businesses and the faith community.

Recommendations

- *Develop a workgroup to plan for sustainability focusing on influencing state policy to allow access to Federal Title IV-E and Medicaid Funding Streams.*

The site review team recommends that the Collaborative create a workgroup to develop strategies that would allow access to these funds. Technical assistance can be made available to educate the workgroup about the intricacies of these funding streams and to share how other states access these funds. In addition, the leadership of the Collaborative has relationships with key policy makers and legislators in Texas and could join forces with other Texas communities to develop integrated approaches.

- *Using the expertise of the Communication Information Officer to develop strategies to increase funding from Local Businesses and the Faith Community*

The Communication Information Officer has raised the consciousness of El Paso with her public education efforts. Capitalize on this increased awareness by involving the business and faith communities in local fund raising efforts. These efforts might include

sponsorship of a specific program by a company, an annual benefit golf tournament, and many other possibilities.

Target Population of Children and Adolescents with a Serious Emotional Disturbance

The target population for the BCMHC has broadened since the 2004 site visit. At that time children and youth in out of home residential placement through the Juvenile Probation and Child Welfare systems were the primary focus of services. Since then a number of children have been returned to the El Paso community. The focus now also includes children and youth at risk of out of home placement who are involved with Juvenile Probation and Child Welfare. Community referrals and referrals from Education are also accepted. However, there is a limited connection with the school districts of El Paso. All those referred must have a DSM-IV diagnosis.

Strengths

The Border Collaborative is to be commended for reducing the number of youth in residential placement and broadening the target population to children and youth at risk of out of home placement.

Challenges

It is not clear whether all children and youth served have been diagnosed with an emotional disability under the DSM-IV guidelines.

Recommendations

- *Develop a process to monitor charts for inclusion of key elements such as diagnosis*

The Program Director of EPCC should develop this process. If children have not been diagnosed a system should be set up to refer them for an evaluation to see if they are eligible for services.

Child, Adolescent, and Family Services and Supports

The site review team met with care managers, EPCC administrators, and BCMHC staff to discuss the wraparound service component. At the time of the last site visit two years ago this component was not yet functional. Currently the unit is fully operational with five care managers who each work with eight families. Referrals come from the Juvenile Probation Department (JPD), Children's Protective Services (CPS), Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR), the community and schools. A Care Management Oversight Committee composed of representatives from the three interagency partners, a parent partner, and the care manager supervisor reviews and screens all referrals to the program. Case reviews are held quarterly by each of the three agencies on families

receiving wraparound services. Care managers do home visits initially and complete a safety plan. Care Managers respond to crisis calls from their clients. Mandated services are available, but psychiatric services can be challenging to obtain in a timely manner. At times transportation, particularly to outlying areas, can be a challenge. Almost all service recipients are Medicaid eligible, but Medicaid is not billable by the care managers. The Parent Liaison is not involved in the wraparound program and there are no parent partners on wraparound teams. There are no parent support groups within the Collaborative although one parent partner offers a support group at MHMR.

Because of budgetary problems at the time of the site visit a plan was being implemented to terminate the wraparound services of EPCC and transfer service provision to the three agencies. EPCC had stopped intake. Families were fearful of this shift and staff was demoralized.

Strengths

BCMHC and EPCC are to be commended for the establishment of a highly effective care management program. The Care Management Program is well structured, carefully managed and holds true to system of care values and principles. The care managers are dedicated and competent and highly praised by families. The care management program is viewed as the strongest component of the Collaborative.

The flex fund for each family is ample (\$10,000/year) and the process makes monies easily available. All requests are linked to the wraparound plan and are commonly used for mentoring, recreational activities, and emergency help with rent and utilities.

The approach to services is strength-based, family-driven and uses natural supports. Case managers have a caseload of eight enabling them to be available to the families.

Challenges

The site review team views the proposed shift of responsibility for care management from EPCC to the three agencies as a significant challenge. EPCC has performed in an exemplary manner in its implementation of wraparound services. It will be difficult to maintain the quality and integrity of this service in the three agencies without thoughtful and careful planning.

The absence of parent partners on wraparound teams and the lack of parent support groups is an ongoing challenge for the Collaborative. Parent partners, when present in these roles, are able to greatly enhance the helpfulness of services and to foster an increase in family voice within the system of care.

There is no integrated case review meeting that oversees the progress and challenges of families receiving wraparound services. Such an oversight meeting can be helpful regardless of who is providing the service.

Although almost all families receiving BCMHC services are Medicaid eligible, care management services are not reimbursable under current Medicaid regulations in Texas.

Recommendations

- *Postpone the shift of Care Management to interagency partners to no sooner than March 31, 2007, to allow time for the development of a detailed work plan*

El Paso Center for Children has done an outstanding job during the past two years in implementing an excellent service delivery system that is highly praised by families receiving the service. The plan to shift responsibility for care management services to the interagency partners (Probation, Child Welfare, and Mental Health) is a good idea for long-term sustainability. Wraparound services that are housed within partner agencies are more likely to integrate systems of care values and principles. Successful integration of care management is, however, a complex undertaking and needs to be carefully planned. A work group with membership from the three agencies and family members should be created and charged to develop a detailed work plan of how this shift would occur with timelines so that quality and integrity of a unified service delivery system is maintained. This shift changes the scope of work of the cooperative agreement and the proposed work plan needs to be reviewed and approved by the Federal Project Officer before implementation.

- *Facilitate parent partner involvement in wraparound teams and in parent support groups for BCMHC families*

The Parent Liaison is encouraged to explore ways to facilitate parent partner involvement in wraparound teams and to establish parent support groups led by parent partners for BCMHC families. This recommendation should be integrated into the work plan described in the Family Partnership section of this report.

- *Establish a case oversight meeting to review the progress and challenges of families receiving wraparound services*

The site review team recommends that a case oversight meeting be established by the Program Director of EPCC with SOC partners.

- *Explore ways to access Medicaid funding for wraparound services*

In some other states Medicaid funding is available to fund the type of wraparound services provided by EPCC. It has been reported that Austin, Texas has been able to access these funds for wraparound services. If Medicaid were available for these services in El Paso a significant part of the current funding crisis would be averted. This issue can be folded into the work group recommended to deal with reforming state policies to enable better access to federal funding streams.

System Level Coordination/Infrastructure and Management Structure

The site review team attended a meeting with members of the System of Care (SOC) Task Force, the Advisory Committee (AC) and guests. The governance structure has recently been modified because there was difficulty in maintaining consistent participation in the previous structure. In the current structure there is an Advisory Committee composed of five youth, five parents, and five community stakeholders. The Chair of the Advisory Committee is on the SOC Task Force and brings agenda items from the AC to the SOC Task Force. The SOC Task Force is the decision making body of the Collaborative and includes lead administrators from the three interagency partners (Probation, Child Welfare and Mental Health Mental Retardation), the Chair of the AC, and Judge Chavez, the Governance Team Leader.

During the site visit there was discussion of changes in key management positions impacting the Collaborative. The Project Director resigned several weeks before the site visit and this position is currently vacant. Judge Briones' term as County Judge ends December 31, 2006, requiring planning for a smooth transition to the new Principal Investigator of BCMHC.

Strengths

There is a long term and strong commitment from the interagency partners. They have contributed resources to the Collaborative and are working to incorporate system of care principles and values in their agencies. The three interagency partners have an excellent history of working together when dual jurisdiction issues arise.

The Collaborative is to be commended for recognizing the challenges of the previous governance structure and putting in place a more functional structure.

Challenges

The Project Director has been a strong and positive leader in the development of the Collaborative. Her loss is significant to the staff and community. Morale is low among Collaborative staff because of her resignation and there is confusion about day-to-day operations.

Judge Briones has provided leadership to the Collaborative since its inception. Her term as County Judge ends in December. It is the understanding of the site review team that the County Judge Elect will assume the role of Principle Investigator. There needs to be a smooth transition of leadership during this critical time in the Collaborative.

There appear to be many positives in the new governance structure. The site review team, however, shares the concern of the Parent Liaison that Family and Youth Voice are diminished in the new governance structure, and this needs to be addressed.

Recommendations

- *Establish an interim plan for the administration of the Collaborative subsequent to the recent resignation of the Project Director. Put in place a plan to permanently replace the Project Director.*

Morale is low among Collaborative staff and there is confusion and anxiety about what to expect and how to keep the Collaborative operational with the vacuum in leadership. The site review team encourages the current leadership to move forward on an interim and permanent plan to replace the project director. It will be important to keep staff informed and involved in plans and progress in this area. Approval from the Federal Project Officer is required before the position is filled.

- *Ensure a smooth leadership transition between Judge Briones and Judge Cobos as Principal Investigator for the Collaborative*

Judge Briones' term as County Judge ends as of January 1, 2007. County Judge Elect, Anthony Cobos will fill her seat and, it was the understanding of the site visit team that he will therefore become the Principal Investigator of the Collaborative. It is very important that there be a smooth transition of leadership responsibilities during this critical point in the Collaborative. The agreement that creates the Collaborative is with El Paso County and, unless otherwise negotiated, the presiding County Judge is the Principal Investigator. Judge Briones and County Judge Elect Cobos are encouraged to facilitate a smooth transition.

- *Review current governance structure so as to increase Family and Youth Voice*

Family and youth voice are the cornerstone of system of care values. The site review team encourages the Parent Liaison to work with the AC and the SOC Task Force to strengthen family and youth voice in the governance structure. This recommendation can be folded into the work plan that the Parent Liaison is developing as part of another recommendation.

Fiscal Management

The site team met with a County Auditor Supervisor, members of the governance team, and Collaborative staff to review the fiscal management of the Collaborative. All were very concerned about the fiscal situation for the fifth year of the grant. Currently identified match is inadequate to draw down maximum Federal funds. Significant program shifts are proposed to deal with this shortfall. Specifically, it has been proposed that services by El Paso Center for Children (EPCC) be terminated and that the three participating agencies (JPD, CPS, and MHMR) assume the responsibility for provision of wraparound services. The specifics of how this transfer would occur have not yet been formulated and many questions were raised about the logistics of such a transfer of responsibility.

Strengths

The County Auditor Supervisor is deliberate, precise, persistent, and clear about identifying all available match in order to access the maximum Federal drawdown of funds.

The County Auditor Supervisor has taken a leadership role in informing the governance team of match shortfall and outlining the drastic impact this will have on Collaborative services and oversight.

Juvenile Probation Department (JPD) and Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) have consistently provided significant cash as well as in kind match to the Collaborative.

Child Welfare has provided space to house the Collaborative administrative staff for a significant in kind contribution.

The Flex Fund is ably administered by Sun City Behavioral Services and is easily accessible, flexible and well funded. The transition of this responsibility to Sun City appears to have been smooth.

Challenges

The limited current match does not allow for full accessing of Federal funds for delivery of services.

Expiration of Hogg Foundation funding this December will make it difficult to maintain the Youth Coordinator position or to fund youth activities.

No current line item budget is available making it difficult to evaluate options around proposed program shifts.

Recommendations

- *Develop a workgroup to plan for sustainability focusing on influencing state policy to allow access to Federal Title IV-E and Medicaid funding streams.*

The site review team recommends that the Collaborative create a workgroup to develop strategies that would allow access to these funds. Technical assistance can be made available to educate the workgroup about the intricacies of these funding streams and to share how other states access these funds. In addition, the leadership of the Collaborative has many relationships with key policy makers and legislators in Texas and could join forces with other Texas communities to develop integrated approaches.

- *Explore ways to maintain the Youth Coordinator position and sustain the emerging Youth Voice.*

Last year the Collaborative received Hogg Foundation funding to develop a Youth program. This funding will end in December 2006 and the emerging youth program will be impacted. The Collaborative is encouraged to explore options to continue funding of the Youth Coordinator position so that this valuable program is not lost.

- *Produce a line item budget*

The Auditor's Office Supervisor involved with the Collaborative routinely develops a line item budget. At the time of the site visit it was not yet completed. When done it will be helpful to the SOC Task Force and Advisory Committee in determining the best options for dealing with the fiscal challenges while maintaining a viable SOC. The Collaborative leadership is requested to forward the budget to the Federal Project Officer for her review by November 15, 2006.

Cultural & Linguistic Competence

The site visit team met with staff from El Paso Center for Children, the Collaborative, LKG, and the Sun City Administrative Services Organization to discuss cultural and linguistic competence. Participants stated that cultural competence has not been a specific focus of their work. It was felt that there were no obstacles or challenges in this area because thinking about culture was so embedded in how staff operated. There had been a Cultural Competency Committee formed but it was disbanded. TriWest conducted cultural focus groups but there has been no follow up since their contract was terminated.

The group stated that most staff was bilingual and that the governance membership was reflective of the community, although no one tracks these issues. There is no one person who is responsible for overseeing issues of cultural competence, however, all view cultural competence as part of their individual responsibility. Cultural issues are integrated in the wraparound trainings. The newsletter published by the Social Marketer always has a section devoted to cultural issues. Some forms have been translated into Spanish.

Strengths

The Collaborative staff, interagency representatives, and service providers reflect the diversity of the service community.

There is evidence that cultural and linguistic issues are addressed in trainings, social marketing efforts and translation of forms.

Challenges

There is no specific focus on cultural issues in the Collaborative and no one is responsible to assure that this important topic is integrated into all aspects of system of care development.

Recommendations

- *Reactivate the Cultural Competency Committee and develop a Cultural Competency Plan*

El Paso is diverse in many ways. It is a border community with a majority Hispanic population who are first, second, or third generation Americans. There are strong ties to Mexico among many of El Paso's population. There is also a small tribal community and a large military base. In System of Care development it is important to be cognizant of the needs of these different groups including sub groups within the Hispanic community.

The site review team recommends that the Collaborative revisit the recommendations from the last site visit report and develop a Cultural Competency Plan. In this undertaking it will be important to reactivate a Cultural Competency Committee including all partners and to assign leadership responsibility for this effort.

Family & Youth Partnerships

The site review team met with the Collaborative Parent Liaison, several parent partners including a NAMI member, and Collaborative staff to discuss family partnership. A separate meeting was held with youth, and a third meeting was held with families and youth receiving wraparound services from El Paso Center for Children. The Parent Liaison reported that the Family Organization recommended at the last site visit is now operational. It is not, however, connected with the Collaborative service delivery system. Parenting classes will begin next month on how to navigate the Juvenile Justice, Child Welfare, and Educational Systems. Fundraising efforts have raised \$1,500 for family organizational expenses. One Parent Partner is selected by each agency to represent family voice on the governance structure, but due to a recent reorganization of the governance structure family and youth voice are diminished. Only one parent partner has received services from the Collaborative. The majority of the discussion with the site review team focused on the failed partnership between the Parent Liaison and partners with Collaborative staff and the service delivery system.

A large group of families and youth receiving wraparound services met with the site review team for an informal dinner meeting. In individual and group discussions families were uniformly very pleased with the wraparound services they have received. Many had heard of the proposed shift in the service delivery system and were very worried about losing their care coordinator, wondering how they would manage. Families described easy access to appropriate flex funding. There was no peer- to- peer parent support available and parent partners were not involved on any wraparound teams.

A separate meeting was held with a small group of youth, the Youth Coordinator, and a youth mentor. There was considerable enthusiasm about youth activities and plans to expand the program with more youth groups and more involvement with Collaborative youth. Funding for activities was described as very limited and is currently being

augmented by fund raising activities by the Youth Coordinator. The Hogg Foundation has funded this program for one year; fiscal support will terminate in December 2006.

Strengths

The Parent Liaison is to be commended for securing 501c3 status and for establishing a family organization in El Paso. Under the auspices of the new family organization parent classes are planned and fund raising efforts have occurred.

The Collaborative is to be congratulated on the excellent wraparound services delivered by committed care coordinators to target population children, youth and families.

The parent partner who chairs the Advisory Committee has performed in an exemplary manner and demonstrates how to empower families in all of her efforts. She has received wraparound services and, therefore, has direct experience with the Collaborative. This makes her input invaluable. It would be ideal if more parent partners could be recruited from those who have received wraparound services.

The Youth Coordinator is to be commended for creating the beginnings of a vibrant youth program and in fostering the emergence of a strong youth voice within the Collaborative.

Challenges

Family Voice has been significantly compromised by conflict between the Parent Liaison/Parent Partners and BC/EPCC staff. There is very limited involvement of Parent Partners in the Collaborative service delivery system. While there are Parent Partners involved in the governance structure their voice has been diminished by the recent restructuring and that voice is not driven primarily by families who have received Collaborative services.

While it is commendable that a Family Organization has been established, the focus of organization activities has not been the Collaborative families. In order to comply with grant guidelines the Family Organization needs to provide more emphasis toward Collaborative activities.

The absence of parent support groups and peer-to-peer supports for parents represents another challenge for the Collaborative. These activities in other communities have been shown to greatly enhance family voice.

The emerging youth program is at risk because of the ending of the Hogg Foundation grant that funds the Youth Coordinator position.

Recommendations

- *Strengthen Family and Youth Voice at all levels of the Collaborative*

The effectiveness of the Family Partnership has been compromised by personnel conflict within the Collaborative. Family Involvement is a cornerstone of system of care development and the Collaborative is strongly encouraged to establish mechanisms to mediate staff conflicts so that the development of family involvement can move forward. The Parent Liaison is encouraged to develop a work group and work plan outlining specific strategies to energize and establish family involvement at all levels of the Collaborative. Technical assistance is available through the Regional Technical Assistance Coordinator. The draft work plan should be forwarded to the federal project officer by November 15, 2006.

- *Explore ways to maintain the Youth Coordinator position and sustain the emerging Youth Voice*

Last year the Collaborative received Hogg Foundation funding to develop a Youth Program. This funding will end in December 2006 and the emerging youth voice will be impacted. The Collaborative is encouraged to explore options to continue funding of the Youth Coordinator position so that this valuable program is not lost.

Public Education & Social Marketing Campaign

The site review team met with the BCMHC Communication Information Officer, several Collaborative administrative staff members, and a parent partner to discuss public education and social marketing efforts. A number of handouts were provided that highlighted the various strategies used. The site review team was impressed by the quality and relevance of all handouts that included newsletters, billboard mock ups, brochures, and power point presentations. Since the Communication Information Officer was hired in late 2003 there has been an annual theme. In 2004 the focus was on creating a recognizable "brand" for the Collaborative. The motto, "One team, No Limits," was chosen and has been marketed since then. In 2005 the "Shout Out Stigma" (SOS) campaign was launched. This campaign included a press conference with the Mayor of El Paso and legislators as well as a successful "Honk Your Horn" event if you are for SOS in El Paso. SOS dog tags were also widely distributed.

The Communication Information officer states that whenever something new is planned she always returns to core system of care values and principles of youth and family voice and cultural competence. Additionally, social marketing activities are coordinated with the BCMHC Strategic Plan goals. At the recommendation of the last site review team a social marketing committee was formed. The committee included public relations staff from the three interagency partners, Border Collaborative parents and youth, and staff. Because of staff conflicts within the Collaborative there was difficulty in sustaining the committee.

Strengths

The Communication Information officer of the Collaborative is to be commended for establishing an outstanding public education and social marketing effort with many excellent and award winning products. Of particular note are:

- An excellent newsletter distributed quarterly to all partners of the Collaborative including families receiving services.
- The "Playbill" brochure that creatively presents key information on the Collaborative and mental health issues.

Public education and social marketing efforts are tied to the goals of the Collaborative Strategic Plan with direction guided by family and youth voice.

The approach to projects reflects both a broad community education component and a more targeted focus for families and staff involved in the Collaborative.

Challenges

Although the social marketing and public education efforts seem outstanding, there is no way to measure the success of these activities and their impact on target audiences.

The Social marketing Committee is no longer active.

Because of budget concerns paper and colored ink are no longer provided for production of the newsletter.

Recommendations

- *Coordinate with the evaluation component of the Collaborative and establish a methodology to measure the effectiveness of marketing efforts*

The Communication Information Officer is encouraged to collaborate with LKG to develop a methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of public education and social marketing efforts. Measuring current outcomes will assist in the development of new strategies.

- *Reactivate the Social Marketing Committee*

The Social marketing Committee offered an excellent opportunity to assure input from all partners regarding activities in this area. The site review team encourages the Communication Information Officer to address the conflicts that impacted the committee's effectiveness and to reconvene the group. This group could also oversee the evaluation of social marketing efforts to date.

- *Secure funding for basic supplies so that social marketing efforts can continue*

The newsletter is an excellent vehicle to educate and inform partners about BCMHC. All efforts should be made to secure a line item in the budget for supplies to assure the continuation of this valuable product.

Evaluation

The site review team met with the Principal Investigator, LKG evaluation staff, and staff from the Collaborative and EPCC to learn about the evaluation component of the Collaborative. The discussion focused on reviewing the bureaucratic barriers to gaining IRB status and describing the orientation and training that LKG has undergone during the past year.

Strengths

IRB approval was secured in June 2006 and the resumption of data collection is anticipated to begin soon.

The evaluation unit is staffed with the equivalent of 2.5 FTEs including a family member and an energetic and committed project coordinator.

Challenges

The unanticipated lag in gaining IRB approval has resulted in the loss of outcome data important in sustainability planning, and a key requirement of the program.

Although fully staffed the staffing pattern is not in compliance with the federal Guidance for Applicants (GFA), EL Paso's RFP, and LKG's proposal. All require "one FTE who has earned a PhD in public health, psychology, social work or other relevant area of human services."

It was not clear to the site review team what services were being provided by the LKG contract to warrant monthly costs of \$100,000 discounted with in kind contributions of \$50,000. It is the site review team's understanding that this contract is larger than the size of the prior evaluation contract, and it is not clear what these additional monies have accomplished.

Recommendations

- *The Evaluation Component of the Collaborative must regain and maintain compliance with Federal requirements under the Guidance for Applicants (GFA).*

In 2005 a decision was made to RFP the evaluation component of the Collaborative. Prior to 2005 TriWest had been responsible for the evaluation component and had met all the federal requirements. LKG was awarded the contract for evaluation in the Fall of 2005 despite concerns voiced by the Federal Project Officer in a letter to County Judge Briones dated September 26, 2005. Since then there has been no data collection because of

difficulty in obtaining IRB approval. IRB approval was obtained in June, 2006 and it is anticipated that data collection will resume soon, although it is impossible to retrieve the data lost during the last year. Data regarding successful outcomes is a key component of sustainability and it is unfortunate that these data were lost. Additionally, the LKG contract is significantly larger than the TriWest contract and it is not clear what new services are being performed for the additional monies. The contract lists specific reports of monthly deliverables. These deliverables were requested by the Federal Site Team, but not yet received. Finally, the current staffing pattern for evaluation is not in compliance with federal regulations, the Collaborative RFP expectations and the LKG response to the RFP. The site visit team strongly recommends that the leadership of the Collaborative work with the federal project officer to clarify these serious issues and work to get this important component of the collaborative back on track quickly.

Service Records

The site review team met with the Program Director of the El Paso Center for Children and reviewed ten charts. Much progress has been made in the development of service records since the last site visit in 2004. At that time families were not yet being served and no service record system had been put in place. Two years later there is a well established service record system in place. In 2004 at the site visit there were plans to establish a web-based charting system, but this effort appears to have been abandoned as of 2006. Charts review by the site visit team demonstrated that the recommendation of 2004 to build a strong interface between the ASO and the service record has been implemented.

Strengths

The Collaborative utilizes a service record system that is well organized and structured. Each record includes a table of contents in the front that makes it easy to find relevant information.

Records reflect a strengths-based treatment planning process and include a crisis response plan.

The service record indicates clear coordination with the ASO and details all ASO services delivered and their cost.

Charts reviewed showed that flexible funds were easily accessible and frequently used by families receiving services.

Challenges

If the proposed transfer of care management to the interagency partners occurs, careful attention will need to be paid to creating a unified and well organized charting system.

In several of the charts reviewed there was no DSM-IV diagnosis.

A monthly summary of ASO services and costs by provider seemed to reflect an inappropriately high number of respite/mentoring services by one provider.

Recommendations

- *Include maintenance of charting system as a topic for the work group dealing with the shift of services to the interagency partners*

The maintenance of a unified charting system that is well organized, strength-based, and reflective of the current system will be an important element in ensuring a successful transition to the three interagency partners.

- *Develop a process to monitor charts for inclusion of key elements such as diagnosis*

The Program Director at EPCC is encouraged to develop this process. If children have not been diagnosed a system should be set up to refer them for an evaluation to see if they are eligible for services.

- *In collaboration with Sun City, establish a process to monitor expenditures and implement corrective measures when needed*

The Program Director of care management services at EPCC is encouraged to establish a review process to monitor unusual expenditures by ASO providers and coordinate with the ASO to put in place corrective measures.

Summary

There is much to celebrate in the El Paso Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative. Passionate and dedicated staff and partners, outstanding wraparound services and award winning social marketing are examples of the strengths of this effort. Those strengths will be especially important in the next two years as the El Paso Collaborative embarks on a move toward becoming family driven and develops plans for sustainability. At the same time, however, the issues identified in this site visit are considerable. The lack of evaluation data, the movement of care management without involvement of the federal project officer, the lack of progress on family partnerships and issues with personnel, especially the Project Director position vacancy, create significant concerns, and may jeopardize the ability for El Paso to continue receiving federal support. We very much hope that these issues will be addressed in a timely manner, and look forward to working with you to see your vision of a comprehensive system of care for children youth and families realized.

Action Plan Chart Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative

Report Section	Person Responsible	Target Completion Date	What has been done
Report Section I			
<p><i>A. Develop a workgroup to access Federal Title IV-E and Medicaid funding</i></p> <p><i>B. Develop strategies for increasing funding From local business and the faith community</i></p>			
Report Section II			
<p><i>A. Develop a process to monitor charts for Inclusion of key elements such as diagnosis</i></p>			
Report Section III			
<p><i>A. Postpone the shift of Care Management to interagency partners until March 31, 2007 to allow time for the development of a detailed workplan</i></p> <p><i>B. Facilitate parent partner involvement in Wraparound teams and in parent support Groups</i></p> <p><i>B. Establish a case oversight meeting to Review wraparound services</i></p> <p><i>C. Explore ways to access Medicaid for wraparound</i></p>			
Report Section IV			
<p><i>A. Establish plans to fill Project Director position</i></p> <p><i>B. Insure smooth leadership transition between Principal Investigators</i></p> <p><i>C. Review current governance structure to Increase Family and youth Voice</i></p>			
Report Section V			
<p><i>A. Develop a workgroup to access Federal Title IV-E and Medicaid funding.</i></p> <p><i>B. Explore ways to maintain the Youth Coordinator.</i></p> <p><i>C. Produce a line item budget</i></p>			
Report Section VI			
<p><i>A. Reactivate the Cultural Competency Committee and develop a Cultural Competency Plan</i></p>			
Report Section VII			
<p><i>A. Strengthen Family and Youth Voice At all levels of the Collaborative.</i></p>			

<p><i>B. Explore ways to maintain the Youth Coordinator</i></p>			
Report Section VIII			
<p><i>A. Establish a methodology to measure the effectiveness of marketing efforts.</i></p> <p><i>B. Reactivate the Social Marketing Committee.</i></p> <p><i>C. Secure funds for basic supplies</i></p>			
Report Section IX			
<p><i>A. Regain and Maintain compliance with Federal requirements</i></p>			
Report Section X			
<p><i>A. Deal with maintenance of charting System in any reorganization plan.</i></p> <p><i>B. Develop a process to monitor charts for Inclusion of key elements such as Diagnosis.</i></p>			