

The East Region of San Diego County has been hard at work for many years building collaborative relationships among agencies in order to improve the health, safety, and well being of its citizens. In particular, the Multi-Systems Workgroup, a subcommittee of the East County Human Services Council and under the direction of Pam Smith, Deputy Director for the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency East Region, chose a “whatever it takes” approach in its efforts to expand and guide community collaboration.

With the momentum of the Multi-Systems Workgroup and the awarding of two Safe Schools/Healthy Students grants for East County schools, Project PEACE (2005) and Project SHIELD, (2007) the opportunity to cement collaborative relationships among East County students, families, schools, social service agencies, mental health professionals, probation, law enforcement, and other community organizations has never been stronger.

And yet, along with this opportunity comes challenge. How can a collaboration of such diverse entities be effective enough to bring about meaningful and positive change to the lives of our struggling kids and families? How can multiple agencies pool resources, create a common language, and most importantly, legally share information that results in both increased benefits and services and a stronger, more effective network of resources? How do agencies navigate within the complicated landscape of information sharing laws like HIPPA and FERPA?

Committed to the idea that an effective interagency information sharing agreement could transform how East Region serves families and kids, Project PEACE brought in Dr. Bernard James, Pepperdine law professor and nationally recognized expert in constitutional law and first amendment rights, to guide the process. In two separate training sessions, Professor James educated community and government leaders on the true intent and scope of HIPPA and FERPA all the while driving home the point that while respect for privacy is of paramount importance, it does not necessitate organizational privacy policies that far exceed the expectations of the law.

While the information sharing agreement is near completion and includes East Region law enforcement, mental health organizations, health and human services, probation, and school districts, the agreement itself is not enough. Project SHIELD has developed a protocol that involves data collection and analysis that can help determine effective strategies for individual intervention as well as identify trends across systems that can target objective, evidence-based self-improvement goals for the agencies involved.

The *Global Oversight Analysis Linking Systems (G.O.A.L.S.) Profile*, as the process is called, offers a model for a strategic information sharing system that ultimately reduces barriers when it comes to serving the needs of families. Through relevant data collection and examination of trends across systems, the *G.O.A.L.S. Profile* provides kids and families a safety net of support all the while strengthening the net. The *G.O.A.L.S. Profile* process can dramatically improve our ability to provide support and services to the citizens of East County San Diego.