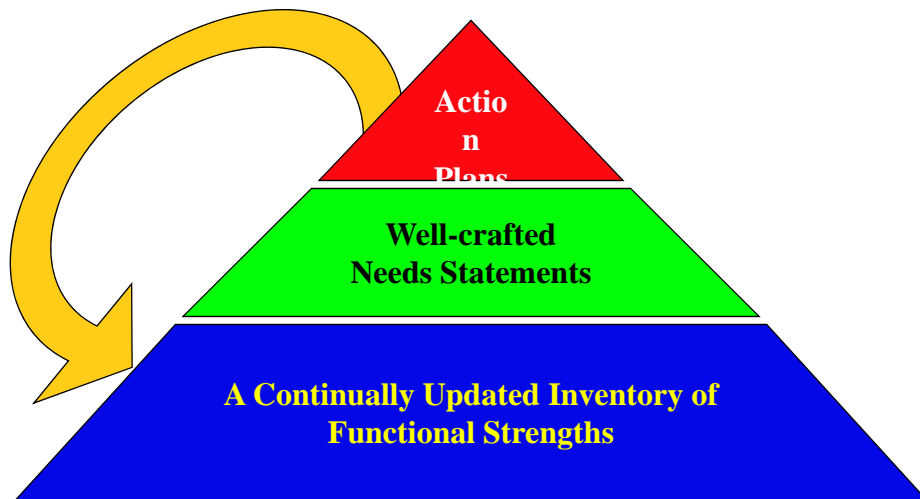


# Using Strengths & Meeting Needs: Increasing the Precision of Intervention

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## Core Elements of Strength-Based Planning



## Strengths & Community Based Work

- **Assumptions & Values**
  - People’s strengths will see them through the hard times
  - Everyone has strengths
  - Family strengths have not been recorded & witnessed enough in most service settings
  - Uncovering strengths identifies common ground
    - From diagnostic categories to living, breathing people
    - From helper to helpee
  - A strength orientation keeps people in touch with the potential & possibility

## Strengths & Community Based Supports

- **Practice Patterns**
  - “Chat” format rather than assessment
  - Occurs with a helper & family member/person
  - Other perspectives on strengths are solicited
  - Requires looking as well as listening
  - Lists are generated prior to first meeting
    - Each family strengths
    - Family as a whole
  - Starts with descriptive moves to contextual moves to functional
  - Presented at first team meeting & added to rather than completely generated at first meeting



## Resiliency

- The study of why things go right, even though the odds say they should have gone wrong
- Initial studies were of individual resiliency
- More recently research has also focused on family and community resiliency

## The Kauai Study

- 40 year study of a cohort of 700 children, all with at least 4 key risk factors associated with poor life outcomes
- At age 18, two thirds of the children were not doing well, but one third had developed into competent and caring young adults
- Even at age 40 this group was still doing well
- What was different about this group?
  - Easy going temperament, intelligence, strong sense of hope, able to draw nurturance from a variety of adults, confidence in their ability to shape events in their lives
  - At least one person in their lives who accepted them unconditionally.

• Werner, E.E. & Smith, R.S. (1992) Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood. Ithaca: Cornell University Press

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## Strengthening Resiliency

- People don't have a fixed resiliency quotient
- Intervention can increase resiliency
- Self-esteem and self-efficacy are promoted by supportive relationships
- By age 30, half of the two-thirds that had been doing poorly had turned their lives around
- A key transformational factor was having a social support network, either through family or other sources
- In general effective interventions must build upon protective factors and reduce or eliminate the impact of risk factors

– Werner, E.E. & Smith, R.S. (1993) Risk, resiliency and recovery: Perspectives from the Kauai longitudinal study. *Development and psychopathology*, 5, 503-515.

## Family Resiliency

- A key source of mutual social support is the family
- Yet most studies of families emphasize negative aspects: Froma Walsh once said that the only normal families are the ones that haven't yet been clinically assessed.
- What contributes to and enhances resiliency?
- We need to map both the pattern of relationships and the strategies used to deal with and adapt to changes in circumstances

## Stage 1: Your First Assumption



- Review the file
  - Do you read the file with an eye for strengths
    - What do you look for when the referral comes in?
    - Can you find strengths from the first piece of paper?
  - Do the “paper” strengths create a sense of hopefulness, excitement & enthusiasm about meeting the family?
  - Can you generate strengths that are accurate, genuine & based in fact?

## Stage 2: Get the Story

- Meet the family
- Start with their story
  - “Just the facts, ma’am”
- Don’t mistake facts, problems or worries for deficits
- Create space for people to tell their own story
- Organize the details to review the facts
- Analyze their story to pick out strengths

### Stage 3: Summarize the Story Strength Products

- **The Strength Summary**
  - Is distributed to each team member and is
  - A written narrative that
  - Tells a Story of the entire family
  - Identifies strengths, talents, capacities & gifts
  - While relating the facts from a positive framework.
- **The Strength Inventory**
  - A list of traits, talents, skills & attributes
  - That are summarized in hand-outs & visuals
  - That provides a quick listing of
  - The family's capacities, potentials, gifts & accomplishments and
  - Is reviewed together as a team.

### Developing the Strength Summary

- **Summary**
  - Introduces the family
  - Identifies who's involved
  - Gives the fact of involvement
- **Life Domains**
  - Tells who the family is in each life area
- **Family Strengths**
  - Pull out & list the identified strengths
  - Make them functional

## Stage 4: Summarize the Story Taking it to the Team

- Summarize the strengths found
- Be prepared to tell stories to illustrate the point
- Identify who you heard from
  - Avoid being the strengths keeper
- Make them real & believable
- Identify exceptions to initial conditions

## Exposing Functional Strengths

- **What** can the person and family do?
  - How have they dealt with challenges in the past?
  - What are their survival skills?
- **How** has it worked when they have dealt with a challenge?
  - Who have they turned to?
  - What was happening in the environment?
- **Why** did the child and family do the things that worked in the past?
  - What did they get out of it?
  - How could they use it again?

## Stage 5: Stay on the strengths

- Ongoing keys to strength discovery
  - Use accomplishments to find new capacities
  - Increase your list & record of skills
    - Create an inventory of abilities
    - Pay attention to each family member's core gift\*
  - Challenge others to stay on those core gifts
  - Notice, remark & record on how skills & capacities have addressed challenges
  - Create opportunities to practice in “calm water” situations

\*See Bruce Anderson, Community Activators

## Stage 6: Transitioning Strengths & Community

- Recognize community capacity
  - Formal Resource opportunities
  - Informal citizen opportunities
  - Natural family opportunities
- Be strategic about introductions
- Create capacity for community to accept people & families
  - As they are
  - With a genuine appreciation of their skills & ability to make a contribution

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### Core Skills for the Present Day Community Based Care Coordinator

- Engaging with people being served & their families
- Inspiring a strong, nonjudgmental family centered approach among all stakeholders
- Identifying & using individual, family & community strengths in service plans
- Reaching a collaborative agreement with people & their families
- Facilitating Strength Needs Based Team Meetings
- Developing strength based plans that meet needs and achieve outcomes

### Some BIG ideas associated with Needs & Community Services

- Bad behavior comes from unmet need
- The biggest unmet need for people in systems is often loneliness
- All behavior is communicative
- Getting a service doesn't necessarily mean you get your needs met
- If behavior doesn't change it is a signal that you should change what you're doing
- It is harder to institutionalize new ideas than people

## Needs & Community Based Planning

- Assumptions & Values
  - Difficult behaviors result from unmet needs
  - Difficult behaviors tell us important things about a person's life
  - Common “misses” for families
    - Meaningful relationships
    - Sense of safety & well being
    - Power & Control
    - Joy
    - Relevant skills & knowledge
    - A sense of value & self worth
  - Program representatives are responsible for finding needs
  - Families voice needs in a variety of ways
  - Needs extend beyond treatment boundaries

## Goals, Services & Needs are Different things

- Need
  - Defines **why** do the action
- Service
  - Identifies “**how**” to do something
- Goal
  - Captures “what” you hope to accomplish

## Goals and Needs are Different

- **Goal**
  - Is something I can imagine for someone else
    - “You need to get into treatment”
  - May address system or adult mandates
    - “You need to do this”
  - Addresses needing “to”
    - More of a command
- **Need**
  - Is something I can imagine the person saying if they could
    - “I need help getting a life to be sober for”
  - Will address compelling reason for the person
    - “I need to do this so I can get that”
  - Addresses needing “from”
    - More of a compelling purpose

## Needs & Individualized Planning

- **Practice Patterns: How it Happens in Individualized Programming**
  - Named facilitator or other role looks for needs as they complete the strengths “chats”
  - Needs statements brought together as a team
  - Family confirms accuracy or not
  - Prioritized as most important together
  - Focus on the “why” of a need not the “how” of it
    - Needs to be able to support kids rather than needs a car to get to work
  - Needs are not services
    - Not “she needs treatment” but “she needs to know she can still have fun while sober”
  - Needs are not goals
    - Not “she needs to attend school” but “she needs to be convinced she can learn in school”

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## A Range of “Needs” Talk in the Service System

- As an imperative (indirectly expressing an order or obligation – “you need to pay your taxes.”
- As something missing or lacking that is important to health – “I need a place to sleep tonight.”
- As necessary steps toward accomplishing a goal – “To get from here to there, you need to drive 3 blocks west on Kendall till you reach the Car Wash, then turn right for 2 blocks.”
- As the holes in our hearts that drive us to do the things we shouldn't and keep us from doing the things we should – “I need to be sure that no one will try to hurt me again.”

## Sample Needs for Kildare family members

- Florence
  - To feel like her younger kids will be successful in school
  - To be reassured that her boys have a good future
  - To be reassured that she is worthwhile & should be treated with respect
  - To know that people believe she can do better with her sobriety
- Kids
  - To see their mother in a relationship in which she is treated with respect
  - To know that they won't lose their mother
  - To be able to express themselves in ways that won't get them in trouble
  - To be encouraged to maintain relationships with trusting adults