

RWJF Grant ID#: 70627

Team Name: Carson City-Douglas County

Major Activities: The goal of this grant was to support planning and implementation efforts for Carson City Health and Human Services (CCHHS) to perform all environmental health services in Douglas County (which at that point were provided by the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health). Douglas County pursued this arrangement because the state announced it was going to charge more for its services, and CCHHS was interested in the proposition because this type of arrangement further strengthens its operations and its ability to pursue becoming a health district. Both parties agreed on the importance of cost savings and enhanced environmental health services for Douglas County, provided in a manner that was cost neutral for CCHHS.

CCHHS established a stakeholder group to oversee all CJS planning, preparation and implementation activities. The stakeholder group included elected officials and administrators from Carson City and Douglas County and the administrator and environmental services manager of the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH). CCHHS also developed an Operational and Transition Plan for Environmental Health, with a detailed timeline, which was reviewed by the stakeholder group at each of their quarterly meetings. The stakeholder group successfully negotiated an Inter-local Agreement that outlines all of the legal components of this cross-jurisdictional sharing arrangement. Significant effort was devoted to developing a mutually-agreeable budget, specifically to ensure cost savings for Douglas County and cost-neutrality for Carson City.

A multifaceted communications plan included the following: 1. use of a new logo that incorporates the CCHHS logo and the Douglas County logo; 2. updates at all CCHHS staff meetings; 3. email to all Carson City government employees and letters to all Douglas County permit holders about the new arrangement; and 4. discussions at Carson City Board of Health meetings and Douglas County Board of County Commissioners meetings.

As the plan neared implementation, Douglas County approved a new county code to reflect the policies of the CCHHS environmental health program. CCHHS made necessary accommodations to its information technology (IT) structure to accommodate a new billing structure, and trained its staff on new software that would be used for billing purposes.

CCHHS began delivering environmental health services in Douglas County on January 1, 2014. Six months later, CCHHS deployed its customer satisfaction survey, to be repeated approximately five months later. Both surveys yielded favorable results with a high level of satisfaction regarding the change. In addition, an internal staff survey was deployed to monitor the implementation of the project, and comments from staff of both Carson City and Douglas County were positive.

Finally, CCHHS also developed a Nevada-specific toolkit for developing CJS arrangements that could be useful in other states as well. It includes a copy of the Inter-local Agreement, logo,

letters to staff and food establishment permit holders, customer satisfaction survey instrument, and the internal staff survey instrument. CCHHS held a meeting with other Nevada counties to share the toolkit, describe its contents, and answer questions.

Accomplishments: CCHHS successfully assumed the provision of environmental health services for Douglas County. This arrangement provides Douglas County with an improved level of service and lower costs compared to what the DPBH would have charged for comparable services. In addition, the transition caused no service disruptions and customers have expressed a high level of satisfaction. The impact on the CCHHS environmental program was cost-neutral.

The process of developing and implementing this CJS arrangement has raised the visibility of public health in both jurisdictions. Douglas County commissioners, and Carson City administrators, board of supervisors and board of health all a greater investment in, understanding of, and commitment to public health services.

It is possible that additional CJS arrangements will be developed that involve the provision of services by CCHHS. Neighboring Lyon and Storey Counties are requesting that CCHHS move forward with providing environmental health services for them. In addition, some exploratory discussions are being held regarding further expansion of service provision.

Challenges: Gubernatorial approval was required for a county to provide services that had previously been provided by DPBH. This was a somewhat complicated process, and approval was granted in June 2013. In the interim, in anticipation of the approval, the team carried out the activities outlined in the work plan.

DPBH's new fee structure is quite complex. Because DPBH did not calculate the costs for Douglas County under this new fee structure, it fell to the stakeholder group to fully understand how the calculations would be applied to Douglas County. This information was central to ensuring cost-savings for Douglas County, as it created a baseline for comparison. Applying the new fee structure was difficult but, in the end, doable.

Environmental health specialist recruitment proved difficult. New staff were not hired for several months after the CJS implementation, causing an initial backlog of inspections and a delay in implementation and testing of the new billing software.

After implementation began CCHHS discovered that many of Douglas County's paper files were incomplete. They also learned that environmental health services impact other Douglas County public agencies as well, necessitating adjustments to several process flows.

Early implementation activities were focused on billing issues, including the establishment of a consistent billing structure and moving from paper to electronic records for Douglas County establishments. In addition, both entities worked to resolve IT network security issues to ensure smooth electronic communication.