

March 11, 1999

Pamela Johnson and Ann Segal  
Boost for Kids  
National Partnership for Reinventing Government  
Suite 200  
750 17th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Johnson and Ms. Segal:

On behalf of Contra Costa County, California, the County Administrator's Office is pleased to submit the attached Expression of Interest to partner with Federal representatives under the National Partnership for Reinventing Government's "Boost for Kids" Initiative. Contra Costa County has a deep commitment to improving results for children, youth and families by forging innovative, cross-systems service strategies. Contra Costa's leadership in this arena resulted in its designation in 1994 as one of six AB 1741 ("Youth Pilot") counties in California. This designation has allowed the County to form a unique partnership with the State of California aimed at improving results for children and families and integrating services.

The first section of this proposal describes recent policy and programmatic innovations that have defined Contra Costa County as a national leader in changing systems to improve the lives of children, youth and families. The next section describes Contra Costa's AB 1741 Demonstration Project, the Service Integration Program, which the County proposes to use as a laboratory for testing novel strategies and drawing lessons to share with other communities across the country as part of the "Boost For Kids" Initiative. Finally, this proposal identifies some key opportunities for better managing results for children, streamlining administration, addressing barriers at the federal, state and local levels to better provide needed services and supports for children and maximizing the use of resources for services for children in Contra Costa County under the "Boost For Kids" Initiative.

## CONTRA COSTA COUNTY: A NATIONAL LEADER IN CHANGING SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE THE

“All Contra Costa children will reach adulthood having experienced a safe, healthy, nurturing childhood which prepares them to be responsible, contributing members of the community.”

*Vision Statement, Contra Costa Family and Children’s Policy Forum, January 1997.*

### LIVES OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Contra Costa County is at the forefront of nationwide efforts to provide more efficient and effective services to children and families. The County has embraced an approach to reinventing government which employs the following strategies:

- Accountability for Results;
- Collaborative Partnerships;
- Community-Based Services; and
- Replacing Service Fragmentation with Systems Integration.

#### Accountability for Results

Outcome accountability is an integral part of Contra Costa’s approach to serving children, youth and families. The County’s emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of services based on measurable improvements in the lives of individuals, families and communities began in July 1992, when the County Board of Supervisors adopted “Healthy Families 2000: A Plan to Improve the Health of Children, Youth and Families in Contra Costa County.” The plan was the outgrowth of intense dialogue with community members, elected officials, school staff, the faith community and public and private service providers. It delineates Contra Costa County’s commitment to developing an effective interagency system that fosters healthy development and opportunities for children in Contra Costa by promoting, enhancing and strengthening family life and expanding community capacity to support children and families. The plan envisions a collaborative, community-based system of services to serve families in a holistic manner by establishing new working relationships among agencies and new partnerships between service providers and families.

Since the adoption of the plan, Contra Costa has strongly emphasized the need to shift away from process measures and adopt results-based accountability based on the premises that:

- A focus on outcomes encourages inter-departmental and intra-community partnerships by creating common, achievable goals for service providers, schools and communities -- promoting a culture of responsibility and collaboration.
- Outcomes provide individuals, families and communities with tangible yardsticks to chart their successes.
- Outcome accountability diminishes the need for bureaucratic micro-management and strict regulations, allowing services to become more efficient and effective.
- Outcomes shift focus from the system and the process to the people and the environment in which they live.

**Children's Report Card and Budget:** Contra Costa's approach links data on child, family and community well-being (captured in the annual *Contra Costa County Children's Report Card*) with fiscal priorities in children and family services. In 1998-99, Contra Costa County produced its fifth annual *Children and Family Services Budget* (Attachment A) and its second annual *Children's Report Card* (See Attachment B). The report card seeks to understand the reality of children's lives. It focuses on five goals, which together represent the major support elements required for a child's well-being:

- ✳ Children ready for and succeeding in school;
- ✳ Children and youth healthy and preparing for productive adulthood;
- ✳ Families that are economically self-sufficient;
- ✳ Families that are safe, stable and nurturing; and
- ✳ Communities that are safe and provide a high quality of life.

Each of the five goals is supported by concrete data, representing varying dimensions of the outcome. The *Children and Family Services Budget* includes direct service program that benefit children and youth under the age of 21 and/or their parents/guardians/caregivers.

“The Contra Costa County family and children’s budget is one of the most advanced in the country....One chart shows the linkage of county programs to the five ‘community outcomes’ included in the recently created ‘Children’s Report Card.’ This is another (rare) example of the deliberate development of linked family and children’s results-based budget tools....[Also,]it does provide a simple summary of the cost of bad outcomes. The county’s 102 programs are sorted by ‘Crisis/Safety Net Services’ and ‘Remediation/Self-Sufficiency Services’ which together make up approximately 91% of total spending and approximately 95% of county general fund spending. ‘Prevention/Early Intervention Services’ make up the much smaller balance. And the document provides a summary of each county program, including a ‘Systems Savings’ entry under each program which describes how that program helps reduce the need for crisis or safety net services, as well as the program’s ‘interrelationships’ with other programs.”

Mark Friedman and Anna Danegger, *A Guide to Developing and Using Family and Children’s Budgets*, Prepared for the Finance Project, Washington, D.C., August 1998, pp. 43-44.

### Collaborative Partnerships

Contra Costa’s leadership in children and family services is built on a strong foundation of collaboration. Past successes have created a high level of trust among public agencies, community-based organizations and other service providers, resulting in increased recognition countywide that no one agency alone has the resources or ability needed to support Contra Costa’s children and families. The County has developed and sustained strong partnerships in two key areas: (1) at the broader community level, with a wide range of individuals and private and non-profit agencies invested in the well-being of children and families, and (2) within the County organization, across County departments and public programs.

*County/Community Partnerships:* The strength of Contra Costa’s County/Community partnerships are best exemplified by Contra Costa’s Children and Families Policy Forum. The Policy Forum brings together community residents, elected officials and representatives from cities, schools, law enforcement, county agencies, community-based organizations, service clubs and the faith community (See Attachment C for the Policy Forum Membership and Task Force Roster).

Established in 1996, the Policy Forum fosters and promotes family and community-centered collaborative strategies that respond to the needs of children and families.

The Policy Forum undertakes a number of projects aimed at improving results. For the past two years, for example, the Policy Forum has produced the County's *Children's Report Card* -- which measures the County's progress towards achieving the five community goals adopted by the Policy Forum. Other projects currently underway include: the "Outcomes Pilot", which is testing the development and use of outcomes in selected programs to provide guidance for larger system implementation; "Blended Funding", which is examining ways to further leverage and blend resources between agencies; and "Promising Practices", which provides feedback to a nationally led effort on development of an Internet/technical assistance program on how to communicate services that are working in support of children and families.

*Inter-Departmental Partnerships:* The County has formed a number of inter-departmental partnerships to foster inter-disciplinary and cross-agency strategies for working with children, families and communities. One example of such a partnership is the Service Integration Executive Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee, comprised of the County Administrator, the Senior Deputy County Administrator for Health and Human Services and the Directors of the County Departments of Health Services, Probation and Employment and Human Services, provides policy direction and administrative supervision to the County's multi-disciplinary Service Integration Program. The Oversight Committee provides a forum for the top administrators to make decisions on how to pool resources, resolve inter-departmental issues and determine how best to ensure that successful strategies that are piloted in the Service Integration Program are institutionalized.

#### Community-Based Services

Increasingly, the County has come to recognize the importance of locating services in those communities where there are particularly high concentrations of multi-problem families and tailoring services to meet the unique needs of each neighborhood. In one recent example, the County brought together community residents and local service providers in two of Contra Costa's most distressed neighborhoods, North Richmond and Bay Point, to develop strategies for moving the residents from welfare to work. Facilitated by the County, both communities developed comprehensive strategies for moving unemployed and underemployed residents into the workforce and up the job ladder. A year and a half into implementation, a wide range of employment-related services are located in each of these communities in programs staffed primarily by neighborhood residents.

#### Replacing Service Fragmentation with System Integration

The County has begun to fundamentally redefine the way it works to move towards seamless systems of services that meet the vast array of family needs. Integrated services programs, such as the Service Integration Program and the Children's Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center, pull together County and community staff from a wide range of professions and agencies to coordinate interventions for families receiving services from multiple county agencies. These programs view the whole family, not just individuals, as the appropriate level for service intervention, and recognize that government, schools, churches, community groups, neighborhood groups, service clubs, community-based agencies and extended family systems all need to work together to support families and improve the quality of life for children. These collaborative efforts build upon the strengths of each participating agency to create a continuum of care for families living in a given community.

## **THE SERVICE INTEGRATION PROGRAM: A LABORATORY FOR TESTING INNOVATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

In 1994, the California Health and Welfare Agency selected Contra Costa County as one of six AB 1741 (“Youth Pilot Project”) demonstration counties. The AB 1741 encouraged counties “to test innovative strategies for improving outcomes for children and families” while the State provided support to counties’ “efforts to decategorize and integrate their service delivery systems in order to improve the lives of California’s children and families.” Over the past four years, Contra Costa has utilized its AB 1741 Demonstration Project, the Service Integration Program (described below), as laboratory for programmatic, fiscal and organizational innovations at the local level. If selected to participate in the Boost for Kids Initiative, Contra Costa County hopes to use the Service Integration Program as a springboard for testing more ambitious innovations made possible only with Federal approval.

### Program Description

Contra Costa County’s innovative Service Integration Teams (SITeams) utilize three key strategies in creating seamless systems of services for multi-problem, high-risk families:

1. Collaboration among public agencies;
2. Public-private partnerships that fuse public services with community-based organization and faith community programs; and
3. Engagement of neighborhood residents in service planning and provision.

Since August of 1994, the SITeams have worked with high-risk families living in two of Contra Costa County’s most distressed communities, Bay Point and North Richmond. Housed in neighborhood-based Family Service Centers, the SITeams are staffed by: Employment Specialists, MediCal and Food Stamps Specialists, Mental Health Counselors, Juvenile Probation Officers, Child Welfare Workers, Public Health Nurses, a Substance Abuse Counselor and Healthy Start Family Resource Specialists. The Service Integration Program strives to achieve the following three goals:

- increase family economic self-sufficiency;
- improve family functioning;
- expand community capacity to support children and families.

The SITeams’ goals are based on the premise that the challenges facing low-income families are inter-related. Consequently, the SITeams take a holistic approach in their work with these families.

SITeam members work with the client families using an integrated case management process, developed specifically for the SITeams. Focusing on the whole family unit, rather than just the individual, SITeam staff build upon family strengths to provide services driven by and tailored to each family’s unique needs. Staff and family members together develop a comprehensive plan for addressing issues in a range of interdependent life domains, such as child care, child and adult health, transportation, social supports, school and employment.

In early 1997, each SITeam initiated a series of community-wide planning sessions, resulting in the establishment of Bay Point Works and the North Richmond Employment Collaborative. These two neighborhood employment projects have expanded the SITeams’ partnership base to include a number of other public and non-profit agencies, the faith community and community residents.

The SITeams’ unique organizational structure reflects the collaborativeness of this program. The SITeam staff reside within four different County Departments (County Administration, Health Services, Social Service and Probation) and a school district. Policy oversight is provided by the SITeams’ Executive Committee, comprised of

the Directors of the key agencies that contribute staff and resources to the program. The day-to-day operations of the SITeams is charged to the SITeam Program Manager, a cross-agency position that resides in the County Administrator's Office.

The two SITeams currently serve approximately 900 families. Contra Costa County plans to establish seven more SITeams in coming years.

#### Highlights of 1997 and 1998 Program Outcomes

The Service Integration Program's successes are measured through intensive tracking of outcomes. Using outcomes, the SITeams are able to judge their achievements based on measurable improvements in the lives of families and children served. Some recent outcome highlights include:

- ☆ Over the past two years 319 welfare participants served by the SITeams have joined the paid labor force.
- ☆ The percentage of welfare recipients who are working has risen more rapidly in the SITeams than in traditional service delivery system. In April 1996, for example, 15.9% of all welfare recipients served by the Bay Point SITeam reported earnings versus 15.4% in a comparison population. By January 1999, 39.4% of all Bay Point SITeam welfare recipients reported earnings versus only 25.0% in the comparison group (Attachment D).
- ☆ As a result of the emphasis on early intervention, only 5.6% of the children seen by the North Richmond SITeam's child welfare workers were removed from their homes in 1997. (1998 data not yet available.) While comparison data is not available, these figures are generally considered far below the County average.
- ☆ During 1997, a monthly average of 93% of all youth on probation at the Bay Point SITeam were either enrolled in or had graduated from high school.
- ☆ In the summer and fall of 1997, the North Richmond SITeam worked closely with officials from the local public transportation agency, AC Transit, to establish the North Richmond Night Jobs Shuttle (AC Transit Line 376) (Attachment E). November 24, 1997, marked the launching of Line 376, which provides hourly bus service that connects North Richmond with key employment centers in the Greater Richmond Area between 7:30 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. Night ridership on Line 376 averages a healthy 150-175 people per night. On April 20th, 1998, staff from the Federal Transit Administration visited the North Richmond Family Service Center to meet with AC Transit and North Richmond SITeam staff to learn more about the innovative community-based transportation planning model implemented in North Richmond.

In addition, successes to date can be measured by a range of new services and activities that have been established directly as a result of the SITeams' work, including two community-run Career Centers (Attachment F), substance abuse services, peer support groups, local employment workshops and a thriving community garden (Attachment G).

#### State/County Partnership: A Foundation for Systems Change

As part of the Boost for Kids Initiative, Contra Costa County hopes to expand upon the strong partnership it has developed with the State of California under AB 1741 to include federal agencies and programs. An illustration of the effectiveness of this State/County collaboration, Contra Costa and California shared a joint success obtaining a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reduce paperwork in favor of intensive case management in the Service Integration Program's employment programs (See Attachment H).

On June 5, 1997, California's Health and Welfare Agency announced the approval of Contra Costa County's Reinvesting in Self-Sufficiency and Employment (RISE) waiver. The purpose of RISE is to enable County Welfare and Food Stamps Eligibility Workers to spend less time documenting eligibility for clients and to devote more time to intensive case management aimed at helping families achieve family stability and self-sufficiency.

Through discussion and time studies, Contra Costa County found that Eligibility Workers dedicated many hours to filling out paperwork and documenting eligibility, instead of working directly with clients and meeting their service needs. By significantly reducing the amount of paperwork involved, the RISE Initiative redirects time saved into intensive case management, job-related activities and referrals to needed family services.

The design and approval of the RISE waiver resulted from an unprecedented partnership between Contra Costa County and State AB 1741 staff. The State AB 1741 Team invited two Contra Costa County staff people to spend several days in Sacramento working with all of the necessary State resources and contact people in the California Department of Social Services to refine the County's draft state action request. This partnership model allowed for the development of a final request that met the needs of all of the involved state programs (including the Food Stamps Bureau, the AFDC Program, the GAIN Program, the Evaluation and the Fiscal staff). State staff were able to quickly identify areas of needed improvement in the initial proposal. Thus, the final State Action Request, which required waiver approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Stamps Bureau as well as from the Director of the California Health and Welfare Agency, moved smoothly through the approval process. Contra Costa County is currently developing a plan for implementing RISE.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY UNDER THE "BOOST FOR KIDS" INITIATIVE**

Low-income, high-risk, multiple-problem families have historically presented some of the greatest challenges to public agencies. The failure of public agencies to streamline and coordinate services often has posed an additional obstacle to these already struggling families -- resulting in conflicting messages and expectations and, ultimately, decreasing the probability that these families will achieve economic self-sufficiency and family stability. Under the auspices of California's AB 1741 Project, Contra Costa County has developed a service integration model that has successfully demonstrated the ability to support significant changes in the lives of these families. However, many of the obstacles to improved results go beyond the local and State laws, regulations and structures; thus, effective County/State/Federal partnerships are required to systematically remove these barriers.

Contra Costa is interested in exploring a range of options to minimize administrative barriers and maximize how resources are used to get the best results for children, youth and families under the Boost for Kids Initiative.

### Shifting Resources from Crisis Intervention to Prevention and Early Intervention

The County recognizes that the Federal government does not have significant new resources to devote to this project. Yet, at the local level, more staff time needs to be spent on prevention, early intervention and other activities that currently have no source of funding support, but can generate significant savings. Consequently, additional staff activities must be balanced by elimination of other staff activities. Under Boost For Kids, Contra Costa County will request waivers aimed both at eliminating a range of unnecessary functions and redirecting the staff time saved into prevention and early intervention services, such as promoting safety, health and enrichment programs, recreation and cultural experiences. In addition, the County hopes to work with the Federal team on how to better leverage staff resources, such as increasing voluntary Family Maintenance participation to reduce staff time spent in court.

### Unified Case Records and Case Management Across Disciplines

The Service Integration Program has developed a sophisticated family assessment tool and case management process which is uniquely tailored to meet the needs of each family. This process is utilized by all professionals working with a family -- from Public Health Nurses to Probation Officers to Employment Counselors. The goal of the Service Integration case management process is to develop a single case plan across programs and to permit families and staff members to jointly prioritize tasks so the family does not become overwhelmed or receive conflicting mandates.

Currently, however, each professional working on the SITeam is still beholden to the paperwork requirements of his or her "home department". Thus, for example, while the Child Welfare Worker develops a cross-disciplinary/Service Integration case plan for each family, he or she must also maintain a separate Child Welfare case plan and Child Welfare file for each family. This dual record keeping system places an unnecessary burden on both staff and families served.

Contra Costa County is eager to work with the cross-agency team of Federal staff to examine opportunities for consolidating recordkeeping and eliminating duplicative paperwork in support of streamlined integrated services.

### Aligning Programs and Blending Funding to Support the Whole Family and the Whole Community

Community building is a critical element of the Service Integration Program. One of the negative consequences of categorical funding streams is the divisions it causes within communities. Typically, community residents with similar needs are forced to obtain services from different agencies and/or programs due to how different populations are funded. Resources are unequally distributed throughout communities based on program eligibility requirements. As a result, we divide up communities rather than using public programs as a springboard for developing new relationships among community members.

One such example is employment programs. The CalWORKs program serves community residents with dependent children for up to five years. The County General Assistance (GA) Program serves indigent adults without dependents for up to three months per 12 month period. The Department of Labor provides funding for a range of services to populations, some of which overlap with the CalWORKs and GA populations and some of which do not. Typically, these programs are all run separately.

The Service Integration Program has developed some creative solutions to bridging these divides by obtaining grant funding to provide the non-CalWORKs population in Bay Point and North Richmond with many of the same services available to the CalWORKs population. As a result of this outside funding, we have developed Career Centers in two of the communities, offering job-related resources and assistance to anyone living in the neighborhoods. We have also been able to open up those workshops available to CalWORKs participants to others in the community. However, the administrative burdens associated with meeting the different eligibility, paperwork and reporting requirements of these separate State, Federal and grant-funded programs are tremendous. Contra Costa County hopes to work with the State and Federal governments on aligning the requirements across like programs that serve distinct populations and, if possible, blending these funding streams into pools for given neighborhoods.



### Flexible Funding to Fill Service Gaps

The Service Integration Program pulls together a wide range of County and community services to facilitate a more holistic approach to supporting children and families. Access to this rich array of resources allows the SITeams to tailor services to respond to the unique needs of each family. Over the past four years, the Service Integration Program has struggled to fill various service gaps -- primarily in the areas of substance abuse counseling and treatment, adult mental health, family mental health, housing assistance and transportation.

Contra Costa County hopes to work with the State and Federal government to redirect funding into these critical areas. In particular, the County is interested in eliminating unnecessary and unproductive administrative processes and reinvesting the savings in these direct service areas.

### **CONCLUSION**

Contra Costa County, California, has a deep commitment to improving the quality of life for children, youth and families. Over the past five years, the County has taken advantage of many opportunities to reinvent programs by working collaboratively within the County and the State. On behalf of the County, I am delighted to have the opportunity to explore strategies for obtaining even greater flexibility at the local level by forging new partnerships at the Federal level as part of the Boost for Kids Initiative. Should you have any questions or require any more information, please feel free to call Nina Goldman at (925) 335-1054. Thank you for your consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,

Phil Batchelor  
County Administrator

ATTACHMENT A:

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY  
1998-99 CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES BUDGET

ATTACHMENT B:

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY  
1998 CHILDREN'S REPORT CARD

# ATTACHMENT C:

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES POLICY FORUM MEMBERSHIP AND TASK FORCE ROSTER

ATTACHMENT D:

BAY POINT SITEAM  
EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

ATTACHMENT E:

NORTH RICHMOND  
TRANSPORTATION ARTICLES

ATTACHMENT F:

BAY POINT WORKS AND NORTH RICHMOND  
EMPLOYMENT COLLABORATIVE ARTICLES

ATTACHMENT G:

COMMUNITY GARDEN ARTICLE



ATTACHMENT H:

LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY