

**Strategic Plan
2003-2008
We Care Services for Children**

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I. Introduction

In 1960 *We Care* Society was formed to provide services to children with special needs. Over the past 42 years the agency has been able to grow and include multiple programs and services for children and their families in Contra Costa County.

In April of 2001 members of the Board of Directors, staff and community members met to begin work on a five year strategic plan. During the process several critical issues were identified and a committee was formed to develop the plan.

Input from stakeholders was gathered. Stakeholders included community members, staff, parents and state and local leaders. One central theme echoed repeatedly. The services provided by *We Care* are valued and necessary for an underserved population.

In 2002, the state of California projected the largest budget deficit in the states history. All public services are in jeopardy. *We Care* receives 90% of all funding through the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and the California Department of Mental Health (DMH). Impending reduction in funds increase the importance of community based non-profit programs to develop strong sustainability plans.

Keeping all of this in mind, this 5-year strategic plan was develop. This plan includes goals for three main areas: staff development, program management and board development.

II. Executive Summary

In our 40-year history *We Care* has been primarily focused on the inclusion and support of children with disabilities and their families. The definition for inclusion has changed over the years from prevention of institutionalizing to increased participation in daily activities, which a child without a disability can also participate.

Our program design and activities have also changed to address the identified needs of our stakeholders, primarily the state and local governments. These stakeholders are also the gatekeepers to funding dollars, which help us to provide an array of services.

New and increased information about the benefits of early intervention and brain development of children 0-5 has increased the amount of attention as well as funding that is directed toward programs such as ours as we are able to demonstrate a long term cost benefit for identifying and addressing a child's needs earlier than the previous standard.

This has created a unique opportunity for our agency. As funding for programs decline due to the reduction of available public money in a difficult economy, increased efforts are being made to develop unique, cost efficient programs for children 0-5.

We will be in the position over the next five years of taking a look at our programs and adjusting them so we can maximize all of our resources efficiently. These services will most likely include more home-based services, more inclusion type programs and more children served. There will also be a decrease in higher priced services such as Mental Health Day Treatment and Center Based Developmental programs.

The reputation of *We Care* is excellent and solid in our community. Local government leaders look to us to take the lead as experts as we develop new and better programs for children 0-5. As we implement

our plan, the board of directors, staff, families and community leaders will be laying the foundation for the type of services we will provide to families of Contra Costa County.

III. Mission Statement.

We Care addresses the developmental and emotional needs of young children by providing education and therapy in Contra Costa County. We build partnerships with families and the community helping each child to reach his or her maximum potential.

We Care Values

- Providing programs that are flexible, accessible, and responsive to each family while meeting the needs of the child.
- Offering a range of choices based on collaboration between parents and professionals.
- Foster a family's feeling of competence and worth.
- Creating an environment that provides encouragement and support for parents and caregivers.
- Continuing our family centered philosophy that acknowledges the family is central in a child's life.
- Respect and accommodate each family's individual feelings, uniqueness, culture, values, and needs.
- Advocating for all children.
- Promoting teamwork and respect.
- Building community relationships.

IV. Organizational History and Profile

We Care Services for Children was founded in 1960 by parents of children with severe disabilities. They wanted a program that would allow their children to receive services in their own community. Frequently, the only option for these children was institutionalization. These parents felt their children should be able to live with their families in their own neighborhoods while receiving services to maximize their development.

We Care Services for Children was founded to provide a pleasant environment, close to home where the children's needs for assistance in their physical intellectual and social development could be met. Parent and community volunteers, in conjunction with professional therapist like founding director Barbara Milliff, over saw the program through the 1960's in various church settings in the Concord area. In 1965 the children's treatment buildings were donated by the Port Chicago Navel Weapons Station and were set up on 10 acres of land donated by the Chaves Family. Barbara Milliff an occupational therapist, who became the Agency's first Executive Director, enlisted the help of the families and volunteers along with

labor unions in Contra Costa County to rehabilitate the buildings and facilities where services are currently provided. In 1970, Concord's Japanese Cultural Center donated our current administration building that was rehabilitated by volunteers as well.

Over the years, programs grew and changed. When the public schools began to take responsibility for older children with severe disabilities, *We Care* began to focus on younger children by providing support and treatment to infants toddlers and preschoolers in a center-based day program and though home visiting services. Mental health services also included a day treatment program and outpatient therapy. Recently services were expanded to include mental health and special needs consultation to preschool and day care providers to help identify children who need specialized services.

In all our programs we currently serve 696 children and their families in the county. The goal of *We Care* is to identify the needs of the community and grow to meet these needs. The mission of the agency is to provide early intervention during the formative years to these special children to lessen the gap with normally developing children. When these children enter the regular school system they already have a head start, the families are more informed, and they are prepared in the best possible way.

V. Program Goals

We Care desires to be regarded as the premier center for children's services in Contra Costa County. To do that we need to look beyond the limits of our current facilities and staff to the real needs of the children in the county. We need to look at our current programs to insure that they are meeting and exceeding the expectations of those who rely on them.

Goal 1

Increase agency capacity to identify children with special needs and provided appropriate services to meet their needs

Strategies

- Develop screening and assessment services
- Increase program capacity to provide additional out-patient services
- Increase program service boundaries; begin evaluation of providing services across Contra Costa or in collaborative partnerships
- Build strategic partnerships with 0-5 providers
- Use national standardized best practices in program development

Goal 2

We are proud of our staff and the work they do. We want to continue the tradition of committed, qualified, professional staff. We want to give them all the tools they need to do their job.

Increase staff expertise to provide quality early intervention services. Hire, train and retain qualified employees.

Strategies

- Develop training program for professionals and Para-professionals
- Increase salaries to meet the top percentile
- Develop and implement hiring procedure to aid in the hiring of culturally and linguistically diverse staff to reflect community and clients to whom services are provided

Goal 3

At the heart of our program is the sensitivity to families. The whole child includes the family and the extended family who nurture and help the child each step of the way. We must continue to give families the tools they need to work with their children.

Develop programs that are family centered and accessible. Increase ability to provide service in a family's most natural and least restrictive environment. Services will be provided at times and locations which best suit the families needs.

Strategies

- Reduction of segregated services for children with developmental disabilities
- Promote natural environment program design
- Increase service provided to families in home, day care or school environments
- Development of programs that meet the family's need for education and support
- Develop an integrated and comprehensive child development center

VI. Management Goals

Goal 1

Communicating our mission and our message to the community is key to a successful marketing effort with the focus on connecting with a persons values and then motivating behavior change. Marketing is a dialogue between We Care and our customers (clients, donors, volunteers, elected officials, etc.). We will need to learn what our market wants and needs, and then communicate messages designed to engage our markets. Through marketing, we will reach a larger audience that will help us realize our fundraising goals.

Increase community awareness of agency services and needs of children ages 0-5. Promote and provide advocacy on key issues with policy makers on local, state and federal level.

Strategies

- Develop marketing plan targeted for key stakeholders in the county
- Implement strategies for marketing plan
- Provide information to identified policy makers on issues concerning children
- Identify and participate in advocacy activities for children
- Implement Website to provide information to stakeholders on key issues and links to referrals and services

Goal 2

It is necessary for We Care to implement a development program to achieve our program goals, have diversified funding sources, and begin major gifts and capital campaigns. Development is the planning process that leads to fundraising. Planning is an integral piece of the development process and through planning we can determine the types of fundraising activities needed to support the agency through gifts and service. A fundraising plan is a guide for raising the

needed funds. It identifies our donors, contractors, and prospects, strategies for research, cultivating and soliciting them.

Increase level of funding to support all program activities.

Strategies

- Maintain government contracts
- Develop fundraising strategies to raise 10% of annual operating costs
- Income generated by programs should be at least 90% of total costs
- Begin major donor campaign for non-funded operating and capital repairs
- Begin Capital campaign for new facilities

Goal 3

Provide appropriate level of administrative support to maintain all levels of fund raising, program quality, and contract administration.

Strategies

- Evaluate administrative structure and need
- Keep cost at or below 15% of total cost of operation
- Provide adequate level of support to allow program staff to focus on children's services
- Monitor and meet all requirements of contracts
- Provide proper level of fiscal management and forecasting

Goal 4

Identify and implement policies for clear financial controls and policy, which enable the board of directors to carry out fiduciary responsibilities.

Strategies

- Reexamine goals and objectives for budget and finance committee.
- Explore feasibility of chief financial officer (CFO) position.
- Determine guidelines for quarterly review of financials.
- Provide training for board members and staff on non-profit financial management.

VII. Board of Directors - Goals

Goal 1

The development of a strong board with a clear direction to increase the sustainability of the agency beyond the next five years will increase our ability to establish reliable and consistent streams of revenue.

Increase agency capacity to diversify and expand fundraising goals. Develop relationships with corporate donors and major foundation support.

Strategies

- Explore feasibility of Development Director position
- Increase Board ability to contact potential donors

- Participate with staff when meeting with foundation and corporate supporters

Goal 2

A strategic board recruitment plan toward a more diversified board, with skill sets in areas identified in our feasibility study.

Identify, attract and train quality board members and an active auxiliary of volunteers to promote the mission of the agency

Strategies

- Develop a process for recruitment for board membership
- Design a clear job description for board members
- Identify key membership roles needed to move strategic plan forward
- Encourage community participation and non board members in committee meetings

Goal 3

In order to accomplish the long-range goal of new facilities and a successful capital campaign, we must increase and improve our relationships with individual donors and community leaders.

Begin fundraising campaign for facilities improvements and new building by 2007.

Strategies

- Begin Major Donor Campaign
- Develop plan and procedures to promote agency mission
- Outreach to current donors to increase annual gift
- Identify and cultivate new donors