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Expanding and Deepening Collaboration at the Northwest Family Service Center

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the last decade, Hennepin County has been working to fundamentally redesign the way it delivers human services. One of the key elements of the redesign is a regionalization of services, and at the center of the regionalization strategy is greater collaboration with other human service providers in Hennepin County. In order to promote the development of collaboration at the Northwest Family Service Center (NWFSC), this report addresses the following overarching research question: *how can the NWFSC more effectively collaborate with other human services providers?* Three sub-questions guided the main components of the research:

- What are the key lessons for the NWFSC from research on other human service collaborations?
- How effectively is the NWFSC currently collaborating with other human service providers in the community?
- What opportunities exist for more extensive and effective collaboration?

We identified the following main findings through a literature review, evaluation of two case studies, and 15 interviews with 17 individuals:

- Successful partnership does not require intensive collaboration, but playing a central role in a partnership is an effective way to generate successful collaboration.
- The NWFSC currently demonstrates characteristics of communication and coordination in its work with community partners, but not what we would characterize as collaboration.
- There is high potential for further developing relationships with current community partners, but doing so will require improving awareness among County staff of those partners and the services they provide, revamping the referral process, and enhancing communication between the NWFSC and its partners.

In order to leverage the strengths of current partnerships and address weaknesses in the relationships, we offer two strategic recommendations:

- In the short-term, focus on building relationships with the six organizations that co-locate at the NWFSC and other current partners rather than using limited resources to build new collaborative relationships.
- In the long-term, consider engaging with additional community partners when the NWFSC has developed strong relationships with existing partners that include a high level of awareness and a strong feedback loop between the NWFSC and its partners.

Seven recommendations aim to assist implementation of the short-term strategic recommendation:

- Hold regular meetings with co-locating partner organizations.
- Conduct more events aimed at acquainting County staff with the NWFSC's partners and the services they provide.
- Develop a notification system that enables all staff in the building to know which co-locating community partners are present on a given day.

- Formalize referral processes with community partners.
- Consider implementing the Systems of Care referral tool more widely.
- Consider creating a separate intake desk for community partner clients.
- Meet with all of the co-locating community partners to determine any possible means of allowing them to provide services at alternative times.

Finally, three lessons emerged from the current collaborative efforts that the County can apply as it continues its regionalization and collaboration initiatives:

- Look to existing partners first.
- Identify new partners using criteria that emphasize organizations that provide services needed in the targeted region of Hennepin County, have a service area that includes that region, do not currently have an office in that region, and practice models of service delivery that are compatible with the space available at hubs.
- Use the success of current collaborative efforts in marketing.

The current collaboration initiatives are unique in the human services field and offer great promise in helping the County to accomplish its mission of providing better lives for its clients and a stronger community for everyone in Hennepin County. We are confident that our recommendations will enable the County to take advantage of its strengths to address some of its weaknesses in collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

For the last decade, Hennepin County has been working to fundamentally redesign the way it delivers human services. In 2004, six County departments merged to form the Human Services and Public Health Department (HSPHD), and in 2006 HSPHD launched its “Delivering Services in the 21st Century” strategic visioning process. HSPHD completed this process in 2009 by unveiling its Client Services Delivery Model (CSDM). One of the key elements of the CSDM was regionalizing services to six hubs and many smaller service centers located throughout the county.¹ The first hub, the Northwest Family Service Center, opened in October of 2012.²

At the center of the regionalization strategy is greater collaboration with other human service providers in Hennepin County. HSPHD’s new vision is “better lives, stronger communities.” It views collaborating with other social service providers as a way to strengthen the community, provide more coordinated services for clients, and deliver services in a more cost-effective way. One unique strategy HSPHD has used to enhance collaboration is having six community organizations co-locate at the NWFSC. However, the arrangement is in its infancy and has presented some challenges related to collaboration.³

In order to promote the development of collaboration at the NWFSC, this report addresses the following overarching research question: *how can the NWFSC more effectively collaborate with other human services providers?* Three sub-questions guided the main components of the research:

1. What are the key lessons for the NWFSC from research on other human service collaborations?
2. How effectively is the NWFSC currently collaborating with other human service providers in the community?
3. What opportunities exist for more extensive and effective collaboration?

This report will first present an overview of regionalization and existing collaboration. It will then present the research methodology. Next, it will address key lessons from research on other human service collaborations, and will then move on to present the results and analysis of interviews with HSPHD staff, representatives from current community partners, and representatives from another community organization that could potentially partner with HSPHD and the NWFSC in the future.

¹ Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department (HSPHD), “HSPHD’s New Direction: Delivering Services in the 21st Century,” 2011, 1-3.

² Wendy Erlien, “Hennepin County Opens Human Services Office in Brooklyn Center,” *Plymouth Patch*, September 30, 2012, <http://plymouth-mn.patch.com/announcements/hennepin-county-opens-human-services-office-in-brooklyn-center>.

³ HSPHD, 2011, 1-2.

REGIONALIZATION AND THE NORTHWEST FAMILY SERVICE CENTER

The NWFSC emerged from HSPHD's Client Service Delivery Model released in 2009. HSPHD was created in 2004 through the merger of six Hennepin County departments, and then began a strategic planning process in 2006. Management and other stakeholders concluded that HSPHD's future would lie in decentralizing services from the agency's main office at Century Plaza, redesigning workflows, and collaborating more effectively with other service providers. HSPHD then created the CSDM, which envisioned a system that "leverages all of our collective resources, allows us to provide a cost-effective continuum of services and helps strengthen our communities."⁴

A critical component of the CSDM is regionalization. HSPHD ultimately envisions three types of facilities: 1) six "hubs" where clients can access all services currently available at Century Plaza; 2) "satellites" that will complement the services of hubs; and 3) "specialty sites" that will offer a particular program. HSPHD envisions that community organizations will co-locate at hubs and satellites. Moreover, HSPHD also plans to collaborate with other community organizations to provide a "continuum of services" for its clients.⁵

Implementation took a major step forward when the NWFSC opened in Brooklyn Center on October 1, 2012. The NWFSC offers all of the services available at Century Plaza in a visually appealing environment with free childcare and parking. It was originally a joint project of HSPHD, Osseo Area Schools, and Community Emergency Assistance Programs (CEAP).⁶ HSPHD uses the space as described, Osseo Area Schools has a satellite office there, and CEAP now has its headquarters in the facility. Additionally, five non-profit community organizations now offer services at the site, typically two to three days per week. Each organization and summaries of their services are below:⁷

- **CAPI** – full range of economic and emergency assistance services for immigrants; provides intake services and referrals at the NWFSC
- **Children's Dental Services** – mobile dental clinics for children
- **Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin** – full range of economic and emergency assistance services for Hennepin County residents; provides legal clinics, intake services, and referrals at the NWFSC
- **Cornerstone** – counseling, legal services, and housing for victims of domestic violence and their children; provides intake, referrals, and resources at the NWFSC
- **Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis** – wide range of services for children, families, and seniors

Seven months have now passed since the NWFSC opened. County staff who work at the NWFSC and representatives from co-locating community organizations now have sufficient experience with the arrangement to offer valuable insight into the status of collaboration at the site. Following a description of the project's methodology, the remainder of this report will

⁴ HSPHD, "Regional Services Planning and Client Service Delivery Model," 2009, 1.

⁵ HSPHD, 2009, 2-3.

⁶ Erlien.

⁷ Based on correspondence with Jane Sinitsky (Hennepin County) and interviews with organization representatives.

analyze the current level of collaboration and present opportunities and recommendations for enhancing future collaboration.

METHODOLOGY

Our research includes a literature review, document review, and semi-structured interviews. A qualitative approach was necessary because we were focusing on the basic collaborative processes already existing and on the views and opinions of human service professionals about what is working well, what is working poorly, and how future collaboration could be improved. It would be extremely difficult to quantify such information; even if it were possible, we would lose a lot of the richness of the information. Of the various qualitative methods, we decided interviews were best for two reasons. First, they are ideally suited to gathering detailed and candid information. Second, interviews better matched the scheduling realities of the busy professionals we wanted to interview. Their schedules would have made it difficult to schedule a focus group or shadowing arrangement. The following sub-sections describe each aspect of our research and the limitations of our methodology.

Literature and Document Review

This stage provided key foundations for the project. We reviewed academic literature related to public-nonprofit collaboration in order to ground our subsequent interviews, analysis, and recommendations in theory and practice. We then reviewed key Hennepin County strategic planning documents related to the CSDM and regionalization in order to understand the stated motivations and goals of Hennepin County for the NWFSC. Comparing programs in practice to the stated visions for those programs is a useful way to identify opportunities for change.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews formed the core of the research. Semi-structured interviews involve the interviewer asking key questions of all respondents but doing so in an order that varies depending on the course of the interview while also asking follow-up questions specific to each interview. Sample interview schedules can be found in Appendices A and B. We conducted 15 interviews with 17 people between February and April of 2013. The following is a general breakdown of the interviews and respondents:

- Seven interviews with nine Hennepin County employees
 - Included management and frontline staff
 - Six interviews with individual respondents
 - One group interview with three respondents
- Five interviews with representatives from five of the six nonprofit organizations that co-locate at the NWFSC
- Two interviews with one respondent from the Northwest Hennepin Family Services Collaborative

- One interview with two representatives from a potential partner organization

We then typed summaries of each interview based on notes and coded the summaries using NVivo software. NVivo is software designed for analyzing qualitative data. Coding involves defining key themes and then notating where they appear in a summary or transcript. Our codebook is attached in Appendix C. After coding, we analyzed the interview summaries by querying the codes with NVivo.

We took several steps to ensure accurate analysis. First, both of us were present in eight of 15 interviews, allowing us to reconcile different interpretations of what a respondent said and to have two sets of interview notes. Second, we interviewed people representing different organizations and different levels of seniority within those organizations. Interviewing people from various backgrounds strengthens data collection by providing multiple perspectives on the same issues. Finally, we verified emerging themes in subsequent interviews in order to determine if they were simply one person's unique views or a shared perception.

Limitations

There were two key limitations to the study. First, all conclusions are tentative rather than final due to the small sample of interview respondents. Our time and resource constraints made it impossible to interview a larger representative sample of County and nonprofit staff. Second, a Hennepin County staff person suggested most of our respondents. The staff person was extremely helpful and gave us no reason to believe (s)he introduced bias into the study, but non-random selection of respondents always runs the risk of bias. Nevertheless, we believe the range of respondents enabled us to draw valid conclusions.

APPLICATION OF OTHER RESEARCH TO THE NWFSC

What is collaboration?

Defining collaboration is an important first step in analyzing collaboration between the NWFSC and community service providers. Although commonly used to describe any kind of cooperation between organizations, organizational researchers have a more specific definition in which collaboration involves sharing information, activities, resources and power.⁸ It is useful to view collaboration as a space along the continuum displayed in *Figure 1* on the next page:⁹

⁸ Barbara Crosby and John Bryson, *Leadership for the Common Good* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 18-19.

⁹ *Ibid*, 18-19.

Figure 1: Continuum of Collaboration



Moving from left to right implies a progressively greater degree of sharing between organizations. At the communication stage, organizations are simply sharing information. As they move into coordinating, they share resources and jointly conduct activities. At the collaboration stage, organizations leverage their power to benefit each other, and at the merger stage organizations become a single entity.¹⁰ Determining the NWFSC’s location on the continuum and its capacity to move along the continuum was an important step in answering the research questions.

What do we know about collaboration?

There is a rich literature on organizational collaboration that offers useful insight for Hennepin County. Organizations choose to collaborate for many reasons, including to address a problem more effectively, improve efficiency, mitigate risk, satisfy a legal requirement, or exercise control over other organizations in a policy environment.¹¹ Whatever the reason, there is extensive support for the idea that collaboration has benefits for organizations that do it well. Not only can they deliver services more efficiently, but they can deliver higher quality services, use resources to which they would not otherwise have access, and learn new ideas from their partners.¹² However, organizations are often too quick to assume that such advantages are inherent in collaborative relationships. Successful collaboration is actually extremely difficult. In fact, two prominent researchers of public-private collaboration write, “Our message to practitioners and policy makers alike is *don’t do it unless you have to.*”¹³

Despite the challenges, research highlights a number of important conditions for successful collaboration:

- **Alignment of goals:** Collaborating organizations must agree generally on the problem they perceive and their goals relative to addressing it.¹⁴ However, agreement on goals

¹⁰ Christine Oliver, “Determinants of Interorganizational Relationships: Integration and Future Directions,” *Academy of Management Review* 15, no. 2 (1990): 242-246.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 242-246.

¹² Chris Huxham and Siv Vangen, *Managing to Collaborate: The Theory and Practice of Collaborative Advantage* (London: Routledge, 2005), 5-10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴ Stephen Goldsmith and William D. Eggers, *Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 125.

does not mean that each member is involved in collaboration because of identical motivations.¹⁵

- **Trust:** Trust between partners is one of the most essential elements of successful collaboration. Without it, collaborating organizations are unwilling to take risks, share resources, or cede power to other partners. However, it is unrealistic to expect and unnecessary to require high levels of trust at the outset of a collaborative relationship. Some level of trust must exist, but partners enhance trust in the collaboration through a circular process. The collaboration achieves small goals, which increases trust, allowing the collaboration to undertake larger initiatives. Success at larger initiatives increases trust, allowing for progressively deeper collaboration.¹⁶
- **Management of power differentials:** Power differentials are an inherent part of collaboration, and are especially important to consider in relation to the NWFSC where Hennepin County is a far larger and more powerful organization than most of its current or future partners. Failure to manage power differentials in a way that ensures smaller members are not marginalized damages the ability to generate the trust that is so critical to successful collaboration.¹⁷
- **High interest and interdependence:** Organizations involved in collaboration must have a high level of interest in the issue the group is trying to address and must perceive there is a high level of interdependence between organizations addressing the issue. Interest ensures that organizations are engaged in addressing the issue and interdependence ensures that they will work closely with other organizations rather than trying to address the issue through individual efforts.¹⁸
- **Appropriate partners:** Collaborations must include partners that have sufficient expertise, financial capacity, and connections to the populations the collaboration will serve. They must also fit with the organizational culture of the collaboration.¹⁹ Lacking any of these elements can destabilize the collaboration and weaken its ability to accomplish its goals.
- **The right structure:** Collaboration can take many forms ranging from intensive contracting to loose networks in which one or more partners simply connect other partners to each other. Members of a collaborative should create a structure that reflects the goals, available resources, and degree of flexibility or rigidity needed in the arrangement.²⁰

¹⁵ Huxham and Vangen, 61-63.

¹⁶ Ibid, 66-68.

¹⁷ Ibid, 165-166.

¹⁸ Jeanne M. Logsdon, "Interests and Interdependence in the Formation of Social Problem-Solving Collaborations," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 27, no. 1 (1991): 25-27.

¹⁹ Goldsmith and Eggers, 64-69.

²⁰ Ibid, 69-72.

What can we learn from other examples of collaboration?

There are many examples of collaboration that offer insight into the NWFSC's own efforts. This report presents two examples:

- Fulton County, Georgia's Sickness Prevention Achieved Through Regional Collaboration program (SPARC)
- Maricopa County, Arizona's Regional Behavioral Health Authority

We focused on examples that offered four key similarities to the NWFSC: 1) a local collaboration that 2) focused on human service delivery with 3) a government or its agent initially at the center of the collaboration and that was 4) composed primarily of nonprofit organizations. Among the examples that met our criteria, we chose the SPARC example because it offered the rare example of a collaboration that featured informal cooperation rather than contracting. The Maricopa County example featured contracting, but we chose it because, unlike most studies, it offered a series of high quality studies by prominent researchers that collectively provide a picture of the collaboration over time rather than in one moment. A brief analysis of each study follows.

Sickness Prevention Achieved Through Regional Collaboration Program

Fulton County, Georgia's SPARC program closely resembles the kind of voluntary collaboration occurring at the NWFSC.²¹ The program launched in 2006 as a partnership between the Fulton County Department of Aging and 32 other organizations providing preventive health screening services to seniors with the goal of better coordinating care for the area's seniors. Like the NWFSC, the partnership operated on an entirely voluntary basis without any formal contracts. Additionally, the providers rarely exchanged money, opting instead to share resources like staff and information when situations called for doing so. No organization was formally the leader of the SPARC program, but the County Department of Aging quickly came to fill a central coordinating role.

Research showed that the program has experienced some challenges as well as successes. Most importantly, the partnership continues to operate seven years after it began.²² With collaborations facing a high rate of failure, its persistence is, in and of itself, a major accomplishment. However, achieving a high level of collaboration has been a challenge. The main study of the program included surveys and interviews with leadership from participating organizations in 2009 and 2011. Using a continuum similar to *Figure 1*, the study found levels of organizational sharing at the very low end of the continuum in 2009, with some movement up the continuum by 2011. However, the perception of mutual benefits from participating in the collaboration dropped significantly over those two years. The perceived quality of governance and administration also dropped over the two years, likely because the County consciously

²¹ Brenda A. Sullivan, "Inter-Organizational Relationships of Health Partnerships: Characteristics of the Fulton County SPARC Program," *Journal of Health & Human Services Administration*, summer (2012): 44-71.

²² Fulton County, "Fulton County and Community Partners Prepare for Spring 2013 SPARC Atlanta Health Screening Clinics," accessed April 15, 2013, <http://myfultoncountyga.us/latest-news/5771-fulton-county-and-community-partners-prepare-for-spring-2013-sparc-atlanta-health-screening-clinics>.

pulled back its efforts somewhat in order to allow its partners greater autonomy. Finally, there was limited communication between partners in both years outside of planning for clinics.

The SPARC example offers two important insights for the NWFSC:

- Lower levels of sharing on the collaboration continuum such as in the SPARC example are a viable model for organizations to work together.
- A central convening organization can play an important role in establishing and maintaining a network. A long-term leadership commitment may be necessary to maintain effective governance of a collaboration.

Maricopa County, Arizona’s Regional Behavioral Health Authority

Maricopa County’s Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) offers another example of a government-centered collaboration. Though focused on contracting rather than a voluntary arrangement like that at the NWFSC and SPARC, it provides several useful insights for Hennepin County. Three studies examine the development of the collaboration between 2000 and 2004 in Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix. The collaboration, as it was studied, began in 1999. In Arizona, the State handles all contracting associated with services for adults with severe mental illness through five RBHAs. The State contracts with an organization to be an RBHA, and the RBHA subsequently manages all contracting within its jurisdiction. In the late 1990s, the nonprofit organization that was the RBHA for Maricopa County went bankrupt, and in 1998 the State granted a new contract to a for-profit company called Value Options (VO). VO began operations in Maricopa County in 1999.²³ The three studies then assessed the collaboration using surveys of the organizations that contracted with VO.

Each of the three studies addresses several dimensions of collaboration that are relevant to the NWFSC:

- Study 1: The first study assessed the network in 2000 and found that tangible resources such as financing flowed through the network in a highly centralized manner, primarily from VO to the service providers. In contrast, intangible resources such as information flowed through the network in a highly decentralized pattern.²⁴
- Study 2: It also assessed the network in 2000, but instead tested the hypothesis that a more central role in a network will lead to higher trustworthiness, improved reputation, and greater influence, which the study refers to as “social outcomes.”²⁵ It analyzed centrality in both a referral network and an information-sharing network. It found relatively little evidence of a relationship between centrality and reputation, but found a strong positive relationship between centrality in a referral network and trustworthiness and a weak positive relationship between centrality in an information sharing network

²³ Kun Huang and Keith G. Provan, “Interaction in a Publicly Funded Health and Human Services Network,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, no. 17(2006): 439.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 443-449.

²⁵ Kun Huang and Keith G. Provan, “Structural Embeddedness and Organizational Social Outcomes in a Centrally Governed Mental Health Services Network,” *Public Management Review* 9, no. 2 (2007): 173.

and trustworthiness. Centrality in a referral network and generally also positively impacted the perception of influence.²⁶

- Study 3: The culminating study assessed changes between 2000 and 2004 in the same three social outcomes analyzed in the second study. It found strong support that centrality in an information-sharing network led to increasing trustworthiness, but limited support for any effect of centrality in a referral network. It found little change in the importance of information or referral network centrality on reputation and information network centrality on perceived influence. However, referral network centrality became a considerably stronger predictor of perceived influence over time.²⁷

The Maricopa County RBHA example offers two important insights for the NWFSC:

- Collaboration in which referrals play a significant role offer an opportunity for the NWFSC and Hennepin County to build trustworthiness with community partners. Less intensive coordination of referrals provide a beginning point on the trust-building loop that will generate the trust necessary for more intensive collaboration.
- Playing a central role in a collaboration presents challenges and opportunities for government agencies. A central role could significantly aid in generating positive social outcomes, but the perception of increasing influence could emphasize an imbalance of power that the partners must manage successfully for the collaboration to endure.

Conclusion

The literature review provided a theoretical and practical grounding for conducting interviews and analysis. We used the characteristics of successful collaborations and insight from the case studies to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities related to the NWFSC's efforts to collaborate with other human service providers. The following section will present our key findings from the interviews.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Our research aims to answer the question: how can the NWFSC more effectively collaborate with other human service providers? The interview component of the research contributes to answering the overarching question by addressing two sub-questions:

1. How effectively is the NWFSC currently collaborating with human service providers in the community?
2. What opportunities exist for more extensive and effective collaboration?

²⁶ Ibid, 182-183.

²⁷ Keith G. Provan, Kun Huang, and H. Brinton Milward, "The Evolution of Structural Embeddedness and Organizational Social Outcomes in a Centrally Governed Health and Human Services Network," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, no. 19 (2009), 885-888.

As discussed previously, collaboration involves sharing resources, jointly conducting activities, and leveraging the power to the benefit of all parties involved. Successful collaborations typically feature well-aligned goals, high levels of trust, effective management of power differentials, joint perceptions of interest and interdependence, appropriate partners, and the right structure. Guided by these principles, we conclude the following related to each question presented above:

1. On the continuum of organizational sharing, the NWFSC currently demonstrates characteristics of communication and coordination in its work with community partners, but not what we could characterize as collaboration.
2. There is high potential for further developing relationships with current community partners, but doing so will require improving awareness among County staff of those partners and the services they provide, revamping the referral process, and enhancing communication between the NWFSC and its partners.

The remainder of this section will present seven key findings that support our conclusions.

Finding 1: The NWFSC's capacity for more intensive collaboration is likely to be low at this time.

Since the NWFSC Hub opened in the fall of 2012, there has been a higher than anticipated number of clients visiting the site. The NWFSC hub was originally planned to accommodate roughly 185-225 clients per day. Currently, the site experiences an average of 200-300 clients each day with even higher client volume around the first of the month. A number of the County employees we interviewed reported high levels of stress related to having too many clients. Additionally, some staff believe the NWFSC is understaffed across a number of job classes including Case Management Assistants (CMAs) and financial workers. Among our respondents, the combination of high client volume and the perception of understaffing has led to a feeling of being overworked and overwhelmed. Frontline workers and managers alike acknowledge the burden that high client volume places on County workers and the extent to which this burden limits the County's capacity to pursue other endeavors.

Given current workload, frontline workers have had very little time to devote towards the time and labor intensive demands inherent in deeper levels of collaboration. Current partners understand that County workers have heavy workloads and are sympathetic to the present limitations County staff have in pursuing deeper collaboration. However, both County staff and community partners expressed a desire to find new ways to work together to better serve their mutual clients. Consequently, our recommendations attempt to respect the limited capacity of frontline County workers at this time.

Finding 2: Identifying new community partners will be challenging.

In order to identify potential partners for collaboration with Hennepin County, we first developed a set of criteria to help focus our search. These criteria were informed by theory on

collaborations as well as our conversations with current community partners and Hennepin County staff. The criteria call for an organization that:

1. Provides services that meet a need in northwest Hennepin County.
2. Has a service area that includes northwest Hennepin County.
3. Does not currently have an office in northwest Hennepin County.
4. Practices a model of service delivery that is compatible with the space available at the NWFSC.

After developing these criteria we began to identify potential partners by asking County staff and managers as well as current community partners for suggestions on which organizations they thought could be good partners for Hennepin County. Then to complete our list of organizations, we searched via the Internet and the “Northwest Hennepin County Guide to Human Services” for organizations that met our criteria. In the course of our interviews, respondents suggested that the greatest unmet needs in northwest Hennepin County were homelessness, teen pregnancy, and mental health. As such, we focused on organizations that provide services addressing these needs. Using these tactics we identified six organizations that had the potential to be good partners for Hennepin County. Of those organizations we only received responses from Catholic Charities, Tapestry, and HomeLine. However, in our conversations with representatives from these organizations we found that most were not interested in co-locating or otherwise offering services at the NWFSC for a variety of reasons:

- Catholic Charities: We selected Catholic Charities because it 1) provides services addressing homelessness and serves clients metro-wide. However, a representative from Catholic Charities explained that the organization was not interested in co-location because (s)he did not believe that the space available would work for its current service delivery model. A representative from Catholic Charities told us that the organization had already toured the NWFSC and did not see potential in the site at the time. (S)he did, however, express that Catholic Charities was already collaborating with Hennepin County in other ways.
- Tapestry: We selected Tapestry for because 1) it provides services that could help teen mothers, 2) it serves clients metro-wide, 3) it is located in south Minneapolis, and 4) a frontline County worker spoke highly of the organization. A representative from Tapestry liked the idea in concept; however, she explained that Tapestry did not have the capacity for expanding its service delivery to the northwest region at this time. Tapestry only has six full-time employees and already had more work than it could handle.
- HomeLine: We selected HomeLine because 1) it provides tenant advocacy services that can help to prevent homelessness, 2) it serves clients metro-wide, 3) it is located in south Minneapolis, and 4) it provides some services through a clinical service delivery model that has been successfully employed at the NWFSC. HomeLine was interested in discussing the possibility of collaboration and two representatives from HomeLine agreed to sit down with us for an interview. After hearing more about the NWFSC, the representatives expressed that, although they were interested in discussing some form of collaboration with Hennepin County, they did not think that co-location would serve the needs of its clients given that much of their work occurs over the phone. They were, however, open to discussing staff trainings or workshops on tenant rights at the NWFSC.

Although our research in this area was limited to a handful of organizations, an important theme emerged especially in light of our conversations with current community partners: co-location at the hub may not be a good fit for the mission, capacity, and service delivery models for many organizations. In light of this theme, it may be difficult to identify and attract organizations that will see temporary workspace at a remote location as a viable strategy for delivering services.

Finding 3: Awareness of collaboration at the NWFSC among County staff is limited.

Effective collaboration requires a high level of awareness of what each partner provides, yet we found only limited awareness of the details of collaboration among Hennepin County staff. First, there is only moderate awareness of the general idea that collaboration is occurring. Three of the nine County staff members we interviewed knew specific details about co-location, but all three of these people were directly involved in implementing the collaboration and none of them were frontline staff. In contrast, the three frontline workers with whom we spoke had only heard about co-location, but had never had any direct interaction with the co-locating organizations. One supervisor mentioned that his/her staff had very limited knowledge of co-location, and another had only learned that co-location was operational several weeks before our interview despite it having been operational for several months.

Second, there is very low awareness within the County of the specific details of co-location. Only the three staff members involved in implementation of co-location knew which organizations were co-locating, what services they offered, and when they were in the building. None of the three frontline staff members we interviewed knew any details beyond that co-location was occurring. As described above, one supervisor felt that low awareness was a widespread issue rather than one confined to just the frontline staff we interviewed. Indeed, low levels of awareness are plausible given the limited staff capacity and the newness of the co-location arrangement.

Finally, the co-locating organizations largely corroborated the idea that there is limited awareness among County staff of co-location. Respondents from three of the six organizations said they did not feel that County staff had a good idea of which organizations were co-locating and when they were in the building. One respondent said, “You’ve got a 50-50 chance [a Hennepin County worker] knows who’s there.” Nevertheless, multiple respondents said that CEAP had experienced a significant increase in clients after moving its offices into the building. The increase indicates a referral stream, which suggests that there is at least some awareness.

Several opportunities also emerged from our interviews. First, management and staff involved in implementing co-location recognize that there is low awareness and are working to address it. As mentioned above, one manager expressed that his/her staff knew only some details of co-location. We also learned that staff members have planned several events to better acquaint frontline staff with the services of the co-locating organizations. We also found that co-locating organizations are now featured on electronic signage and that other efforts to increase signage are underway. Second, community partners appear willing to make a greater effort to increase

awareness. One partner was eager to offer more seminars, meet-and-greets, or other events for staff, and we have no reason to believe other partners would not be willing to do the same.

Building awareness would likely pay many dividends to the NWFSC's efforts to more effectively collaborate with community partners. Because collaboration involves sharing resources and jointly conducting activities and neither of those functions can occur without awareness, the low levels of awareness suggest that the NWFSC is operating at the lower end of the organizational sharing spectrum. Enhancing awareness is important because in addition to increasing operational effectiveness, it represents a first step to building trust and drawing attention to the interests and interdependencies of the organizations involved in the collaboration. The additional benefits lay the foundation for more intensive collaboration in the future.

Finding 4: The referral system between the County and its community partners shows limited coordination.

Although an analysis of the referral processes for the entire NWFSC is outside the scope of this study, it is worthwhile to examine the way in which County staff members make referrals. Referrals are important to social service organizations and represent one of the most common modes of working together found in human service collaborations. Although referrals represent a lower form of collaboration – falling somewhere between information-sharing and coordination on the continuum depicted in Figure 1– they are essential in strengthening connections between organizations, building trust, and ultimately achieving the shared goal of improving outcomes for mutual clients. Stronger referral networks help Hennepin County build trust with its community partners and eventually move towards more intensive collaboration as illustrated in the Maricopa County studies.

In the course of our interviews with management and staff at Hennepin County, we consistently heard a desire to provide the best possible referrals to clients. We heard stories from a number of Hennepin County workers describing instances in which they had gone above and beyond to help ensure productive referrals. In spite of the compassion and dedication of these workers, finding the right resources for a particular client and ensuring the client gains access to those resources can be challenging. We found that, while County staff members believe that the referral system at the NWFSC generally works well, there are some areas in which there is room for improvement. In this section we examine Hennepin County's referral processes with current community partners as well as analyze two referral tools used by County staff: the Broader Needs Assessment and Systems of Care.

Referrals to Current Partners: Through our interviews with County staff and community partners we found that referrals are not, for the most part, occurring on a regular basis between Hennepin County staff and co-locating organizations. County staff report that they do not really know who the current partners are, when they are in the building, or what services they provide. Furthermore, not a single respondent from the County reported regularly making referrals to the co-locating organizations. Corroborating this finding, co-locating partners report that they do not believe many referrals are coming from the County.

The one notable exception to this trend is CEAP. Unlike the other partners, CEAP has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of clients it serves since moving into the NWFSC. Representatives from CEAP as well as Hennepin County report a high volume of referrals flowing to and from their respective partners. Unlike the other community partners, CEAP is headquartered at the NWFSC full-time and has a large number of staff in the building on a daily basis. As such, County staff members are more familiar with CEAP and have a greater understanding of the services it provides.

Broader Needs Assessment: According to the managers and frontline staff at the NWFSC, the Broader Needs Assessment (BNA) software is the principal referral tool used to identify the appropriate resources for a particular client. Standard procedure while using the BNA is as follows: First, the worker asks a client a series of questions regarding who (s)he is, where (s)he lives, and what his/her current needs are. The worker then records those responses into the BNA software. Next, the BNA database provides a list of service providers that may be able to help the client meet those needs. Then, the caseworker selects from the list the service providers that (s)he believes will be most helpful to the client and relays that information to the client. Last, the client uses that information to contact the appropriate service provider.

Although Hennepin County workers generally regard the BNA as a useful tool, we did hear that it falls short in three primary ways:

- *There are too many results.* – When using the BNA to identify resources for a particular client, the tool often returns a very large number of results. For example, when searching for mental health resources for a particular client, the BNA may return information on 20 or 30 different service providers. Caseworkers must then select from the results the appropriate organization to present to the client as a referral. In light of the number of BNA results, workers require vast knowledge of area resources if they are to consistently provide clients with productive referrals.
- *Results are not always complete or accurate.* – Sometimes County workers are unable to find the appropriate resources for a client using the BNA. Some workers use other resource databases such as MinnesotaHelp.org, housinglink.org, the Disability Linkage Line, and Google to find the appropriate resources for their clients. Furthermore, the results found in the BNA are not always current or accurate. Staff mentioned occasionally having to check results via Google and other outside sources to determine whether the resources were accurate and updated.
- *Referral outcomes are not tracked.* – The BNA does not provide a mechanism through which referral outcomes can be tracked. Hennepin County workers mentioned the outcomes of referrals are normally not known. When asked about the outcome of referrals made to outside organizations, one County worker said, “Unless it doesn’t work out for them [the client], we don’t hear back.” This situation is not, however, unique to Hennepin County. We heard from some community partners that they also do not have systems in place for tracking incoming or outgoing referrals. Nevertheless, lacking systems for tracking the source, destination, or productiveness of referrals renders it difficult to ascertain how well the current referral system is working and reduces communication with other service providers.

Systems of Care: Another referral tool used by a few staff at Hennepin County is Systems of Care (SoC). The SoC tool was developed out of the Systems of Care Partnership, which is a collaboration headed by the Northwest Hennepin Family Services Collaborative. The SoC Partnership is made up of about 25 organizations (including Hennepin County) serving the northwest metropolitan area. This collaboration was formed as a result of a need in the community of social service providers to better refer clients to other organizations. The SoC referral tool allows a user at one member organization to electronically refer a client directly to a worker at another organization. The software contains a screening questionnaire similar to the BNA, but it only contains SoC partners. Currently, SoC has been implemented within the County on a very limited basis and only about four workers are currently using the tool. Not surprisingly, very few of the managers and staff we interviewed knew of the tool's existence.

In spite of its limited implementation, SoC is an innovative and powerful tool worth considering for a number of reasons. First, the SoC screening tool allows users to refer a client directly to a worker at another organization. This helps to ensure that the referral gets to the right person at the right organization. Second, SoC tracks the status of a referral (sent, received, resolved). This enables organizations to track where referrals are coming from, where they are being sent, and whether or not any action has been taken. Third, the list of services and providers is quite accurate since it is updated on a monthly basis. Fourth, the software is most useful when working with clients who have barriers to acting on referrals themselves since the tool allows workers to make referrals on behalf of an individual. Last, the people we interviewed from Hennepin County and community partner organizations familiar with the software believe that it is working well.

While the SoC has its strengths, it also has some weaknesses that limit its usefulness to Hennepin County. First, the person-to-person nature of the referral system is not ideal for the size and structure of HSPHD. Given the large number of staff at the County in comparison to the size of member organizations, implementing SoC for all relevant HSPHD staff is probably not a viable option. Second, technical issues with software have caused it to fail on numerous occasions. A number of crashes have disrupted the momentum of implementation of SoC. For the last nine months or so, however, the software has been stable and seems to be working as intended. Finally, according to one Hennepin County manager, the way SoC is currently structured, the software is not a good fit for the intake procedures of some programs within the County.

Finding 5: The space available at the NWFSC for its community partners presents some challenges for service delivery.

Part of designing the right configuration for collaboration is ensuring that physical space meets the needs of the partners. Although the NWFSC's partners appreciate the opportunity to use free space, they commonly pointed out two aspects of that space that present challenges to their service delivery. First, we spoke with three organizations that use space behind the locked doors in the lobby and all of them said security was an obstacle for their clients. These organizations serve primarily walk-in clients, but their representatives felt the County preferred that their clients had an appointment so that security officers would know who was coming on a given day. They have devised methods of working around the challenges presented by the check-in process,

but they do not consider it ideal. Second, some find the building hours restrictive. One community partner and one County staff member said that some partners would like to serve clients at night and on the weekend, but have largely been unable to do so.

We simultaneously heard that the County feels that it faces obstacles in addressing the concerns of community partners. A County staff member explained that leaving the building open late or on the weekend requires security at those times, which is costly. Additionally, spaces such as the community room cannot accommodate all types of activities that community partners would like to host.

Addressing challenges with the physical space presents an early opportunity to build trust. Most of the community partners do not yet have a sense of how receptive the County will be to their concerns. However, none said the County has been unreceptive and some have plans to contact management to discuss their concerns. Accomplishing small tasks and addressing small issues is how collaborating organizations begin the trust-building loop we discussed earlier. A receptive approach and minor changes could start that loop for the NWFSC.

Finding 6: The goals and motivations of Hennepin County and its community partners relative to collaboration are well aligned.

The NWFSC's partnership with the six co-locating organizations has the critical characteristic of aligned goals and motivations between the organizations. Two Hennepin County staff members explained that the co-location project emerged from financial pressures requiring the County to do more with fewer resources and from a goal of strengthening the community by building connections with other service providers. Moreover, strategic planning documents highlight HSPHD's vision for the CSDM to be a system that "leverages all of our collective resources, allows us to provide a cost-effective continuum of services and helps strengthen our communities."²⁸ It is an asset that HSPHD's staff members' views of co-location and regionalization match the vision identified by leadership.

It is also clear that the community partners share the goal of addressing unmet needs. While not motivated directly by the County's financial pressures, four out of five the community partners said they chose to partner with the NWFSC because they perceived a large need for their services in the northwest Hennepin County area. One explained that his/her organization saw the County as a "natural partner" and said, "We should be involved with that [the NWFSC] and we want to be." Like the County, they aim to leverage collective resources and strengthen the community.

Goal alignment indicates two key strengths of the partnership. First, goal alignment is a critical aspect of a successful partnership and is clearly something that the partnership possesses. Second, the fact that HSPHD's partners are motivated by a desire to address unmet needs suggests that all members of the partnership recognize their interdependence and share an interest in addressing human service needs. Shared interest and interdependence are also essential to successful collaboration. It will be important for Hennepin County to leverage these strengths as it works to further develop relationships with community partners.

²⁸ HSPHD, 2009, 1.

Finding 7: Community partners generally perceive the County to be a good partner.

Respondents from the organizations currently collaborating with Hennepin County generally believe that the County is a good partner. One major reason cited by community partners explaining this belief is that the County plays a pivotal role in the community of social service providers. The County is a very large organization with considerably greater capacity and influence to impact people in the community than the vast majority of service providers in the region. Hennepin County also has considerable influence on social service provision in the community through the services it contracts out to nonprofit providers. Several of the community partners we spoke to told us that the County has been critical in enabling their missions through stable funding and responsive contract management. These factors make Hennepin County a potentially powerful partner in any collaborative effort to improve social service delivery in the northwest metropolitan area. Furthermore, as a result of its pivotal role in the community, Hennepin County's participation can help convey legitimacy to collaborations. One individual familiar with Systems of Care described how the collaboration only gained traction once Hennepin County became active in the initiative.

The community partners we interviewed also indicated that Hennepin County management has shown interest and willingness to work with community partners to resolve issues related to co-location. For example, some partners have requested that events hosted at the NWFSC be posted on signs in order to direct attendees to the right place. Hennepin County was able to accommodate this request and incorporate event listings into its electronic signage in the main lobby. Accommodating the needs of community partners communicates commitment to the collaboration and helps to build trust between partners.

Although some community partners shared that they found Hennepin County to be receptive to receiving feedback to improve the collaboration, others had not yet provided feedback to the County. Perhaps the power differential between Hennepin County and its partners has produced some degree of reluctance on the part of community partners to vocalize feedback. Since the community partners have been given free use of space at the NWFSC, they may be reluctant to communicate some of their concerns for fear of being perceived as needy or ungrateful and thus souring the relationship. Unfortunately, we did not get the opportunity to probe this hypothesis further and cannot, therefore, conclude whether community partners truly hold this view. However, this possibility does resonate with scholarly work on power differentials in collaborations and is worth further consideration.

One last point that bears mentioning is that a few respondents mentioned occasionally receiving poor customer service when visiting the NWFSC. For example, one interviewee reported that (s)he was greeted impolitely on one occasion when checking in with front desk staff. Unfortunately, on one occasion we also experienced poor customer service at the front desk. On every other occasion, though, we received good customer service, so it is unclear if there is a systematic problem. We are sympathetic to the high client volumes, new procedures, new environment and resulting high level of stress currently experienced by front desk workers at the NWFSC and acknowledge that stress is likely a contributor to occasionally poor customer service. Although customer service was by no means universally perceived or experienced to be poor, we thought it worth mentioning because 1) multiple sources experienced the same

phenomenon and 2) perceptions of the quality of customer service could influence a partner organization's decision to co-locate or continue to co-locate with Hennepin County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The County's work to collaborate with community partners at the NWFSC has been impressive, but there are also opportunities for improvement. We found that other service providers view the County as a good partner and that the County and its current partners share similar goals and motivations for collaboration. At the same time, though, the County's capacity to invest additional effort in collaboration is limited, finding new community partners will be difficult, awareness among County staff of existing collaboration is low, the referral system is relatively uncoordinated, and the physical space at the NWFSC presents some challenges. The following recommendations aim to help the NWFSC preserve or strengthen the aspects of its partnerships that are working well while improving those that are not.

We provide two overarching strategic recommendations that are meant to reformulate the way the NWFSC approaches collaboration with community organizations and seven narrower process recommendations meant to adjust the way it works with its existing partners and to assist in implementing the short-term strategic recommendation. Among these recommendations, Recommendations 1 through 4 are actionable items whereas Recommendations 5 through 7 are considerations. We also provide some lessons learned to consider if Hennepin County or the NWFSC pursues additional collaboration in the future. It was beyond our ability within our timeframe to fully understand the complicated nature of HSPHD's work, so our recommendations and lessons learned are sufficiently general to allow management to fill in the implementation details.

Strategic Recommendations

Short-term: Focus on building relationships with the six co-locating organizations and other current partners rather than using limited resources to build new collaborative relationships. – The partnerships with the six co-locating organizations and other selected community partners have the foundations to develop into more intensive collaboration. Current partners view the County as a good partner and their goals are aligned with the County's goals. We know that collaboration is challenging, that finding new partners will be challenging, and that the County has limited capacity to invest more time, energy and resources in collaboration. Therefore, we recommend that the NWFSC invest in current partnerships to more efficiently and effectively use available resources at the present time. Furthermore, developing its relationship with current partners may be useful in attracting future community partners.

Long-term: Consider engaging with additional community partners when the NWFSC has developed strong relationships with existing partners that include a high level of awareness among County staff of those partners and their services, a coordinated referral process, and a strong feedback loop between the NWFSC and its partners. – Additional collaboration

would be consistent with the County's strategic goals, but more feasible in the long-term when it has fully adjusted to the regional service delivery model.

Measures for Implementing the Short-Term Strategic Recommendation

To enhance the overall relationship between the County and current partners:

- *Recommendation 1: Hold regular meetings with co-locating partner organizations.* – A regular meeting with community partners would provide a formal venue to discuss the working relationship between organizations. A recurring opportunity to receive and provide feedback, resolve emerging issues, and discuss how to better serve mutual clients would help to increase communication, build trust, and allow for deeper levels of overall collaboration. This would also provide community partners with an opportunity to communicate and discuss how to better work with one another. We recommend meeting on quarterly or monthly basis.

To increase awareness of collaboration:

- *Recommendation 2: Conduct more events aimed at acquainting County staff with the NWFSC's partners and the services they provide.* – There are already County staff members that are gaining experience in hosting such events, and the NWFSC's partners have expressed interest in investing more effort in building awareness. Additionally, County staff expressed a desire for more opportunities to learn about community partners.
- *Recommendation 3: Develop a notification system that enables all staff in the building to know which co-locating community partners are present on a given day.* – Even once staff members know who the NWFSC's community partners are, effective collaboration requires that they know when they can refer clients to those organizations. Possible systems could include improved signage, a calendar, or email notifications.

To better coordinate the referral system:

- *Recommendation 4: Formalize referral processes.* – Formalizing referral processes can ensure that referrals between organizations happen regularly and accurately. Consider including some mechanism for tracking the frequency and productivity of the referrals. Memorandums of understanding would be one way of formalizing the referral process.
- *Recommendation 5: Consider implementing Systems of Care more widely.* – Although SoC in its current form is not a viable alternative to the BNA, it may have some use to County staff especially when working with clients that lack the capacity to reliably follow through on referrals by themselves. Perhaps if the structure of the SoC software were modified to allow for users to refer clients to a general intake box at another organization rather than to a single person, SoC (or similar software) may be more widely applicable to Hennepin County. Any modification to the functionality of the SoC software must necessarily be negotiated with the other partners whose level of receptiveness to this idea is yet not known.

To improve the space for community partners:

- *Recommendation 6: Consider creating a separate intake desk for community partner clients.* – A separate intake desk could serve three purposes. First, it would overcome the

challenges community partners believe the existing check-in process presents while maintaining the County's need to keep space secure. Second, it could make the co-locating community partners more visible to the County's staff, further improving awareness. Third, it could reduce the high volume of clients checking in at Hennepin County's front desk and thus provide some relief to front desk workers. It may be possible to staff the desk with a volunteer. Volunteers already staff the information desk on the first floor. The Volunteer and Community Partnership Program at Hennepin County may be able to help you meet this need.

- *Recommendation 7: Meet with all of the co-locating community partners to determine any possible means of allowing them to provide services at alternative times.* – Security and cost considerations may make additional hours impossible, but a good faith effort to address the problem would, at a minimum, be an opportunity to build trust.

Lessons Learned to Consider for Regionalization in New Communities

The model for collaboration that Hennepin County has developed in the northwest region offers useful lessons that can be readily applied to collaborative efforts in future regional hubs. Overall, the collaborative model is an effective way to deepen the collective impact that Hennepin County and other social service providers have on vulnerable individuals in the community. The following recommendations can help to ease the formation and maintenance of effective, mutually beneficial relationships with community partners:

- *Look to existing partners first.* – Current community partners already familiar with Hennepin County's work may be natural partners in other regions provided the new sites align with their strategic interests.
- *Use the criteria developed in the Analysis section to identify new partners.* – These criteria can help direct Hennepin County to prospective community partners whose strategic interests, missions, and capacities align with those of the County. They call for an organization that:
 - Provides services that meet a need in the target region of Hennepin County.
 - Has a service area that includes the target region.
 - Does not currently have an office in the target region.
 - Practices a model of service delivery that is compatible with the space available at a hub.
- *Use the success of current collaborative efforts in marketing.* – Hennepin County has already accomplished a lot in its current collaborative efforts and will improve existing relationships through the actions suggested above. Tell prospective community partners what the County has learned and how it approaches collaboration.

CONCLUSION

We have enjoyed working with the Northwest Family Service Center and hope that our report offers a useful starting point for enhancing collaboration with nonprofit human service providers in Northwest Hennepin County. The current collaboration initiatives are unique in the human

service field and offer great promise in helping the County to accomplish its mission of providing better lives for its clients and a stronger community for everyone in Hennepin County. As with any new and innovative initiative, there are steps that the County can take to improve its collaboration in the coming months and years. Some of them are simple fixes to the way it works with partners, whereas others may require some rethinking of the ways leadership conceptualizes collaboration. Together, though, we are confident that implementing these changes will be worth the effort for the County's staff, clients, and partners.

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APPENDIX A: Sample Questions for Hennepin County Staff

What is your position and the nature of your work?

What are the most pressing needs that you see among the clients you work with?

- To what extent can you meet those needs with services provided by Hennepin County?
- What do you do when the County can't provide services a client needs?

What are some of the other service providers you most frequently refer your clients to?

- What factors do you consider when you choose the organization to which you make a referral?
- To what extent are you able to follow up with the referral organization or your client to learn the outcome of the referral?
- Are there any organizations in particular in which you see potential for deeper coordination with the County?
- Are there any other aspects of the referral process you think are important for us to know?

What is currently working well in the referral process? What are some challenges?

How much interaction do you have with the six organizations that also use space at the NWFSC?

- Do you think your experience is typical for Hennepin County staff?
- What is your understanding of why the County chose to have organizations co-locate in the facility?
- How well do you think co-location is achieving those goals?
- Is there anything you think needs to be changed?

To what extent do you think the County is prepared to collaborate more extensively with non-profit human services providers?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B: Sample Questions for Staff of Co-Locating Organizations

What is your position and the nature of your work?

Why did your organization decide to offer services at the NWFSC?

- What is the history of your involvement with the facility?
- How did you become aware of the opportunity to co-locate there?
- What was the process like in the initial stages of collaboration with the county? Was it easy? Did it go smoothly?

How would you describe your relationship with Hennepin County at the NWFSC?

- How much contact do you have with County staff or management?
- How would you like your organization's relationship with the County to evolve over time at the site?

What are some common ways that your organization initiates its relationship with clients that it sees at the NWFSC?

To what extent are the clients you work with at the Northwest Family Service Center also clients of Hennepin County services?

- To what extent does Hennepin County refer them to you?
- What are the steps in the referral process from the County?
- Do your clients typically have appointments with you and the County during their same visit to the NWFSC?
- How does the client coordinate joint appointments?
- To what extent do your organization and the County coordinate the services each provides to a particular client?

What have been some of the advantages of offering services at the NWFSC?

What have been some of the challenges of offering services at the NWFSC?

- How do you overcome them?

What are your organization's long-term plans at the NWFSC?

To what extent are you able to communicate your feedback to management at Hennepin County?

- How do you communicate this feedback?
- What changes have occurred as a result of your feedback?

What changes could be made to improve the arrangement?

APPENDIX C: Codebook

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>
Awareness	Individual awareness of who the NWFSC's community partners are, what services they offer, and when they are in the building
Capacity	Hennepin County's ability to collaborate more intensively with other community partners
Challenges	Challenges that providers or Hennepin County face with the NWFSC arrangement
Community Needs	Stated needs of people in the northwest metro
Customer service	The way staff and community partners perceive clients to be treated when they come to NWFSC or Century Plaza
Feedback	Feedback mechanisms between County and other providers regarding the NWFSC arrangement
Motivations	Partner organizations' motivations for offering services at NWFSC and Hennepin County's motivations for partnering with outside organizations
Opportunities	Suggestions from service providers or County staff for changes in the way the County and other providers work together
Referral processes	The process by which clients are referred to other organizations for services
Services	Basic descriptions of services provided

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