



STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 - 2015

Coalition Background: The origins of the Lewis County Autism Coalition go back to 2008 when Dr. Isaac Pope of Pope's Kids Place initiated a pediatric health project addressing the needs of children on the autism spectrum. This initial work led the state Department of Health to identify Lewis County as a pilot Community Asset Mapping (CAM) project. CAM invited a couple dozen Lewis County stakeholders from public schools, early intervention, pediatric medicine, Head Start/ECEAP, United Way, Centralia College and others to participate in a half day meeting on February 16, 2010 to map community assets.

Since that date the coalition has produced a road map of autism resources for parents and providers, conducted community trainings for health care practitioners and educators, hosted a September 2011 Autism Awareness conference, developed a school-medical protocol and sponsored a summer playgroup for children on the autism spectrum. Ongoing funding has come from the Foundation for Early Learning and community partners, including the Lewis County Developmental Disabilities Program.

Vision Statement: Lewis County values and supports lifelong success for all individuals and families living with autism through access to quality education, recreation and employment resources.

Mission Statement: The Lewis County Autism Coalition is a catalyst for community action and partnerships that support families and advance success in school, work, and life for children on the autism spectrum.

Needs Assessment: Lewis County has a strong foundation of assets on which to build a robust system of support services and resources for families and their children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The core of these services is based in public school district, medical and early intervention programs.

Parents seek services that support their children when school is not in session; especially on weekends and during the summer. There is a need for information and peer support that helps parents effectively support their child's everyday social growth and success. Services need to be available, accessible and affordable for families all across Lewis County, including under-resourced East County.

Providers desire information on the latest research and best practices, and training in tools and methods that can effectively serve children and communicate with parents.

System improvements would include use of a school-medical protocol that can communicate vital information among a child's multiple caregivers, increased training and engagement of medical providers across the county, treatment services for children with severe behavioral needs and a multi-disciplinary care team for individual children on the spectrum.

The needs assessment process engaged 200 individuals through surveys, and 43 individuals through focus groups.

SWOT Analysis

The Coalition conducted a SWOT (strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats) analysis and then looked at the interplay of SWOT elements that could positively impact future efforts. This led to the following findings:

- The Coalition's dedicated diverse membership can effectively reach out to more agencies and engage more people (especially in east county).
- New funding sources have been identified to achieve much-needed grant funding.
- The lack of East County presence can be overcome with the engagement of school districts, agencies, and Centralia College campus in Morton.
- The relatively small number of coalition attendees can be addressed through outreach that engages more agencies, leading to the involvement of more people.

Priority Strategies

The coalition utilized the state Early Learning Plan framework to identify and prioritize strategies to inform a 3 year Action Plan. Identified as essential were creating a system of access to information and resources and generating opportunities for parent learning. This could lay the foundation for a system that best serves children with a comprehensive array of services. Three priority elements to inform the 3 Year Strategic Plan:

- Ready Children - services
 - Expand summer playgroup (in 2013).
 - Inventory and address service needs/gaps in East County
 - Provider/educator outreach with Road Map, protocol and training
 - Implement innovative treatment approaches (CATCH/PKP)
- Ready Parents-Caregivers-Professionals - support/training
 - Maintain Internet presence (Facebook, partner websites, email)
 - Connect parents to services (distribute Parent Road Map)
 - Monthly support group
 - Training and education (M-CHAT, annual conference, special workshops)
- Ready Community - coalition development/public awareness
 - Leadership Development (Steering Committee/Executive Committee)
 - Strategic Planning
 - Funding / Sustainability
 - Community Outreach (newsletter, events, media)
 - Advocacy

A 3 Year Framework and first year (2013) Action Plan were adopted to serve as a road map to guide the Strategic Plan's implementation.

Governance

To ensure success and accountability for the Strategic Plan's implementation a revamped Governance Structure was adopted. The goal is to share responsibility among more individuals, while maintaining the coalition's momentum that engages more people to expand services and county-wide reach. The structure has a Steering Committee, Executive Committee and 3 Strategy teams.

➤ The Steering Committee (comprised of up to 20 individuals who meet monthly) provides overall direction to Coalition program and development. It is comprised of a broad cross-section of public and private sector stakeholders; including parents, school districts, medical providers, social services agencies, parents and early intervention services. The Steering Committee controls and directs the affairs of the Coalition, acting as its decision-making body to determine program policies, budget and strategic direction.

➤ The Executive Committee is comprised of 5 members: one member each from the 3 Strategy Teams, plus 2 at large. The Executive Committee sets the coalition agenda each month, makes decisions as needed between coalition meetings, oversees budget and finances/funding, and serve as liaison to facilitator. Officers could include Co-Chairs, Secretary, Treasurer and at large. The Strategy Team representatives will be a liaison link to that group.

➤ The Strategy Teams plans and monitor implementation of their respective annual Action Plans. Each team has 2 leaders and members who are aligned with one or more Strategy activities. One leader from each team serves on the Executive Committee. Each team has ongoing or adhoc work groups, as needed.

Sustainability Plan

The Autism Coalition places a high value on seeking a sustainable system of supports and services . The Coalition has affirmed a framework that will guides its effort to achieve this objective:

- Grants. Funding will be sought from public and private foundations, corporations and government that can support the coalition's core budget and development, and to initiate pilot projects that meet identified community needs.
- Community fundraising. Grassroots efforts will be implemented that generate ongoing funding in support of the coalition's core budget and support services. This activity will engage volunteers in one-time and ongoing events. The coalition will generate ongoing support from individuals and businesses, and work in cooperation with service clubs and coalition partners.
- Fee for service. Ongoing funding will be generated through sponsorship of professional development events (e.g., annual conference, periodic workshops, etc.) that meet identified needs of parents and professionals. Events costs will be met through sponsorships and registration fees.
- Coalition partners. Agencies, organizations and businesses will be invited to sustain the coalition through a system of annual contributions. A sliding scale system will be developed that respects a partner's ability to provide support.

An annual Sustainability Plan will be developed, implemented and monitored by the Ready Community team.

Communications Plan

Effective communication is essential within the coalition and for its efforts to increase public awareness and engagement. The elements of the coalition's communications plan includes:

- Email lists. The coalition maintains email lists for Steering Committee communications and for broadcast messages to a larger list of supporters (newsletter, event announcements, etc.). Responsible: Coalition facilitator and/or Secretary.
- Coalition decision-making. Coalition meeting notices and outcomes are provided on a timely basis. Steering Committee meeting agendas are emailed at least 3 days ahead of a meeting and the meeting notes are distributed within 2 weeks following a meeting. Responsible: Coalition facilitator and/or Secretary.
- Internet. The coalition maintains a website (www.lcautism.org) and Facebook page. Responsible: Volunteer webmaster/administrator.
- Newsletter. The coalition produces a quarterly newsletter that reports on recent achievements and promotes upcoming events. The newsletter is aimed an audience of parents and professionals interested in the coalition's work. Responsible: Coalition facilitator and/or Secretary.
- Media. Periodic news releases, op ed columns and letters to the editor are issued to increase public awareness of living with ASD, best practices and community resources. A feature in the Chronicle and other Lewis County newspapers is a goal, at least an annually. Responsible: Ready Community team.
- Advocacy. It is vital to stay aware of public policy developments (regulatory and legislative) and to communicate information to policy makers. Responsible: Ready Community team.

An annual Communications Plan will be developed, implemented and monitored by the Ready Community team.