

Family Relief Nursery: Emerging Issues, Emerging Responses

The Family Relief Nursery (FRN) has been working with families at risk of child abuse and neglect for 23 years. The Relief Nursery model: therapeutic childcare, parenting education, home visiting, respite child care, and resource referral strengthens families, allows them to overcome risk factors, and helps children enter school ready to succeed. The Nursery has successfully reduced victimization rates and out of home placements, but identified two areas of ongoing concern that it is now addressing. The first area concerns the over-representation of African American families in the child welfare system. The second is the need for integrated, comprehensive care.

While African American children constitute 15% of the total population, they are more than 30% of the children in foster care. One factor identified as contributing to this issue is the systemic problem of child welfare workers removing African American children from the home at a higher rate than Caucasian children for the same or similar abuse/neglect reports. State funds are then provided to the fostering families, rather than providing the birth family with the support and aid needed to keep the child in the home. Twenty-two percent of families the FRN currently serves are African American; to better resolve overrepresentation, we seek to provide culturally responsive interventionists, parenting education curriculum, and trauma-informed childcare. We are bolstering our strengthened parenting education with enhanced expertise in home visiting to better reflect concerns and issues in African American families and more effectively integrate parenting and home visiting curricula. Our East Portland satellite nursery is ideally located to serve at-risk African America families that are increasingly re-locating to East Portland.



Goals for this work include increased participation and engagement of African American families, and through this, the community's identification of the FRN as a culturally responsive model that is relevant and effective for African American families. Long term outcomes include advocating for greater cultural responsiveness among child welfare workers as well as a decrease in the number of African American families in the child welfare system.

Second, in order to comprehensively serve families, their physical, mental, and behavioral health care must be addressed. The high risk families FRN serves may have difficulty following up on multiple referrals to variously sited primary care doctors or mental health counseling. The goal of integrated care is to provide these services where the families are. To that end, the FRN has partnered with the National College of Natural Medicine to site a health clinic in the nursery and provide primary health care to Relief Nursery families as well as women in the adjacent Women's Residential Center. In addition, Nursery staff now include a Qualified Mental Health Professional and Qualified Mental Health Associate. They are able to offer counseling services to FRN families and address the traumas and behavioral health issues with which they grapple. *To support this work, go to www.voar.org, and click on Donate Now.*



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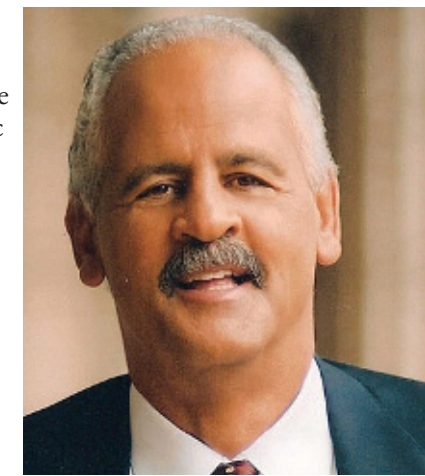
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Re-imagining the Dream: Equity, Inclusivity and Economic Stability—A Community Initiative

Volunteers of America Oregon's strategic planning process led the agency to consider ways to deepen and strengthen its commitment to diversity and inclusiveness. Increased diversity among staff and in community partnerships enables VOAOR to benefit from broader vision, insights, wisdom, experience and knowledge. New solutions are found for ongoing challenges when a wider array of voices is offered a platform for input. Also, cultural diversity enables us to develop more effective, relevant culturally-specific strategies for addictions prevention and treatment, child abuse, at-risk youth, and domestic violence prevention and intervention, corrections transition, and senior services.

for economic prosperity and sustainability with a demonstrated commitment to diversity, inclusivity and equity. The theme is "Re-imagining the Dream: Equity, Inclusivity and Economic Stability."

This effort, led by Volunteers of America Oregon, has a steering committee that includes prominent members of our community as well as Volunteers of America Oregon board members. The symposium represents a community dialogue in which stakeholders, policy makers, and constituents provide input into strategies to transform organizations as they address unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and income inequality. Each symposium will mirror the engagement of diverse ideas, voices, and strategies that is its overall goal. Participation in the conversation will encourage active generation of policy and practice solutions. Speakers with a track record of contributing to dialogue and action on diversity will lead each symposium. Outcomes will include concrete steps for implementation to effect change. VOAOR will work with culturally-specific coalitions in the community to develop a community scorecard that measures how our forums are performing.



Stedman Graham, nationally renowned author, educator and entrepreneur.

The challenges are to increase staff diversity to better reflect our program participants, but more broadly to increase the participation of ethnic and cultural minorities in education and economic arenas, thereby resolving some of the social issues that lead so many of our clients to addictions or criminal behavior. We are pleased to announce a significant event that addresses these issues community wide. Volunteers of America Oregon will implement a community action initiative that promotes diversity and inclusivity among area businesses, non-profits and in the community at large through the convening of a year-long symposium consisting of a kick-off event and quarterly follow-up events. We will bring together local business, faith community, non-profit and educational leaders to develop a roadmap

lead each symposium. Outcomes will include concrete steps for implementation to effect change. VOAOR will work with culturally-specific coalitions in the community to develop a community scorecard that measures how our forums are performing.

The Symposium kick-off event will be held May 8, 2015, at the University of Portland Chiles Center 1:30-4:30pm. Our speaker is nationally renowned author, educator and entrepreneur, Stedman Graham. To purchase tickets, go to www.voar.org.

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CPR: People Matter

Community Partners Reinvestment program (CPR) began as a corrections transition program for young men aged 18 to 25 leaving prison. The program expanded to the County jails, where its pre-release counseling and curriculum and post-release services,

mentoring, and activities have also been successful in reducing recidivism for this high-risk population. Continuing to identify and meet community public safety needs, the program now works with the Gang

From the desk of the President Kay Toran



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Volunteers of America Oregon: Diversity and Transformation

2015 is another year of innovation at Volunteers of America Oregon, as we are expanding the depth and breadth of our programming to better serve the most vulnerable. In this newsletter, you will learn about two emerging arenas for our work, as well as ways in which existing services are responding and adapting to our most pressing social needs.


In May, Volunteers of America Oregon will hold its first diversity forum focused on how to achieve equity in our various institutions. Learn about our efforts to be a catalyst in our community to promote participation and action in economic and community development for all, as well as how to enhance that development.

We also provide a glimpse into the ways that healthcare transformation has allowed our agency to integrate primary and behavioral health care, more effectively serving program participants struggling with physical and mental health issues as well as adverse childhood experiences, trauma, and substance use.

Our culturally-responsive services are meeting ongoing and emerging needs in our community, strengthening adults, children, and families and leading to sustained community well-being.

Thank you for your continued interest and support,

Kay D. Toran, President/CEO



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The Wine Club is a partnership with the Oregon Pinot Society that offers Volunteers of America Oregon supporters a chance to buy great Oregon wines with a share of the proceeds paid back to VOAOR.

Wine Club

Find out more at VOAwineclub.com

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Volunteers of America Oregon Our Vision

Volunteers of America Oregon is a leader in creating vibrant, compassionate communities where every member is valued, every home is safe and every life is self-determined.

Our Mission

Volunteers of America Oregon changes lives by promoting self-determination, building strong communities and standing for social justice.

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Impacted Family Team to prevent future generations of young men and their children from winding up in a cycle of crime, jail or prison.

Seated around a table in their offices, CPR counselors, mentors, family care staff and the Multnomah County Parole Officer who works closely with the team, talk about what makes their program succeed in keeping young men out of trouble, in school or work, and with their families. They speak to the work they do and the best practices they employ to reach young men who are apathetic, ambivalent and hardened by growing up in the system. Although no one names the one critical component exactly, the team shares their well-researched approach in a common language. They say it's listening; not issuing orders, but providing opportunities; going bowling or hanging out for a coffee when it's getting to be too much. They model behaviors to cope with anger that can address a situation without escalating it. They work on communication skills and develop tools for navigating the complex and demanding system that confronts parolees. They provide a safe place where the men can dismantle the walls they erect to protect themselves from the residual effects of the traumas of their early years. Counseling sessions, well researched curriculum, meetings with parole officers, outings with mentors,

and parenting resources anchor the program, but the relationships in which those activities are embedded are the continual fabric that nurtures and strengthens these young men. The men and women sitting at the table are the critical component of that program. Each one is intelligent, thoughtful, and caring. Their skilled and dedicated presence is the program's success. A great deal of hard work, city and county-wide partnerships and local and federal funding are not to be overlooked, but without Freddie, Choo, Orentheo, Pecos, Marina, Kelsey, Sara, Brittney, Carl, Patrick, Jason, Rick, Nate, Kat and PO's Keith, Carl, Kate, and Travis together with the visionary leadership of program director Kathy Sévos and Clinical Director Felesia Otis, the 36% reduction in recidivism and 74% reduction in jail costs could not exist. The program saves the system thousands of dollars per participant—because the men and women on staff show up each day to teach the young men how to live a different life, one conversation and cup of coffee at a time.

To learn more, go to www.voaor.org/Public_Safety.



Volunteers of America Oregon Welcomes Dr. Moreland and Integrated Care

“Before Affordable Care, 50 to 60% of our program participants were uninsured,” explains Dr. Moreland, Volunteers of America Oregon's Chief Medical Director. She is leading the agency in developing the range of integrated care to comprehensively and effectively serve this population. Increased access to care demands expanding the breadth and depth of care provided. It has long been recognized that men and women in substance use treatment or with a history of criminality are often dealing with mental health issues and unresolved physical health issues. Failing to address any one of the issues makes success with any single treatment less likely. Volunteers of America Oregon has introduced National College of Natural Medicine (NCNM) Clinics at the Men's Residential Center, jointly at the Women's Residential Center and Family Relief Nursery, as well as the original clinic at InAct Addictions prevention and treatment program. Qualified mental health professionals and a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner are on staff in several programs and now primary care providers are being integrated.



The efficacy of our integrated services relies on another key factor: meeting people where they are. Clients are struggling to meet some program objectives and sustain participation. It is unrealistic to expect them to also follow-up on multiple referrals to multiple agencies. Dr. Moreland's vision is to provide the integrated

services on site where clients are already receiving substance use treatment or other program services.

The goals of this work are improved outcomes for treatment and corrections transition programs among clients with co-occurring mental and physical health issues—which ultimately improves

public safety and enriches community health and wellness. Studies on relapse prevention at the Women's Residential Center found that their integrated care focus resulted in more women staying clean and sober longer. The cultural shift that fosters and accompanies integrated primary and behavioral health care will have broad implications for ways in which health care providers are trained—to more comprehensively diagnose and treat behavioral and physical health problems, as well as the traumatic experiences that are often at the root of addictions, mental health issues, and criminality. Collaborations that support wrap-around services with trauma-informed care deliberately interwoven with social services will be critical to the objective of increasing the ability of clients to sustain overall wellness.

Another critical feature of this work that Dr. Moreland is implementing at Volunteers of America Oregon, which also requires a culture shift, is the agency-wide use of electronic medical records and a codified credentialing process. This is what is enabling Volunteers of America Oregon to bill for integrated care services, funding our work of nurturing, uplifting, and empowering the most vulnerable.