

Executive Summary

History: As part of a strategic planning process, in February of 2006, United Way of Santa Barbara County (UWSBC) convened three expert forums to discuss the most important issues in the health and human service areas of Children, Families, and Seniors. The purpose of these forums was to solicit input from non-profit, community, governmental, funding, and educational experts on the current state of services and the desired aspirations and outcomes for each area. Through these discussions, UWSBC became aware of our community's need and preparedness to adopt a consensus-based Master Action Plan (MAP), one for Children & Families and one for Seniors & Families. After subsequent discussions with the UWSBC Board of Directors, local health and human service leaders, local funders, and a variety of community leaders and stakeholders, United Way launched the **Power of Partnership Initiative**.

Need: In the region spanning from Goleta to Carpinteria, there are currently no comprehensive, community-wide strategic plans for Children, Families, or Seniors that have general acceptance and adherence from a majority of different stakeholders. While in the last thirty years our community has seen a tremendous proliferation of services to local people in need, we have not adopted a community plan to help integrate our efforts and align our resources towards agreed-upon goals. Further aggravating this situation is the fact that area experts predict escalating numbers of people needing services, reduced resources, greater competition among service providers, and critical program failures within the next ten years.

Initiative Description: In Phase One of the Initiative, UWSBC began contacting area experts, stakeholders, community leaders, and funders to develop the structure of our planning process and the support to begin Phase Two of the Initiative. The goal of Phase Two of the Initiative (April 2008-July 2009) is to create a MAP for Children & Families, and one for Seniors & Families, consisting of a Vision Statement, Prioritized Goals, Measurable Outcomes and Objectives, and Strategies to achieve those Objectives. Each MAP will be based on ten-year aspirational goals with periodic measurement markers. The Initiative convened the following groups to oversee the Initiative: a Vision Council, two Steering Committees, two Expert Forum groups, and multiple Community Forums— key leaders and individuals from every sector of our community—to develop these consensus-based, community-driven MAPs. In July 2009, when the MAPs have been completed, they will be disseminated to stakeholders and to the community at large. Phase Three of the Initiative (July 2009-) will be an ongoing process of implementing the MAPs, developing greater involvement from local stakeholders, convening ongoing service provider and funder forums, gathering data regarding services focused on the goals and desired outcomes, measuring progress, and communicating the results to the community.

Benefits: The **Power of Partnership Initiative** will generate a community-driven and expert-assisted, consensus-based prioritization of the community's hopes for Children, Families, and Seniors on the south coast of Santa Barbara County. This shared Vision with Goals and desired Outcomes, will strengthen our community's efforts to increase the effectiveness of current and future attempts to improve people's lives. Through the development of a shared language for our endeavors, our community will achieve a greater integration of service efforts and enhance our ability to increase the overall well-being of our Children, Families, and Seniors in our community. The benefits will include greater efficiency and effectiveness in achieving meaningful objectives, reduced service duplication, improved collaboration and partnering among service providers, increased cooperative interactions between local funders, and increased communication between all the stakeholders. In short, the initiative will produce what we all want— a stronger community.