

## To Reach Involve Build and Empower (TRIBE): Youth and Families in Napa County

by Chrissy Brady and Belinda Basca



### CASE STUDY

The *SDFSC Case Study Series* is intended to provide a snapshot of the programs implemented and lessons learned by SDFSC grantees as a service to other grantees and alcohol and drug prevention providers.

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### INTRODUCTION

Parent or caregiver involvement and parent education have long been areas that prevention programs have strived to implement effectively. Since the early 1980's schools, community groups, and researchers have looked at how the family unit can positively impact outcomes for youth. But what is "parent involvement?"

Parent involvement can range from parenting practices, communication, volunteerism, learning at home, decision-making, and community involvement (Epstein, 1995, 1996).<sup>1</sup> In short, parent involvement is the participation of any caregiver in a child's development (academic, social, or emotional) throughout the lifespan. Family-based involvement has illustrated a range of positive effects for youth from promoting academic achievement, to positive behavior outcomes and delaying or reducing substance use.

Schools and communities can work together to promote a positive relationship between parents and their children. "The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. The form of parent involvement chosen is not as critical to the success of children as the fact that it be reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting."<sup>2</sup>

Study after study supports the idea that not only does parental involvement produce positive results across domains such as academic and behavioral, but that positive parental involvement can be taught. Teaching parents to avoid risk factors such as poor communication or favorable parental attitudes towards substance use, and to promote positive parenting practices such as consistent parenting and problem solving, can be successful in reducing the risk of problem behaviors in youth.<sup>3</sup>

Effective programs that target the family level of universal prevention address both family risk factors and family protective factors. Two of the foremost researchers in prevention practices, Dr. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard Catalano, subscribe to the social development model of family prevention which "emphasizes the role of bonding to prosocial family, school, and peers as protection against the development of conduct problems, school misbehavior, and drug abuse. It hypothesizes that strong bonding to prosocial others (the family social unit) reduces the probability of delinquency and substance abuse." Catalano expands further to illustrate that the key to the social development model is bonding to the family unit as a prosocial force. This process involves three factors: providing opportunities for family involvement, using skills for participating as a family unit (communication, problem solving, etc.), and consistent rewards or punishments in relation to the desired family behaviors.

1 In Fager J. and Brewser, C. (1999). Parent partners: Using parents to enhance education. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

2 Henderson, A.T., & Berla, N. (Eds.) (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED3750968)

3 Catalano, R.F. et al. (1998). A universal intervention for the prevention of substance abuse: Preparing for the drug-free years. Drug abuse prevention thought family intervention. NIDA Research Monograph, Number 177: 130-159.

*"Perhaps the greatest social service that can be rendered by anybody to the country and to mankind is to bring up a family."*

—George Bernard Shaw

Several Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities grantees have implemented parent involvement and parent education components to their programs. Napa County's *TRIBE (To Reach Involve Build and Empower)* is one such program, and is the subject of this case study.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Napa County's *TRIBE* program for youth and families is a partnership between Napa County Health and Human Services (HHS), Boys & Girls Clubs of Napa County, and the Cope Family Resource Center. Together, these agencies provide a comprehensive prevention program to youth ages 9-14 and their families, at no cost to the family.

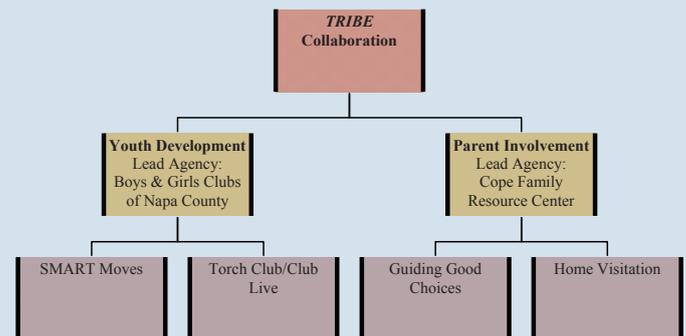
Napa County HHS has been participating in the development and implementation of a countywide, prevention-based strategic plan for several years. As part of the strategic plan development, the need for family-based services arose and several partnerships naturally evolved, including those with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Napa County and the Cope Family Resource Center. Prior to the triad, no family-based prevention services were offered in Napa County.

The Boys & Girls Club of Napa County developed a partnership with Napa HHS to expand youth development efforts within the county. The Cope Family Resource Center had

prior experience with both parent education and home visitation programs and is the major family resource center in Napa County. As such, the Cope Family Resource Center was the most appropriate organization to implement a family-based model.

### **TRIBE Program Components**

The *TRIBE* program has two major components—Youth Development and Parent Involvement—that work in tandem to strengthen the family as a prosocial unit in substance use prevention.



### **Youth Development: SMART Moves**

SMART Moves is a small-group prevention program that focuses on building self-esteem and teaching youth to resist peer pressure when dealing with ATOD use and sexual activity. The goal of the program is to create successful prevention through responsible behavior in youth ages 9-14. The Napa County program serves approximately 30-50 youth per quarter.

### **Youth Development: Torch Club/Club Live**

The Torch Club is a leadership club for youth (ages 11-13) that utilizes a youth development approach. Currently, the Torch Club is an active Friday Night Live (FNL) Club

Live<sup>4</sup> chapter that engages those SMART Moves graduates who want to expand their impact within the community through project-based community service.

### **Parent Involvement: Guiding Good Choices (GGC)**

GGC is a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) model program developed by Hawkins and Catalano that utilizes a multimedia curriculum to teach positive parental involvement as a factor for delaying or reducing substance use in youth. The program is provided in both English and Spanish in a five-week cycle, four times per year. An average of 50 Napa families (children ages 9-14) have been trained annually through the *TRIBE* program.

### **Parent Involvement: Home Visitation**

The home visitation program is based on the SAMHSA Nurse-Family Partnership, adapted under the California Safe and Healthy Families program. The process involves an initial intake, an in-home assessment, which crosses prevention domains, and a rating of the families' level of need based on the individual situation (for example, a homeless family has a high housing need). The home visitation component of *TRIBE* provides regular visits for approximately 30 families per year leading to the development of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). Not every family has the same level of contact with the home visitor as the frequency of the visits depend on the needs of the family and can range from weekly to monthly. The Home Visitor works with the families to develop, implement, and monitor the IFSP, which utilizes existing

4 FNL Club Live is designed for middle school-aged youth. This program focuses on developing and expanding social skills. Activities are organized to engage youth socially, to expand their ability to express themselves in social environments, and to help youth actively engage with peers.

family resources and resources within the community to provide a wrap-around framework for serving the family's needs. The plan includes the family's priority concerns (i.e., housing, communication, socio-emotional development, etc), identified services that are needed to address those concerns, and expected family-level outcomes. At the end of the home visitation experience, the parent completes a retrospective post-test to review their family strengths and prevention domains. While the home visitation model has been used previously by the Cope Family Resource Center with particular families who could benefit from this level of individualized service, the *TRIBE* program implemented this model from a prevention standpoint and expanded the availability of home visitation services to families with children older than five years. In addition, this was the highest functioning component of *TRIBE* in terms of positive family outcomes and parental response.

## **BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES**

There are several key strategies that Napa County's *TRIBE* program has utilized as they work with youth and families in Napa County.

### **#1 Cultivate parent participation**

Although many grantees may struggle in the recruitment and retention of parents for SDFSC programs, *TRIBE* found that recruitment and retention for the home visitation program was higher than anticipated. The County found that 90% of home visitation participants were self-referred. Retention of participants was also higher than anticipated, possibly due to

satisfaction with the individualized attention and services that families receive.

*"We went to where people already were and used those venues to recruit."*

-- Shirin Vakharia, Napa County Prevention and Youth Treatment Services Coordinator

Parent participation in the GGC program increased over time due to improvements in the recruitment and retention techniques. By focusing on a change of venue, parent participation also increased. Staff partnered with the Housing Coordinators at public housing sites and literally knocked on doors and provided classes on-site at public housing, schools, and safe houses. Participant retention steadily improved after implementing these venue changes.

## **#2 Build stakeholder collaboration**

The overall *TRIBE* collaboration has endured challenges over time. The initial hope was that *TRIBE* partners would be "joined at the hip" to provide services in tandem, however, the two elements of the collaborative design (parent education and youth development) do not easily lend themselves to seamless communication between stakeholders. While the program directors meet regularly to coordinate grants, and the *TRIBE* collaboration works together monthly, *TRIBE* is still working on instituting the collaboration on a staff level. Ideally, program coordinators would connect when scheduling activities to promote cross-program participation and utilization of services. However, neither main partner organization had ever partnered in this fashion before. While there were joint-offerings and cross referrals, it takes time to build a true

collaborative relationship to avoid the feeling that these are two separate programs working in parallel efforts.

Now that *TRIBE* is at the sustainability stage of its initial funding, the partners have succeeded in ensuring that the programs will continue based on preexisting structures. The *TRIBE* program is a more sustainable program than most because it is built on existing program strengths, and established new relationships to continue to build upon those strengths.

## **#3 Promote the program**

Program promotion efforts have evolved over time. *TRIBE* held an initial kick-off event at the beginning of the grant cycle, which was good for general awareness and highlighting the program. However, the event did not generate enough attention within the target population, who did not attend the event in large numbers.

In year two, *TRIBE* adapted their promotions model by changing their venues in order to reach those families who do not normally attend prevention or family events. By bringing the parent education classes and home visitors directly to the families in need, participation and retention of the target population increased. By changing their approach to recruitment and program promotion, *TRIBE* was able to focus on their target population of difficult to reach families.

Shifting to site-based classes, such as an elementary school or housing site, allowed *TRIBE* to provide services at a venue where parents were already present. The partners

then utilized those settings and staff at those settings to develop additional and sustainable relationships with the community.

*TRIBE* continued to evolve their program promotions in year three. They worked with a marketing & design firm to create posters and pamphlets to increase visibility. One key factor in the new marketing campaign was to not portray the *TRIBE* components as substance abuse prevention, but rather to describe the program broadly as helping parents navigate the teen years. While the *TRIBE* components are clearly conveyed to partners and referral sources as a substance abuse prevention program, they are not advertised as such to avoid potential participants from self-selecting out of available opportunities.

## TIPS FOR REPLICATING SUCCESS

Napa County has successfully created a unique collaboration of health, youth, and family stakeholders to create a family-centered, wrap-around approach that addresses substance use prevention. It has done so through successful collaboration, parental involvement strategies, and integrating youth development programs.

### ***Build Successful Collaborations***

Collaboration to reduce or delay substance use is a popular strategy for replication. Utilizing existing resources to the utmost is a common goal for community partners looking to maximize their positive impact. Successful collaboration however, takes more than finding partners who want to work together – it takes finding partners with similar goals who can effectively work together.

The Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health has developed an online Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, which “shows a partnership how well its collaborative process is working and what it can do to make the process work better” by measuring synergy, decision-making processes, benefits, and partner satisfaction. The goal of the Tool is to provide collaborations with constructive feedback to guide the next steps in developing a strong and sustainable collaborative process.

-- <http://www.cacsh.org/psat.html>

None of the *TRIBE* stakeholders—Napa HHS, Cope Family Resource Center, or the Boys & Girls Clubs—had worked within a cross-agency, collaborative model before. Relationship-building and joint-offerings amongst the partners took time to develop in order to provide true wrap-around, family-based services and not just a referral-based partnership between separate entities. Additional training on the collaborative model to all levels of staff, from the directors and program coordinators to the direct service staff, would have been beneficial towards institutionalizing the partnership.

### ***Keep a Feasible Number of Program Components***

In retrospect, *TRIBE* stakeholders acknowledge that fewer program components would have been easier to manage and evaluate. It would have been more feasible if the collaboration could have focused their resources on the most effective approaches within the *TRIBE* core components. For example, *TRIBE* could have put more emphasis on the home visitation component rather than the Guiding Good Choices (GGC) program of the parental

involvement piece. While the GGC program is research-based, offered in Spanish, and provided childcare & food to participants, it was still difficult to bring families out of their homes and into the community. By bringing home visitation services directly to the family, *TRIBE* was able to integrate a highly effective approach directly with their target population — families who are less inclined to participate in prevention programming. While at first it may be difficult to bring a stranger into a home, over time, the personal relationship and individualized attention translates into long-term direct services to families with more complicated and specific prevention situations.

### **Encourage Parent Involvement**

To improve parental recruitment & retention, the *TRIBE* project offered GGC in Spanish to reach the high monolingual population in Napa County and offered intense services through the Home Visitation Model to reach and retain those families that were not reached through conventional parent education classes.

*TRIBE* has seen higher participation and participant retention within the Spanish-

language cohorts than the English-language cohorts. One theory behind these improved outcomes is that if a community is hungry for skills, the community will seek out these kinds of opportunities.

*"I just hope this program will continue for a long time. It's a great opportunity to better oneself on setting clear guidelines on drugs, alcohol, and other family issues."*

-- GGC Parent Graduate

The home visitation component (also available in Spanish) was seen as a success for its ability to connect with families who may not normally be reached through a traditional parent education program. For example, even when GGC classes were offered in convenient locations to the population such as public housing sites, the home visitation component still had higher participation and retention rates. Again, the personal relationship developed between the family and the home visitor and the individualized attention that the home visitation program allowed are credited with this component's achievement.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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