

Family Engagement Summit

Catalyst for Kids is planning for a Family Engagement Summit to be held in November 2006. The Summit is modeled after the Permanency Summits hosted by Families for Kids Partnership from 1998-2003. The format will include both plenary and breakout sessions, with the breakout sessions being central to the development of a statewide framework for on-going collaborative, cross-systems family engagement work. Participants in the Summit will be 180 – 200 invited decision-makers who represent the range of stakeholders whose personal and/or professional interests are aligned with issues related to family engagement.

This spring a Design Team has been meeting to create a vision and plan for the Summit. At the first meeting each team member identified areas that “create barriers to” or “opportunities for” successful family engagement, and that can be significant leverage points for creating change. These will be used to pinpoint the areas of focus for the Summit. The Design Team’s recommendations for the summit will be presented to the Catalyst for Kids Executive Committee in June.

Sponsors of the Summit include Casey Family Programs, Children’s Administration and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Project Update

King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality

The King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality is a broad-based coalition committed to understanding and taking action to address racial inequities in King County’s child welfare system. The Honorable Patricia Clark, King County Superior Court, Jacquelyn Buchanan, Regional Administrator—Region 4 DSHS/Children’s Administration, and Lyman Legters, Director of Casey Family Programs—Seattle Office serve as the Executive Committee. Catalyst for Kids staffs the Coalition.

In May 2006 the Coalition entered into a partnership with the Alliance for Racial Equity, a national collaboration whose mission is to create a child welfare system that is free of structural racism and that benefits all children, families and communities. King County is one of the first locations in the country where the Alliance is partnering with the community to achieve shared goals of reducing disproportionality and disparity. King County was selected because of the broad commitment to the work that is demonstrated by the Coalition. The Alliance will bring technical assistance and some limited funding to support objectives identified by the Coalition.

Formed in 2004, the Alliance’s goal is, by 2015, to significantly reduce the racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparity in jurisdictions agreeing to partner with them. Alliance collaborators include Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Services, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the Race Matters Consortium.

Contact Us:

Nancy Roberts-Brown
Director
206-695-3236
Nancyrb@chs-wa.org

Mariko Ohiso
Coordinator
206-695-3238

Marikoo@chs-wa.org

www.catalystforkids.org

Project Update

Finding Our Roots: Permanent Connections for Youth

Finding Our Roots is a project that uses Family Group Conferencing and coordinated legal advocacy to provide adolescents in foster care in Seattle and Yakima with permanency through lifelong connections to caring adults. It is a collaborative project of Catalyst for Kids, Northwest Institute for Children and Families, UW Child and Youth Advocacy Clinic and Children's Administration.

The story below offers an excellent example of how Finding Our Roots can bring hope and permanence to vulnerable youth.

Dominic, age 17, was an adjudicated sex offender incarcerated at Maple Lane Juvenile Rehabilitation Facility at the time he and his family first engaged with Finding Our Roots. His initial Family Group Conference in November '05 gave Dominic hope for "life beyond incarceration" and helped him stay focused on the time of his release.

A second family meeting took place in January upon Dominic's release from Maple Lane. Held at his foster home, the purpose was to set up a structured and supportive plan to help him handle his post-incarceration freedom. The plan included frequent family contact as well as good communication between the youth, foster parent, service professionals and family members.

A third family meeting in May revealed that Dominic's progress has been remarkable. He has made great strides in behaving with responsibility, visiting with family members, improving his attitude and participating with excellence in school. This meeting resulted in the development of a new support plan detailing concrete steps towards greater freedom in the community, as well as Dominic's understanding that summer school is in his long-term best interest.

This case has become a model for establishing a good family and service professional partnership to foster positive change in a youth who had little hope of rehabilitation. Dominic has indeed found his roots.

Finding Our Roots is funded by the Stuart Foundation and Region 2 Children's Administration.

Leadership Team—We welcome new members

Dr. Michael Frumkin

Dean and Professor of Social Work, Eastern Washington University

Jim Theofelis

Director of The Mockingbird Society

Tiffany Washington

Foster Care Alumna

Our Vision ~ Every child grows up in a safe, nurturing family of his or her own.

