

Proposal for

Public-Private Leadership and Innovation for Children, Youth and Families

Breaking Barriers
March 2017

Background and Context

This document has been generated by a collaborative of experts from throughout California dedicated to developing a new, innovative, and unique path to solving the many vexing challenges that face those attempting to comprehensively address the needs of youth and their caregivers who wrestle with disability, trauma, or vulnerability. Notwithstanding decades of past efforts and improvements in some areas, and despite considerable public funding, our collaborative (many of whom have worked for decades in our existing systems of care) recognizes that communities and public agencies still struggle to effectively address the needs of these populations and the resulting poor individual and societal outcomes.

Having analyzed the efforts of the past, we recognize that comprehensively and effectively serving California's children and families requires extensive authentic partnerships among diverse and dedicated partners, including business and technology leaders, faith leaders, private philanthropy, and most critically, those our systems seek to serve. Foremost among these needed partnerships are new and unique coalitions to and identify and plan for the needs of all young people, families, and communities, and to use those insights to re-engineer our existing systems. We can no longer require that people first "fail" in some manner before qualifying for care. And we cannot adequately attempt to serve them by simply trying to fit them into existing structures that may not adequately serve their identified needs.

While many have sought to collaborate across sectors, actual improved outcomes are far too often impeded by the rules of the very systems seeking change. Inherently, this leaves only limited perspective and opportunities for transformation. Both research and common sense have shown that categorically-focused approaches, even when executed in collaboration with another agency, often fail to meet the unmet, unidentified, and emerging needs of youth and their caregivers. Systems that continue to rely only a narrow band of categorical services, offered to limited populations, while ignoring other determinants outside their mandated focus, fail to achieve positive outcomes for children, their families and communities. Far too often, systems accept as "transformative" overly simplistic and "easy" reforms, even celebrating them as unique, when what we actually need is to develop and implement entirely new methods to solve complex human problems.

How do communities of like-minded people transform well-intended, but often unresponsive systems and processes? It will take committed, collaborative leaders who are willing to envision a solution-making process that connects them with partners who have been historically separated from one another, and who can yet work creatively within and in spite of, the institutional rules that bind them. Some existing state and local oversight committees have proven helpful and necessary when concentrating on narrow populations, but often operate only within the limits of their statutory or administrative scope.

A Proposed Pathway to Comprehensive Collaboration and Care

Most organizational change occurs through one of three vehicles— legislative/policy enhancement; litigation on behalf of a unique class of citizens; or organizationally-held “Performance Improvement” processes. The approach contained within this proposal is about a fourth vehicle of change: a Private-Public Social Pact, rooted in previously unimaginable partnerships and the entrepreneurial orientation towards change that they can create together.

Breaking Barriers currently envisions two simultaneous efforts: ***Statewide Leadership for Cross System Change***; and the development of ***Centers of Excellence for Public-Private Leadership and Innovation*** that will establish models of cross system innovation in three distinct regions of California. These two interrelated efforts will each chart their own path and strategy, while mutually informing each other’s work and building leadership in the state to realize a comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable system of academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral health for **all** children, families and communities in California.

Effort One – Statewide Leadership for Cross-System Change:

It will take time and patience to identify and develop the right mix of united leadership voices to elevate statewide expectations for policy and practice change. Breaking Barriers seeks to develop and convene an authentic private/public partnership with representation from diverse and vibrant business and technology leaders, faith leaders, private philanthropy, elected representatives, and most critically, those youth and families that the system seeks to serve. This effort will be implemented in three phases:

Phase 1) Recruit and convene a small group of individuals who are actively engaged in state, county, school and community improvement efforts and share a broader commitment to change for all children and communities. The purpose of this initial convening is to:

- Affirm a shared vision of the need for, definition of, and path to genuine change

- Reach agreement on the need to develop a statewide voice that can advance a new approach for improving outcomes for all children, families and communities
- Align current and future efforts around statewide leadership development
- Develop a set of strategies to identify and engage key voices and stakeholders who are questioning and/or are concerned about the outcomes in public and private sector efforts and that have the political, economic and moral capital to lead, promote and advance genuine change
- Conduct an analysis of current needs, gaps, and resources, and assess the current state of implementation of children's programs

Deliverables:

- Identify effective and efficient working models of comprehensively serving the needs of children and families
- Establish a voice to represent both the needs of California children and their families and solutions to those needs

Phase 2) Implement the Strategies identified in Phase-One; identify and engage potential leaders who are and/or want to be aligned with the leadership conversation and this change effort. This would include, but not be limited to the following activities:

- One-on-one convening/consultations
- Small work-alike convenings/consultations
- Regional meetings and dialogues
- Sharing statewide and local data on needs, systems outcomes, and initiatives/improvement efforts
- Site visits and consultation with Breaking Barriers Regional Centers of Excellence
- Small policy change summits

Deliverables:

- Opportunities for leaders in the field to learn from one another and demonstrate strategies that have achieved improvements in the system and for children and families

Phase 3) Guided by a continuous learning process from Phases-One and Two, revise and add additional Leadership Implementation strategies:

- Convene First Cross-System Policy Change Summit

Deliverables

- Results-based information-sharing across the entire field
- Development of a cross system policy that is designed to align, support, and sustain a comprehensive system that works across systems to provide integrated services to all children and their families and integrates a continuous quality assurance/accountability approach.

- Improved service delivery for children and families.

While there are existing statewide leadership conversations ongoing in California, in nearly all cases, they are limited in purpose and intent to specific domains or populations: school settings, foster youth, or youth with developmental disabilities, to name a few. The herein proposed leadership effort would devote the necessary energy and resources to bring key leaders from those conversations into shared learning environments and engagement with new partners, and through the creation of the three regional centers outlined below, would foster new solutions. There are many groups exploring solutions, each with its own map. This statewide leadership effort will connect their maps to one another and to maps heretofore unknown.

Effort Two – Centers of Excellence for Public-Private Leadership and Innovation

Breaking Barriers (BB) seeks to unite disparate agencies, leaders and partnerships with a shared commitment to change by facilitating, convening and supporting a coordinated set of three regionally focused **Centers of Excellence for Public-Private Innovation for Children, Youth and Families**. These centers would be partnerships between consumers, faith leaders, philanthropy, community based agencies, business and technology leaders, and would facilitate design and innovation adjacent to, but **outside of** government's inherent limitations. BB Centers of Excellence would support regional and local conversations among entrepreneurs, innovators, early adopters from historically disparate and silo-driven public sectors, and the nonprofit community, and philanthropy.

Just as disruptive and innovative thinking in technology, healthcare, and manufacturing are creating solutions to issues and challenges which have stifled progress for decades, the Centers of Excellence for Public Private Innovation in Children, Youth and Family would seek to foster and facilitate solution-seeking for California children and families.

The Centers will support collaborations among diverse youth-serving agencies and public departments, together with their non-traditional partners, to design and pilot advanced solutions in key areas. Local and regional public-private partnerships would be formed to accelerate the cycle of piloting, refining, and scaling solutions, while lessening constraints and removing obstacles such as competitive procurement processes. These would represent efforts to guide the more effective use of public funding, rather than a request for additional resources.

Breaking Barriers has identified the following three geographies for Centers of Excellence and Regional Learning Conversations:

- Bay Area/Central Valley

- Capital/North State
- Southern/Inland Empire

These Breaking Barriers Centers of Excellence will initially focus on three areas:

- 1. Implementation Support for Promising Practices/Service Delivery Models**—In order to address the complex needs of children and their families, the Centers support, assist and facilitate local organizational and community readiness, initial and ongoing implementation activities, quality and outcome monitoring, sustainability, and “scaling up” of promising models being considered in the region. The centers convene cross-system meetings and information-sharing processes to provide decision-makers and stakeholders with information to support policy-making, planning, investment strategies, social marketing efforts, service array design, implementation, and sustainability.
- 2. Partnership Engagement and Collaboration**—Provide facilitation, support, and technical assistance to existing smaller collaboratives within the region, bringing alignment to distinct policy boards, commissions, workgroups and other change efforts within the three regions.
- 3. Workforce Development Activities**—Persons with lived experience possess unique capacity and perspective, but often lack the skills or power to effect transformative processes. BB regional collaboratives would identify existing constituencies where consumers of public youth and family services are present, and mobilize web based, in-person and telephonic technical assistance and training. The proposed Centers would thus significantly enhance the transfer of skill, knowledge and expertise to service recipients, other interested citizens, administrators, educators, practitioners, and policy makers.

Each Center would meet for one full day, at least three times per year, to identify shared challenges and successes and chart a course toward innovative solutions for their respective communities. Additionally, participants would attend semi-annual state level symposia, where each regional team would share progress and learning and discuss the implications of their work with key state leaders and other invitees. Combined, these regional centers and the statewide symposia would create a collective, statewide learning environment which would provide an unparalleled resource in the culture change, planning, and collaboration necessary to ensure that California’s children and their families can access the services and supports the need to succeed in school and society, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities. Over time, these coordinated learning conversations would yield innovation and partnership to transform systems, and insure alignment of California’s existing and future community and institutional resources to support and improve children’s and families’ social, emotional,

behavioral and physical health, educational outcomes, community wellness, and occupational readiness.

Among the primary goals of the Centers are the following:

- Public youth and family serving industries are de-insulated from their consumers, philanthropy, business, faith, and community leaders through the development of a shared power structure for decision-making and accountability.
- Youth and parents are trained to facilitate and lead regional and local conversations on how to best serve children and families.
- Regional and local conversations take place and lead to sustainable and replicable change on behalf of students and their caregivers.
- Statewide learning opportunities are created by bringing the three Centers of Excellence together consistently in facilitated and empowering conversations.
- Cross-system policy transformation occurs through the development and support of a statewide leadership that shapes statewide change consistent with Breaking Barriers' vision.

The Role of Breaking Barriers:

Breaking Barriers is a nonprofit organization with unique interest and energy that seeks to transcend the currently disconnected efforts and conversations to achieve improved outcomes for children and families in California. The Breaking Barriers vision is to ensure that all of California's children and their families are able to access the services and supports necessary for them to succeed in school and society, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities. Our mission is to align California's community and institutional resources to improve child, family and community health and wellness. Breaking Barriers will serve as the convener of the three regional Centers, and facilitator of two semi-annual Statewide Symposia.

Such a strategy would represent a promotion of Positive Community Culture ~ a re-engineering of social and educational programs so they can connect more fully with broader approaches to integrate community efforts around a shared understanding of challenges and solutions.

Potential Partners:

Education Leaders
Academia and University Researchers
Business, Technology and Finance Leaders
Youth and Family Service Recipients
Private Philanthropy

Public Service Administrators
Community Foundations
Non-Profit Leaders
Child- and Youth-Focused Commissions
Health Leaders

February 8, 2017

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