

Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report 1106

COLLABORATING PROVES SUCCESSFUL

**TO: Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
Contra Costa County Board of Education**

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to highlight collaboration as an approach to maximize resources and enhance program effectiveness. During this time of economic downturns and budget shortfalls, the Contra Costa County Grand Jury found that collaborating has stabilized services and improved outcomes without additional funds or personnel. The Grand Jury identified an example of a successful collaboration between the County Office of Education and certain Contra Costa County departments. The result was a greater number of foster children matriculating to further education or achieving gainful employment.

Other collaborations exist between and within public agencies in Contra Costa County. However, additional opportunities for collaborations should be instituted County-wide.

BACKGROUND

The Grand Jury investigated a collaborative comprised of the following participants: Employment and Human Services Department, The Independent Living Skills Program, The Office of Education, The Workforce Development Board, and the Probation Department. It demonstrated improved results by successfully preparing foster children for exiting the foster care system and/or completing high school requirements for graduation. This particular collaborative received a grant from the California Department of Education, which initiated an effort to convene County-wide foster youth service providers in order to better address outcomes for these youth. The participants collaborated to more effectively address issues related to enrollment, special education placement, transcript review, tutoring needs and transitioning to college and vocational programs.

Participants shared insights, expertise and information. The process provided an enhanced experience for the involved children, resulting in improved outcomes. This approach helped eliminate institutional barriers and also created opportunities to reduce overlap and maximize available resources.

FINDINGS

1. Grants are not always essential in creating successful collaborations.
2. Collaborations might be an effective means to utilize limited resources and enhance outcomes, and can be used in a variety of situations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing the County Administrator and department heads to identify, and when appropriate create additional collaborative opportunities between County departments and between the County and other public agencies that will maximize resources, eliminate duplication and overlap, and improve outcomes.
2. The Board of Supervisors should consider including in each department head's annual performance plan an element that requires each of them to identify and report on possible collaborative efforts.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Findings and Recommendations

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