

Implementing, Evaluating and Sustaining a Parent Mentor Program: Lessons Learned

Laurie Drabble, Ph.D.

Hilary Kushins, MSW, JD, CWLS

Dave Shuster



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MENTOR PARENT PROGRAM

Dependency Advocacy Center

Santa Clara County, California

Functions of Recovery Support



LIASON

- Links participants to ancillary supports; identifies service gaps

TREATMENT BROKER

- Facilitates access to treatment by addressing barriers and identify local resources
- Monitors participant progress and compliance
- Enters case data

ADVISOR

- Educates community; garners local support
- Communicates with FDC team, staff and service providers

DEPENDENCY WELLNESS COURT (DWC)



1998

- Started in 1998
- Judge, attorneys, Social Services, Dept. of Alcohol and Drug Services, attorneys.
- Voluntary program.
- Limited resources and few participants.
- Off the record, informal. Same judge for legal and drug court hearings (unless contested).

DEPENDENCY WELLNESS COURT (DWC)



2007

- In 2007, received 5 year federal grant to expand drug court, Family Wellness Court
- First Five matching funds.
- Expanded partners from original drug court, including DAC and Mentor Parents, First Five, domestic violence/trauma specialist, CASA, and mental health.
- The Oversight Committee met monthly, consisting of heads of all represented agencies on drug court team to address issues as they arose in drug court on a policy level.
- Grant ended in 2012. Partners committed to continuing model, with strong judicial leadership

DEPENDENCY WELLNESS COURT (DWC)



Today

- Merged drug court from 1998 and federal grant drug court to one drug court, DWC, in 2012 when federal grant ended.
- Voluntary program.
- Separate drug court and legal hearings with different judicial officers (parallel model).
- 100-120 active parents at any given time.
- 2 full days per week.
- Challenges of evaluating DWC.
- Oversight Committee continues to meet on a regular basis.

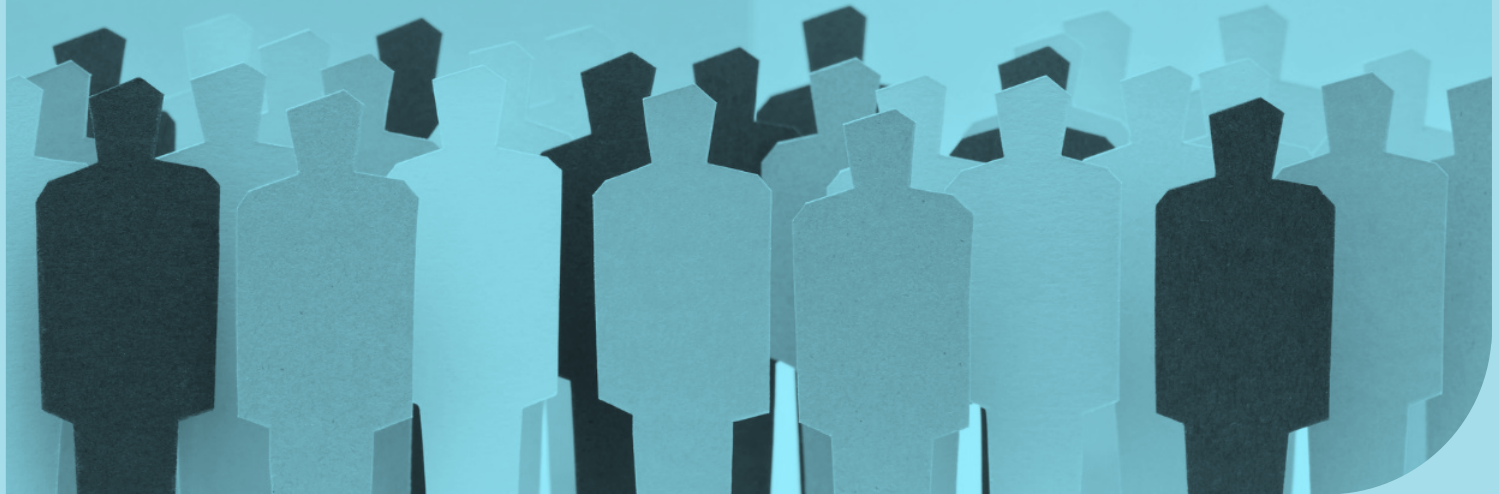
- Peer mentoring program.
- Employees of parents' attorney firm (Dependency Advocacy Center).
- Communications with clients covered under attorney client privilege
- 5 mothers, 3 fathers
- Director and clinical supervisor
- Average caseload 25 clients
- Work 30 hours per week



MENTOR PARENTS

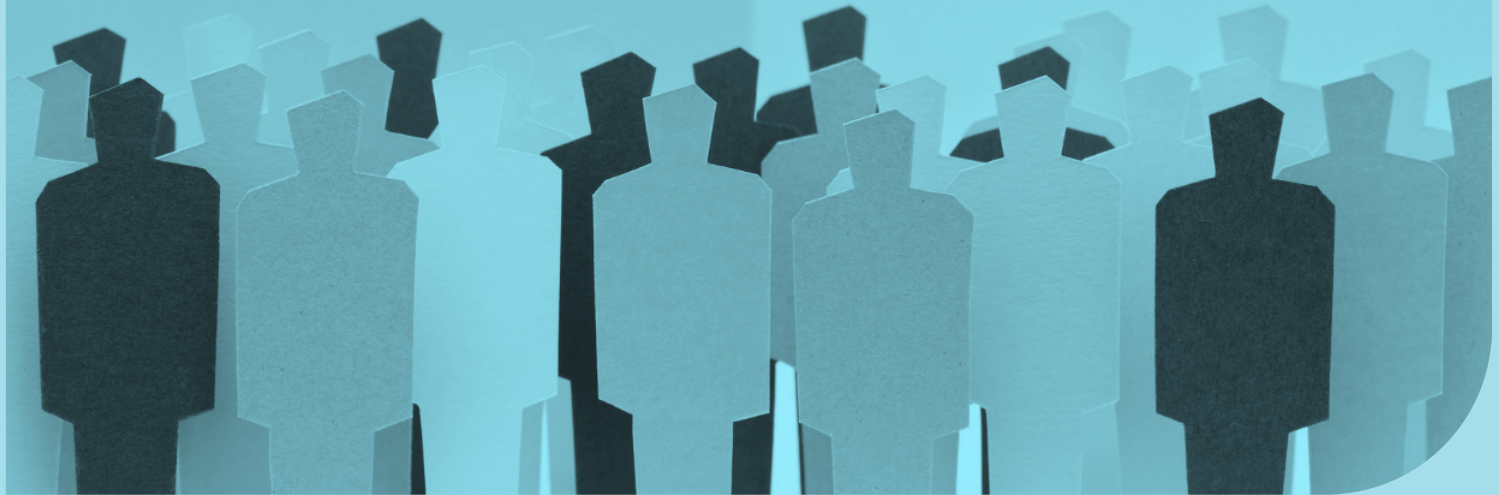
- Committed to clean and sober lifestyle and raising healthy families.
- Successful graduate of dependency drug court.
- Successfully reunified with their children and had their dependency case dismissed.
- No pending criminal cases or charges.
- Willing to share their story.

CRITERIA TO BE A MENTOR



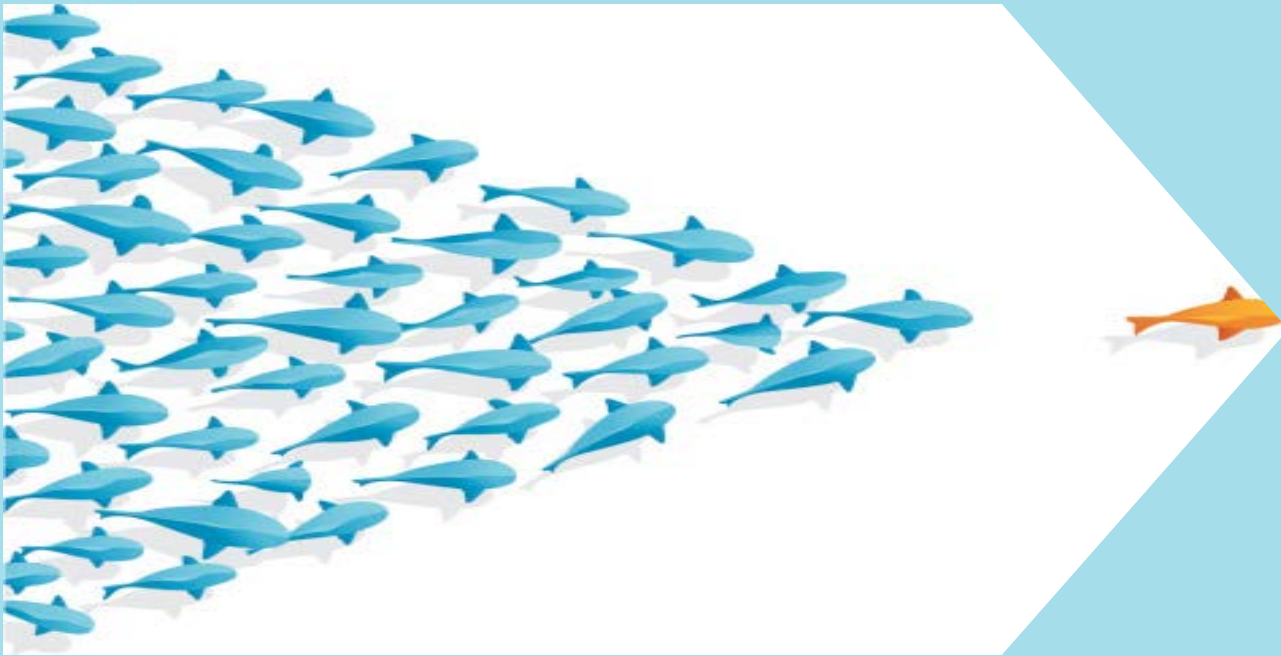
- Recruit eligible parents into DWC
- Establish professional boundaries
- Provide only referrals or facilitate service delivery of court ordered programs and those directly related to recovery
- Provide support at drug court and legal hearings and throughout dependency court process
- Maintain confidential communications (protected under attorney client privilege)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



- Participate in various trainings, including DFCS, CASA.

ROLE THEY PLAY IN THE SYSTEM



- Integral part of committees where policy gets decided (Oversight)
- Educate new DWC team members
- Participate in trainings for DFCS (court report writing, engaging fathers), CASA (birth parent perspective, understanding addiction)

Leading by example



FUNDING

- Began as one volunteer for 5 hours a week, first drug court graduate.
- Dept. of Alcohol and Drug Services (DADS) first funder and focused on mothers.
- Mentors included in 2007 federal grant: 4 mentors (inc. 2 fathers) and one manager
- Dept. of Mental Health (DMH) then funded 2 more mentors in 2009
- Federal Evaluation - mentor program one of the most effective pieces of the drug court program
- Federal grant expired, Santa Clara Board of Supervisors (BOS) continued funding for Mentor Parent Program
- Current funding: 70% Board of Supervisors, 30% Behavioral. Health Services Dept. for a total of \$425,000/year.



EVALUATION – PARTNERED RESEARCH

Child Welfare Partnership for Research and Training (CW-PART) MODEL

- ▶ The CW-PART is a collaborative project between School of Social Work at SJSU and local agencies working with children and families
- ▶ Teams of students work under supervision of faculty to focus on research questions defined as priorities to local agencies.
- ▶ Development was funded through California Social Work Education Center

HOW IT WORKS

- Faculty leads work with agency to define research projects
- Students complete research over academic year
- Findings are provided to county through research summaries
- Integrated into Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Program at SJSU



WHY THE PARTNERED MODEL?

- It provides learning opportunities for students
- Helps address questions of interest to the county/ local agencies
- Supports capacity building



BENEFITS & CHALLENGES: AGENCY/COUNTY

BENEFITS

- Research projects are beneficial to county/agency planning and evaluation.
- Leverages resources in support of county initiatives and projects (e.g., faculty consultation).
- Minimizes potential burdens of accompany individual projects.

CHALLENGES

- Time investment (planning, providing data)
- Timing to fit academic year

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES: FACULTY

BENEFITS

- Effective strategy for teaching
- Meaningful projects
- Stronger relationships with partner agencies/ practice

CHALLENGES

- Time investment (partners, students, logistics like IRB)
- Timing work to match student and county constraints
- Competing demands (e.g., publishable research)

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES: STUDENTS

BENEFITS

- Makes research more meaningful- *research that contributes to the field.*
- Greater possibility of sharing research findings.
- Opportunity for collaboration and developing relationships.
- More support and guidance from research lead faculty.
- Opportunity to learn from other student perspectives and their research findings.

CHALLENGES

- Conflicting schedules among service providers and students.
- Challenging to schedule multiple focus groups and interviews.
- Students may be at their field placement, class or job.
- Requires research team members to be very flexible.

CAPACITY BUILDING - CONSULTATION

- Assistance in development of logic model
- Problem-solving related to evaluation infrastructure and protocols
- Development and piloting of evaluation instruments for DAC/MPP
 - Client satisfaction survey
 - Self-sufficiency assessment
 - Development of DWC evaluation tools



THEORY: EXCERPTS FROM MPP “LOGIC MODEL”

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- Engagement and retention in DWC
- Engagement in MPP support services
- Access to treatment and other services

INTERIM OUTCOMES

- Increased self-sufficiency in recovery, legal status, social support, and other life domains
- Engagement in self-help/recovery
- Abstention/ reduction in substance abuse

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Successful reunification at MPP program completion
- Reduction in recurrence of maltreatment/ reduced days in foster care
- Long-term sobriety

ILLUSTRATION: MEASURING SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROJECT

- Identification of domains through focus groups with Mentor Parents
- Pilot adapted version of Self-Sufficiency Matrix
- Report back and feedback on challenges, and/or discoveries in administering the Self-Sufficiency Matrix



SELF-SUFFICIENCY MATRIX FINDINGS

| | Baseline Scores | Post scores (12 months) | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|---------|
| Self-Sufficiency Domains | Mean (SD) | Mean (SD) | p-value |
| Housing | 1.55 (0.85) | 3.47 (1.39) | <.001 |
| Employment | 1.09 (0.39) | 2.16 (1.29) | <.001 |
| Mobility (transportation) | 1.34 (0.60) | 2.69 (1.42) | <.001 |
| Life Skills | 2.39 (1.09) | 4.00 (1.02) | <.001 |
| Family/Social Relations | 2.22 (1.04) | 3.66 (1.07) | <.001 |
| Community Involvement | 1.87 (0.88) | 3.71 (0.96) | <.001 |
| Parenting Skills | 1.93 (1.08) | 3.78 (0.94) | <.001 |
| Legal | 2.84 (1.49) | 3.77 (1.28) | <.004 |
| Substance Abuse | 2.38 (1.43) | 4.56 (0.88) | <.001 |

RESEARCH/EVALUATION PROJECTS

- Evaluation of unique contribution of mentor parent program
 - Qualitative interviews/surveys with stakeholders
 - Client satisfaction and client engagement surveys
 - Client focus groups
- Evaluation of outcomes
 - Re-unification and re-entry
 - Increase self-sufficiency
- **Website: <https://sites.google.com/a/sjsu.edu/cw-part/>**

HIGHLIGHTS OF PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES

- Documentation of MPP impact on DWC engagement and increased self-sufficiency
- Documentation of relationship between MPP participation/contact hours and reunification
- Evaluation findings used in report to funders
- Parallel consultation to address data collection instruments and infrastructure with DWC; influencing practice in other therapeutic courts



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LESSONS LEARNED FOR SUSTAINING A MENTOR PARENT PROGRAM

- ▶ Create visibility with your mentors. What committees can they sit on? Who should they meet with? Where does policy get decided?
- ▶ Who can the mentors train? Social workers? Judges? Team members? Increases visibility of the program and establishes support from stakeholders.
- ▶ Evaluate your program. What do you want to measure? How will you measure it? What data do you need to collect? Who can help you obtain that data?
- ▶ Create mutually beneficial partnerships to sustain program. Which university/college/community college is near you? Is there a school of social work near you?
- ▶ Have both hard data to support your program and a mentor to publicly share their story: a winning combination for potential funders.

LESSONS LEARNED FOR RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

- 1. *Liaisons*** in each system for managing the overall partnership, brokering resources, and serving as conduits between systems
- 2. *Support of leadership*** in both the agency and university
- 3. *A structured process*** for identification of research questions
- 4. *Multi-year projects centered on key county initiatives*** are more feasible and meaningful than multiple smaller projects.
- 5. *Organizational assets are critical***, including faculty expertise, relevant courses in curriculum, adequate numbers of interns/students, funding for planning

LESSONS LEARNED FOR RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

- 6. *Importance of orientation*** for students, field instructors, and other partners
- 7. *Course assignments may require adaptation***
- 8. *Coordination is important*** to maximize the “team” experience
- 9. *Flexibility and maintaining communication***, through key identified liaisons are critical to problem solving about timing issues, data, and other challenges that may arise
- 10. *Attending to the partnership and efforts to build social capital are as important as the research products.***

CONTACT INFORMATION



Hilary Kushins, MSW, JD, CWLS

Dependency Advocacy Center
Drug Court &
Training Programs Manager
111 W. Saint John Street,
Suite 333C
San Jose, CA 95113
phone: (408) 999-0311
hkushins@sccdac.org

Laurie Drabble, Ph.D.

Professor
San Jose State University
School of Social Work
One Washington Square
San Jose, CA 95192-0124
phone: (408) 924-5836
lauriedrabble@sjsu.edu

Dave Shuster

Dependency Advocacy Center
111 W. Saint John Street, Suite 333
San Jose, CA 95113
phone: (408) 516-7470
dshuster@sccdac.org