

January 9, 2012

CONNECTED INDIVIDUALS

# 2012

## Connected Individuals



Fairfax County Human Services  
Council Roundtable Discussion

**“Connected individuals” means....** Those of all ages who contribute to and are invested in their community. Strong social bonds exist (at the individual, family and community level) which promote positive living and access to services.

*“Connected individuals” is a concept embraced in elements of the County Vision...*

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County by:

### **Maintaining Safe and Caring Communities**



The needs of a diverse and growing community are met through innovative public and private services, community partnerships and volunteer opportunities. As a result, residents feel safe and secure, capable of accessing the range of services and opportunities they need, and are willing and able to give back to their community.

### **Connecting People and Places**



Transportation, technology and information effectively and efficiently connect people and ideas. As a result, people feel a part of their community and have the ability to access places and resources in a timely, safe and convenient manner.

### **Creating a Culture of Engagement**



Individuals enhance community life by participating in and supporting civic groups, discussion groups, public-private partnerships and other activities that seek to understand and address community needs and opportunities. As a result, residents feel that they can make a difference and work in partnership with others to understand and address pressing public issues.

# Populations and Characteristics of People We Serve Today *(and factors influencing services to general population and target groups)*

- **Communities** are defined as a group of people who share some or all of the following: geographic boundaries, sense of membership, culture, language, common norms and interests.
- The human service system focuses on the general well-being of all residents of the county. It works to protect, promote and improve health and the quality of life.

## *This means connected individuals are...*

...**safe and secure** – (individuals, youth, older adults, adults with disabilities, families)

...**capable of accessing** a range of services, resources and physical places

...**heard and influence** decisions

...**partners** who understand and address pressing human services issues and concerns

...**seeking opportunities** and are willing to give back to their community

...**supportive of** and strengthen social bonds at an individual, family, neighborhood and community level

# Target Populations (Where more work needs to be done)

- Local government provides supports to enhance community... and serve as broker/catalyst
- **The human services system helps to identify those who need “connecting” ....**

*...people we serve who might be vulnerable and isolated by...*

- Geography (*limited transportation/access to services*)
- Poverty
- Bias & social barriers
- Language
- Control by others (*example: victims of domestic violence*)
- Trauma or chronic disease
- Mental illness
- Lifestyle
- Infirmity (*example: homebound*)
- Newcomer to community

You live in a densely populated area and do not know your neighbors...

You are a recent immigrant and you don't know how to navigate the system...

You live in a high rent community and think you are the only one struggling to pay the bills...

# Cross-Cutting Human Services System

*The human services system needs to discuss ways to engage people about:*

- ***Identifying shared principles*** for county programs when working with the community.....***examples:***
  - Neighborhood focused programming provides a central point for local residents to engage in community action.
  - Programs become an integral part of the community when residents determine what is needed and most useful.
  - Financial, economic and social well-being for all individuals and families is essential to create healthy and stable communities.
  - Achieving and sustaining desired results depends on:
    - Being inclusive
    - Being respectful of a broad range of resident experiences and perspectives
    - Building strong partnerships with the community and organizations

The human services system **and** the community need to discuss ways to engage people about:

- **Accessing** services – identifying and meeting needs of discrete populations – and working to ensure we connect people to the services they need...when they need them...efficiently and effectively
  - Special emphasis is on outreach and service provision innovations – (example: customer portals whereby clients are able to apply for services on-line and/or access portions of their case records)
- Developing community **awareness, education**, outreach, information
- Building upon **existing civic engagement** activities – volunteers, mentors, advocacy and build and strengthen alliances
- **Partnering with community** to address human services challenges
- **Working to identify strategies** to meet people where they are....and grow their understanding, interest and commitment in being engaged in the healthy civic life of the county
  - Personal connections...through a continuum of belonging and willingness to serve as civic responsibility
  - Mediation strategies
  - Listening vs. enforcement
  - Seeking resident input on view of government's role
  - Making appropriate policy changes based on residents/taxpayers' input

# Work to define benefit of connections in community – and how it could be measured

*Examples* of community measures to quantify “connections” -

- Over **1,155 individuals served on 61** human services boards, commissions, councils and citizen groups, contributing in excess of 32,000 hours of donated time in FY 2010
- Medical Reserve Corps- over 4,000 residents will serve in the event of a public health emergency
- Over *85 individuals and organizations participate on the **Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax (PFHF) Coalition***. The coalition is working together to improve community health and develop a strategic plan: **Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP)**.
- 89% of 8th, 10th and 12th graders volunteered in FY 2010 (*Note: Just over half of students (51.4%) report that they volunteer about once a month or more. The numbers spike for 8th and 12th graders due to the civic hours requirement.*)

SAMPLES from other jurisdictions:

- % of persons who lived in their current residence over 1 year ago (source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey)
- % of residents who feel they are a part of their community (source: Resident Survey)
- % of residents who want to remain in their community or community
- % of residents who are able to access supportive services in order to remain in their community
- % of residents who think people in their community care about each other
- % of residents who feel they can rely on others in the community
- % of older adults (65+) and adults with disabilities receiving services from the system who remain in their home or remain in their community

# Stakeholders and Relationships

*Examples of community, regional, inter-jurisdictional, programs/services working with or in support of the mission of the human services system and county departments*

- Clients and consumers of human services
- Residents/voters/elected officials
- Special interest and advocacy groups
- PTO/PTAs
- Faith communities
- Civic associations
  - Lions club
  - Kiwanis
  - Boys/Girl Scouts
  - Fraternal organizations
  - Unions
  - League of Women Voters
- Federation of Civic Associations & neighborhood associations
- Businesses & corporate partners
- Cultural groups
- Volunteer groups/communities of interest
- Philanthropic & local foundations
- Government partners:
  - Fairfax County Public Schools
  - Public Safety
  - Volunteer Fairfax
  - Office of Public-Private Partnerships
  - George Mason University
  - Northern Virginia Community College
  - Community coalitions: *examples:*
    - Partnership for Healthier Fairfax
    - Faith Communities in Action

# Providers of Contract Services for Connected Individuals

- Fairfax County uses more than 116 contracts with partners totaling an estimated \$9 million annually for services related to “Connected Individuals”
- About 80% of these contracts are with for not for profit providers
- Services covered include:
  - Prevention services (social services, oral health, primary care, mental health, etc.)
  - Transportation services
  - Recreation services
  - Community programming
  - Consumer-run day programs
  - Resources to improve neighborhoods (example: the Neighborhood Enhancement Partnership Program)

# Trends Affecting Capacity of the human services system

(initiatives, mandates, eligibility issues, financing)

## Federal and State

Federal and state impacts on community engagement are minimal with the exception of a general ***focus on building communities of interest***: (examples of areas where interests are shared and government role is to build community awareness and solutions)

- Public response to threats - community responses to disaster, pandemics, terrorist attacks
- Enhancing partnerships with faith and other communities of interest – White House Faith Liaison office, HIV/AIDs Faith Based Initiative; HEAL (Healthy Eating and Living) Summit; White House Council on Women and Girls
- Focus on "giving back" – National Day of Service (MLK Day), White House Office of Volunteerism; Medical Reserve Corps; Gracing Spaces (Public Health Nurses volunteering to beautify community resource centers)
- Public policy – federal funding for developing public policy to address:
  - Disparities in outcomes - access to care, government services, fair pay restoration
  - Bias and discrimination - address barriers based in fear or isolation – culturally and/or socially
  - Community problems

# Trends Affecting Capacity of the human services system *(continued)*

## Local

- Identifying the value of the community's return on investment

Value questions:

Is it the role of the human services system/local government structure to build community capacity to have 'connected' individuals?

How does the county human services system engage residents to serve others?

How are community expectations managed and met?

- Work to build neighborhood strengths to solve problems
  - Education strategies – example: neighborhood colleges
  - Community mediation
  - Partnerships –among schools, neighborhood associations, faith groups, business/corporations - Volunteer Fairfax, Office of Public-Private Partnership initiatives
  - Engaging individuals with the interest

## Constraints/Barriers *(results from studies/research, policy changes, possible funding changes, restructuring)*

- Increasingly urban – without a complete, interconnected infrastructure
  - Connecting people to government services can be a challenge
  - Highly dependent upon cars for individual transportation – to work, home, activities, services and resources
- Orientation to region/metro-centric – residents' attention is diffused by....
  - Regional media market orientation
  - Geography - is “community” the neighborhood you live in -or the subdivision, magisterial district, “town” or the county? all of the above?
  - Lack of awareness and/or identification with Fairfax County as a place to live, work *and invest in*
  - National issues and trends - community perspective on a variety of social issues can be overshadowed
- Limited staff capacity to engage the community – truly collaborate to solve community problems
  - Being responsive, customer focused, building trust and relationships – that means time and resources to invest in neighborhoods, coalitions, communities

## Constraints/Barriers (continued)

- Need to grow and allow access to new technology and communications strategies to engage the broader community– building relationships for educated residents, taxpayers/volunteers, etc.
  - Government Skyping, blogs, Facebook access, improved web presence, language access
    - As part of its ongoing effort to improve performance and accessibility, the City of Williamsburg has launched an official smartphone app – CITY411 – that enables residents to submit a variety of non-emergency service requests from an iPhone or Android-based phone. The app allows residents to send text and audio messages as well as a photo.
    - Sarasota County opened an online website that will enable citizens to revise and make comments on county policies. Each policy or proposed ordinance will be “open” for editing and comments until a specified date. After the wiki closes, county staff review the results and prepare a summary for the commission to consider as part of its public input.  
<https://wiki.scgov.net>.
- Capacity to recruit and retain resident representation – outreach, training, ongoing education, recruitment, flexible ways to serve/support governance (barriers: time obligations, family commitments)
- Moving from “outreach” to engagement - connections with residents happen over time and in different ways
  - Information and education may be passive, with the community response happening asynchronously....at different times...and responses from individuals and communities do not always happen on a planned timeline
- Managing expectations – developing consensus on workable community solutions can be impacted by lack of shared values

**WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT****EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY AND APPROACHES***What works...*

Overall, the community appears to believe Fairfax county is well governed. There are high expectations from the community for the government services to be delivered well and effectively. Working across a continuum – from community...to communities of interest...to families and individuals needing help to connect. Examples of effective community engagement:

***Examples of community driven responses to identified needs in the county:***

- Jeannie Schmidt Health Clinic
- 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness planning effort
- Opportunity Neighborhood – *“cradle to career” support in a defined neighborhood*

***Examples of “communities of interest” coming together:***

- Annandale Terrace elementary – PTO and school administrators working together to help school families in need of food, shelter, clothing
- “Villages” – (older adults)
- Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax
- HIV/AIDs Faith-Based Initiative
- Athletic community – support to ensure all children have equal opportunity to participate in sports

**WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT****EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY AND APPROACHES** *(continued)****Examples of service connections that help individuals find solutions to their own needs and concerns:***

- Fatherhood initiative
- Family Group Conferences
- Domestic Violence Advocacy Center (DVAC)
- Food for Others – two bi-lingual self-sufficiency workers co-located at nonprofit food distribution program to access the SNAP (food stamp) program and enroll in other eligible services
- Facilitation of regularly scheduled community meetings with public agencies and community stakeholders
- Utilizing technology in computer clubhouses to bridge the information technology gap for children, families and older adults

***Needs Improvement:***

- When government is perceived as the answer, community engagement can be dampened because involvement is not seen as necessary
- Recognition that engagement is not efficient. It is, however, effective – and vital - to have engaged residents who see their common interest in building a safe, caring community
- Building youth involvement and engagement – identifying and growing student leaders and a framework for connecting children to their community

**WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT****BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS***What works...*

- Recovery and peer support services – helping people in recovery to help one another. Philosophy and supports to break down barriers to participating in healthy community life and building connections to contribute and support others
- Building connections in “safe” places for the community –in neighborhoods, schools, etc. Identifying the natural places that can be used to foster sense of belonging (Family Resource Centers, etc.)
- Public Health Outreach - works to connect individuals with health education, resources, and referrals (e.g. fight the flu campaign, community immunity initiative, GMU Flu Prevention Program; etc.). Moving outside organization walls, into the community

*Needs Improvement:*

- Connecting individuals with services – needs for enhancing coordination of shared client services/ information and referral....some strategies include:
  - Encrypted emails
  - Enrollment “cards” and service “membership” – to ease participation in county services while ensuring confidentiality of protected individual identity/information
  - Databases that “talk” to each other for improved client service delivery
  - Access to integrated resource databases for self-navigation/sharing information (wiki site)

## WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

### COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

#### *What works...*

- For populations served through human services system, the continuum of community engagement involves supporting connections to people who ***need services***, people who want to ***respond to needs and create solutions***, to those who ***guide and support planning for*** the vital health of the community.
  - Facilitated community engagement (where government is a catalyst)...*example*: Faith Communities in Action
  - Sponsored community engagement (political leadership seeking resident engagement)...*example*: Governing Board of the Fairfax-Falls Church Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness in Ten Years

#### *Needs Improvement:*

- Identifying sustainable and organized strategies for ongoing resident engagement with and for the human services system
- Developing strategies to determine when government serves as initiator OR sustainer in community driven solutions for human services system

**WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT****LEVERAGING RESOURCES/PARTNERSHIPS***What works...*

- *Example:* The Office of Public Private Partnerships (OP3) is tasked with developing effective strategies for community outreach and engagement that leverage investments to benefit county programs and the community.

*Needs improvement:*

- Encouraging volunteerism, individual and corporate giving in responsive, effective and best long term strategies
- Developing true engagement strategies...not just “outreach” and informing the community...at all stages of government planning, execution, evaluation of service delivery to county residents
- Ensuring there is a minimal framework to support, maintain consistency and continuity in retention of volunteer resources across the county

**WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT****WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT***What works:*

- Public engagement training for county employees

*Needs improvement:*

- Building county staff capacity to mediate community issues/concerns through staff development training.
- Expanding public engagement training to offer to county representatives on boards, authorities, councils and commissions

**LEGISLATIVE or REGULATORY***Needs improvement:*

- Consider ways to comply with open government laws with use of integrated technology that could enhance public participation....from webcasts for all public meetings ...to improvements in use of communications technology (example: remote site electronic participation by appointed citizen representatives to boards and commissions)

## SUMMARY

**WHAT** we can do within existing infrastructure to build community engagement

**HOW:** Identify communities of interest to become aware and engaged

**WHY:** Costs less to govern in the long run

- Leveraging community to find solutions means taxpayers don't have to pay for it alone and improves sustainability and impact
- It is not just about money - our community is more vital and robust as a result – making it a more appealing place to live and work, which benefits the community culturally, economically and socially
- Isolated individuals and communities have poor outcomes – in healthy living, safety, economic security and healthy environment

## SUMMARY

### WHAT is the Human Services Council role?

- Resident engagement...online, building community interest, forums, education sessions - meeting people where they are in their interest/abilities and helping to grow and sustain their commitment and investment
  - Build community through conversation
  - Personal involvement through representation of your community
  - Use social media to communicate information/gather input from larger community
  - Influence policy decisions
  - Support and leverage resources
  - Evaluate return on investment
  - Connect with other boards, authorities, commissions

### SYSTEM NEEDS:

- Staff resources are needed to leverage resources in the community
- Knowledge sharing is needed among service providers and partners
- Residents need connections and relationships

**RESOURCES - to learn more:**

1. **Richard Florida – *The Rise of the Creative Class***
2. **Montgomery County MD – community score card:**  
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/content/exec/stat/indicators.asp>
3. **Alliance for Innovation White Paper - The Connected Community: Local Governments as Partners in Citizen Engagement and Community Building. James H. Svara and Janet Denhardt, Editors. Arizona State University**
4. <http://www.egov.vic.gov.au/trends-and-issues/community-engagement/6.html>
5. <http://www.knightcomm.org/five-strategies-to-revive-civic-communication/>