



CRADLE TO CAREER
FRESNO COUNTY

THE ROLE OF
**POLICIES
PRACTICES
AND
RESOURCES**
IN
**SYSTEMS
CHANGE**

HOW COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
ARE TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS
IN THESE KEY AREAS



fresno county
superintendent of schools
Jim A. Yovino, Superintendent



POLICIES

Policies are laws, regulations and other rules guiding individual or institutional actions adopted by institutions and/or local, state and federal governments.

In transformed systems, policies are creating equitable opportunities and inclusive economic mobility for Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty.

Delivering Public Health Services Outside the Walls of Government: THE COVID-19 EQUITY PROJECT

The Covid Equity Project (CEP) is an ongoing collaboration launched in 2020 in immediate response to the pandemic. The partners include the Fresno County Department of Public Health (DPH), the University of CA San Francisco (UCSF) Fresno campus, and more than 18 community-based organizations.

The working structure includes these specific coalitions:

- Immigrant and Refugee
- African American
- Persons with Disabilities
- United in Health Equity (added later for additional rural/cultural support)

Each coalition provides language specific and culturally respectful outreach/education, testing, contact tracing, and quarantine supports. After launching in July 2020 and operating through December 2021, the new system was plug-and-play ready for vaccine distribution to hard-to-reach populations in early 2021.

Trusted Messengers are Key to Success

The 100+ Community Health Workers (CHWs) recruited, trained, and employed through the CEP are already trusted messengers in their communities who understand the culture and speak the language of the people they serve. Because people were vaccine hesitant, the CHWs asked DPH leaders if they could be trained to administer vaccines. What at first seemed like a crazy idea became a reality as DPH explored the possibility and found a legal and safe way, under existing CA law, for this shift to happen. The CHWs received training to be considered medical assistants solely for giving vaccinations and may give shots under the supervision of a physician at vaccine clinic sites.

In 2022 DPH consolidated administration of the CEP to a hub through Fresno Community Health Improvement Partnership and transitioned from a coalition model to single organization contracting.

Expanding a Successful Model

To expand the successful model further, DPH piloted an Ag Initiative for vaccinations working directly with farming business owners and contractors who hire farmworkers to reach the vulnerable farm labor community. DPH learned that the agricultural community was ready and had the infrastructure to support vaccinations and focused early on that population compared to other counties, with the support of the Board of Supervisors, to protect those who prepare and harvest food for the nation. The CEP supported many farm labor vaccination events, educating those vaccinated beyond just getting the shot so that more of their families and friends would get vaccinated. This was especially important for undocumented farm labor who traditionally live in the shadows and are extremely wary of government involvement. Through this initiative over 33,000 doses of COVID vaccine were administered.

IMPACT

- Fresno County has the highest vaccination rate in the San Joaquin Valley (32nd in California).
- Fresno County's fully vaccinated rate in HPI Q1 is currently the highest in the San Joaquin Valley region, 54.7%, compared to CA's rate of 58.8% for Q1 as of 11/10/21. (Approximately 70% of the county's population falls under the CA Healthy Places Index Quartile 1 (HPI Q1), which means they experience higher vulnerability and challenges related to overall health, social-economic, housing, transportation, education, and other key factors that contribute to a person's health and well-being.)
- Farmworkers, low-income residents, and mostly those of color received quarantine and isolation support in the amount of more than \$1.6 million as of November 2021.
- Based on Fresno County results a State RFP was issued to support more development of this type of Community Health Worker network model.

Ensuring Mental Health Services for All Students: ALL4YOUTH

All4Youth is a collaborative partnership between Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS) and the Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health (DBH). The shared mission is to have an integrated system of care that ensures all children and youth ages 0-22 in Fresno County have access to behavioral health services to support their social, emotional, and behavioral needs and promote health, well-being, and resiliency. The program is currently in year four of a five year roll out plan. All 32 school districts in the county have been on-boarded or partially on-boarded. All4Youth serves multiple urban and rural school districts who experience high levels of poverty and trauma.

The collaborative nature of All4Youth, the commitment to align resources and the explicit focus on equity have been essential to meet rising mental health needs. In the 2020-21 school year 4,000 referrals were made. When a referral is made a student receives at a minimum (regardless of whether they are receiving Medi-Cal/Medicaid, have no insurance or have private insurance) a screening, assessment (when indicated based on screening), and linkages to appropriate services and supports.

A Model for the State

Most County Departments of Behavioral Health have some presence in schools but the level of integration between a public behavioral health agency and an educational institution and the blending of funding streams that are part of All4Youth is unique to Fresno. Because of this innovation, breadth of services provided, and the comprehensive nature of the program, many across the state are looking at All4Youth as a model. In 2021 the leadership of All4Youth was selected by the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California to testify at a hearing to share strategies for integrating care in an individual school setting and an entire school system.

Needed Infrastructure Already in Place

Fresno County believes it is critical to minimize the potential duplication of systems that could confuse students, families, educators, healthcare providers and other partners. A potential challenge and opportunity are that the State is issuing funding to Medi-Cal/Medicaid managed care health plans to incentivize them to provide mental health services through community collaborations like All4Youth but led by the managed care plan. Because Fresno County has the infrastructure in place to effectively utilize the funding All4Youth leadership will be working with the managed care health plans to determine how to best align the State-contracted managed care plan incentives model.

IMPACT

- Referrals to services have doubled from inception to 2020-21, with an 18% increase from FY 2019-2020 to 2021. In the first half of FY 2021-22, after kids returned to school, numbers are already at 78% of the previous full year due to the impacts of COVID-19.
- Students and families are supported in sharing information, which facilitates care coordination between the mental health clinician and the school staff.
- The systems in place are built to ensure that no one falls through the cracks.

Closing the Digital Divide: FRESNO COALITION FOR DIGITAL INCLUSION

In Fresno County, like the rest of the nation, the pandemic revealed enormous inequities in internet access and the need for policy change. In June 2021 Fresno C2C partners joined forces to form the Fresno Coalition for Digital Inclusion (FCDI). Following the COVID-19 Equity Project model, FCDI brings together institutions, local government/public agencies, AND community-based organizations to collaborate with shared purpose toward equitable solutions. There are presently 29 organizations at the table representing the County, K-12, higher education, CBO Digital Literacy Coalition, healthcare and housing.

The coalition is working in several dimensions: the personal, household, and community levels, as well as the systems infrastructure level.

COVID Reveals the Stark Reality

The pandemic revealed that across Fresno County most students did not have access to a device or connectivity at home. With the shift to online learning, school districts provided devices with support from the State and CARES Act funds. Simultaneously, the districts realized that while they had made progress getting internet to all schools, they had not considered how many homes did not have access to the internet or if they did have access, the number affected with connectivity issues where the speed of a WiFi connection was lower than Broadband equivalent.

Without that speed, they found families sitting in their cars in fast food or school parking lots trying to get enough connection for school. In other cases, family connections could not handle three children trying to access the internet simultaneously for school, or older children were helping the younger ones and missing their classes. Parents could not log on to their school portal to get the information needed for their children or had no email to receive information. If the primary access to the internet was through a parent's smart phone or the phone was used as a hot spot, access was affected for students as parents began to go back to work. Devices helped but did not solve all the problems.

Digital Literacy is Fully Integrated

Community-based organizations (CBOs) became the de facto trainers for families because of their reach and trusted relationships in local communities throughout Fresno County. This role reached beyond their scope and as a result, CBOs began collectively framing the training need and how they could address it by forming their own Digital Literacy Coalition. As the FCDI was forming, the CBO Digital Literacy Coalition was fully integrated. Key elements include standardized training competencies, training assessments, feedback loops, and common measures. Next year trusted messengers deployed by the CBOs will begin outreach to train adults and parents of students across the community.

Using New Technology to Gather Accurate Data

A pilot project launched last year to find out directly from families how they connected to the internet, specifically what kind of Internet Service Providers (ISP) are available, provided a glimpse of the level of need in communities throughout Fresno County. Further investigation at the State level showed that the maps provided by ISPs or the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) over-state the level of real connection and ability to use the internet. An arrangement has now been set up to develop speed-testing through student use. A speed testing application has been launched in Fresno Unified. So far, it has revealed that almost 7,000 students in the urban area (mostly where residents of color are predominant) do not have high enough speeds to do their schoolwork online. This represents 9% of the student body. In the future, this speed information will be fed back to the California PUC to update their maps. Presently, the focus is on developing our own local maps. A second version of the app is being developed for rural schools.



PRACTICES

Practices are the everyday actions and decisions of individuals and institutions.

In transformed systems, these actions are informed by Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty to address the root causes of structural inequities.

The All4Youth team is changing practices across each community served through trauma and resilience training that is a required part of the All4Youth onboarding process for all schools. Everyone in the school, including certificated, classified and management staff are trained in trauma and how to better understand and relate to students who may exhibit behaviors that cause concern. The training was designed with intention, but the team did not realize how profound the impact would be until the reviews from participants were received. Consistently, as each new school site has been on-boarded, feedback from participants has been exceptionally high. The trauma and resilience training has been the most successful part of the project.

The training includes three modules on trauma and resiliency-Introduction to Trauma, Stress Resilience, and The Trauma Informed Classroom. The goal is to change the perspective that adults hold related to children who may exhibit behaviors of concern so that the adult recognizes and understands that there is a lot more going on, knows how to look for those things, and be cognizant and empathetic caring. The evaluations for this training have an average score of 4.6 out of 5, the highest of all trainings offered by FCSS. Respondents have shared that the training has helped them be a better spouse, parent, and teacher. Bus drivers, custodians and office staff have all responded positively to the training.

The pairing of this training with the services provided by the program has supported greater impact. There was resistance from school administrators in the beginning as school calendars are so full. Some of the most resistant staff have become the biggest champions and want and receive expanded training options after the three modules are completed. What started with 12 schools has now occurred at 230.

All4Youth was built from the ground up as a true collaborative partnership between Fresno County Superintendent of Schools and Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health. From the very beginning and to this day, the staff is specifically hired to represent the populations served. More than 60% of the team are bilingual and that has been very helpful in connecting with students and families since that mirrors the percent of Latino children. Clinicians with areas of expertise (SUD, LGBTQ+) are hired to best serve all populations. Hiring is only a first step and to take it to next level, equity and cultural sensitivity are a priority. A lesson learned came after some of the staff hired mentioned that the interview panel was all white and that composition made the people interviewed uncomfortable. This feedback was valuable and the All4Youth team took action to create a more diverse and welcoming experience for candidates.

FRESNO COALITION FOR DIGITAL INCLUSION

Thanks to the pandemic, there is cross-sector agreement that quality internet access for all is necessary, and it must be equitable and affordable. This commitment is the basis for the Fresno County Coalition for Digital Inclusion. The third largest school district in the state – Fresno Unified – used equity as the basis for creating an LTE cellular network using 15 schools as towers providing coverage around 25 schools so that 10,000 students and families in southeast and southwest Fresno can be served.

Equity Based Service Criteria

1. Starting from the south (where more of those in poverty live and with residents of color predominant) going north
2. Considering where most assignments of commercial hotspots occurred during the year;
3. Considering where cell signals were weakest;
4. Considering the socioeconomic conditions of the residents.
5. The district made a pivot to each student having a laptop and provided supports for internet access (WiFi at campuses and on buses, additional LTE coverage area, wireline broadband to the home) so that many more underserved students can learn beyond the school and many more families have access.

BLACK INFANT AND MATERNAL HEALTH

THE BLACK DOULA NETWORK

A program designed to change a system

The BLACK Doula Network (BLACK is an acronym for Belonging, Love, Affinity, Community and Kinship) is a multi-pronged effort of the BLACK Wellness & Prosperity Center (BWPC). BWPC is developing a curriculum to be co-taught with a local community college, training 30 predominantly Black doulas for serving Black pregnant women and babies in the next two years toward a long-term goal of training 300 individuals. Simultaneously, in an effort to support these birth professionals' integration into the birth teams at hospitals, BWPC is developing culturally specific training for medical providers at local hospitals and researching its impact. The initiative is supported by ANTHEM's local grant. BWPC is also pursuing other efforts to influence policy on state level, for example developing various resources in partnership with the community and participating in statewide committees.

Some of the activities through which BWPC attempted to raise awareness of Black birthing outcomes included holding listening sessions with Black doulas and community voices in the region, collecting pregnancy and birthing stories from Black birthing persons to raise awareness of birth inequities, and developing a BLACK Birth Equity Plan that is informed by birth experiences of Black mothers from Fresno. The learnings from these activities were disseminated among

various stakeholders with the intention of showing manifestations of mistreatment and empowering and validating others to speak up.

A priority focus of BWPC's work is to center lived experiences in advocacy and policy work with hospitals and healthcare systems and develop interventions that are effective and relevant to improving the birth experiences and birth outcomes in Fresno's Black community. The Doula training curriculum development began in August and a team is meeting regularly toward the completion goal of the spring of 2022. The development of the "Operational Guidance for Power-Sharing with Black Girls, Women, Birthing Persons, and Mothers" is another notable achievement. Stanford University's California Maternal Quality of Care Collaboration (CMQCC) formally endorsed the Guidance, an organization with influence throughout the state. The Fresno County Home Visitation Network adopted the Operational Guidance in November 2021 and wants to create something similar for other cultures to further advance their initial cultural/language specific focus groups that occurred in fall 2020.

THE MATERNAL WELLNESS INNOVATION HUB

Developing Black Birth Justice Advocates

The Maternal Wellness Innovation Hub, a pilot within Best Babies Zone Fresno GROWS in southwest Fresno, engaged 15 women in a nine-week rapid cycle design series to develop Black Birth Justice Advocates from the community. The local consultant used workshops in a rapid format to explain the theory of change, understand how racism is a root cause of their health outcomes, and help shift their minds to what is possible to change in their community. The training included learning about stages of change, maternal health, built environment, self-care, program development, and logic models and

budgets so that the women learn and develop their confidence to advocate for their community. The initial pilot graduated seven women who began implementing their plans in November. The planning pilot utilized pre and post assessments of participants, including measuring maternal depression. While the data is being compiled now, some with maternal depression at the start of the pilot had significantly decreased their depression by the end, demonstrating the cohort development and purpose were already being achieved.



RESOURCES

Resources are cultural, financial and social assets among a group of people or accessible to them.

In transformed systems, asset use is guided by and responds to the interests of Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty.

THE COVID-19 EQUITY PROJECT (CEP)

The Covid-19 Equity Project marked an important investment of financial and social assets into the community. The social and cultural assets at the heart of the CEP are the nearly 100 Community Health Workers (CHWs) deployed across the county's rural and urban communities. These CHWs are linguistically and culturally competent, speaking more than sixteen different languages and dialects, including American Sign Language (ASL), and pride themselves in being the 'trusted messengers' for many hard-to-reach mono-lingual communities.

CHWs meet people where they live and work with culturally and linguistically appropriate preventive information. They conduct case investigation, contact tracing, door-to-door canvassing and outreach, education, hosting vaccine clinics, and administering vaccines directly. The CHWs also eliminate language barriers, transportation challenges, and difficulties navigating the vaccine registration systems by pre-registering people and assisting with check-in and check-out. Most importantly, they are reducing misconceptions and giving residents the sense of reassurance and confidence needed to improve testing and vaccination rates in Fresno County. To date, the fundamental and invaluable work of CHWs has significantly contributed to the county's

overall reduction in case counts, positivity rates, hospitalizations, and deaths and has improved testing and vaccination rates, particularly for communities in the lowest Quartile 1 (25%) of the Healthy Places Index (HPI).

The County and City of Fresno aligned for the first time around health equity Scopes of Work and contract structures for the project. The financial resources deployed were significant, thanks to CARES Act funding. Never has government funding been invested into the community in this way or at the level of \$13.3 million through November 2021.

The CEP central database is used to document basic demographic information such as zip codes served, race/ethnicity, and languages for outreach efforts and additional supports and initially for case investigation and contact tracing. Initial assessment for isolation and quarantine supports (IQS) is documented and checked against the California and county system utilized for case investigation. When the state shifted to a different case investigation system, all subcontracted agencies shifted as well and this database to track their case investigation work. The CEP central database tracks their outreach and vaccination work while utilizing the State system for case

The 2019 CA Mental Health Student Services Act is a legislatively driven allocation of funds administered by the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission. All4Youth leadership applied for funding and Fresno was one of the large counties in CA that was awarded \$6 million in 2020. The funding is designed around prevention and the All4Youth team is working to establish four Wellness Centers in Fresno County, all to be located at or near school sites in regions of the County of Fresno that are underserved. The goal is to continue to build the bridge between education and mental health and provide the tools needed for integrating school-based services. Two of the four centers opened recently and two are in the construction phase. Preventative work focuses on homelessness, foster youth, LBGTQ+ and persons with lived experience, known as Family Partners, are being hired to link families with resources located on school sites and resources available through other sectors and organizations throughout the community.

In another innovative way to combine health care and education resources, All4Youth leaders have encouraged Human Resources to embrace the concept of employing people who have, as a stated expectation in the job description, lived experience with a behavioral health condition. Within the Department of Behavioral Health this is known as a paid peer professional. This approach was new territory for the Office of the Superintendent of Schools. The team was able to pull together to support HR to understand why it was needed. This shift has been transformative in human capital resource deployment for the schools. As stated above, the All4Youth Wellness Centers are staffed by Family Partners through the joint efforts of the All4Youth leadership team.

All4Youth is accessible to all youth whether they receive Medi-Cal/Medicaid, have no coverage, or are privately insured. This access has been a game changer. As part of a performance improvement project, DBH studied the penetration rate in underserved communities. Recognizing and concerned about how many underserved people they were serving prior to All4Youth, they have seen access increase in underserved communities across all cultural groups due to the collaboration since the 2018 baseline through 2020, the county penetration rate for school age youth has increased by 1.3% in the zip codes that billed for All4Youth. Those in the field consider anything over a 1% increase significant. The accessibility to screenings, assessments, and linkages to support at a school setting where everyone (certificated, classified and management staff) are trained to respect, recognize, and make a referral has significantly increased access.

As the country and county begin to emerge from the pandemic, mental health services are among the top needs cited by the community. For those already dealing with historic and current racial or ethnic trauma, the disproportionate deaths and economic hardships experienced by those of color affects their mental health even more. The All4Youth scaling means that as referrals climb, the teams have already worked through many start-up issues and are better prepared to respond to the increased demand. The downside for Fresno County is that it is classified as a medical shortage area, and we are already short of physical and mental health personnel. Therapists in private practice as well as agencies are overwhelmed with need. At the outset of the All4Youth five-year roll-out, the Director of DBH cautioned that we as a county would not likely have the staff capacity to fulfill the need. When you add the effects of the pandemic, that day has arrived. DBH and FCSS continue to explore strategies to address workforce development needs, including creating pipeline projects to inspire and support local youth to pursue a career in healthcare.