

OYA *In the Loop*

December 16, 2008

Cabinet team coming together

A few weeks ago, I asked members of the OYA Cabinet to set aside a full day to meet and focus on our collective role as your agency's leadership team. We engaged one another with energy, enthusiasm and commitment – honing our rapport as a team along the way.

Reaffirmed that day was my strong belief that our leadership team is a beacon of OYA's values. Values *must* drive our work – beginning with the Cabinet and projected throughout the organization – clear, consistent, effective, realistic, honorable values must infuse our relationships, our expectations and our work lives. Values are contagious, not only among ourselves, but also with our youth.

For OYA to realize its potential, values must form the foundation of our mission and vision. They became the recurring theme of the day, and the yardstick against which we measured our ideas and initiatives.

At our meeting, we first took an honest look at our current situation: where we have come from and where we are now.

- We delved into our individual roles, and articulated where there might be confusion.
- We scrutinized the relevance, meaning and effectiveness of our mission.
- We shared our perceptions of stakeholders' perceptions of OYA.
- We examined our role in the juvenile justice continuum – both perceived and desired.
- We analyzed the culture/climate survey to understand what you were telling us above and beyond the scientific findings.

Next we took the first step in creating a strategic plan for 2009 and beyond: we began to envision our future. Because our values will be reflected in all of our plans, decisions, actions, attitudes and achievements, we started by articulating our team's core values and expectations:

Visioning the Future: Cabinet's Core Values/Expectations

- We need to trust
- We need integrity
- We need reliability
- We need to be non-insular

- We need honesty
- We need truth
- We need accountability
- We need mutual respect
- We need leadership through actions
- We need to walk the talk
- We need results/follow through
- We need openness
- We need to be stewards
- We need fun/fulfilling work
- We need to be transparent
- We need to be professional
- We need to take responsibility for self and actions
- We need to communicate
- We need to value collaboration with partners
- We need clear expectations and consistency
- We should empower staff and youth
- We need simplicity
- We need role clarification

Then we put ourselves in staffs' shoes and repeated the exercise, adding more than 20 items to our list:

Visioning the Future: Staff Core Values/Expectations

- We need opportunities for staff to come together
- We need resources/tools to do work
- We need to be included in all things (do more with pockets of people across geo line)
- We need to be recognized
- We need to clearly understand our roles
- We need fewer initiatives
- We need to be safe
- We need to be respected
- We need actual office stuff to be value-added
- We need to be engaged
- We need our supervisors to help us excel
- We need to know lines of authority (who do I go to for what issue)
- We need opportunities for development
- We need follow thru
- We need consistency/fair treatment
- We need better communication
- We need to believe we are making a difference
- We need to be supported by upper management
- We need to be empowered
- We need to be asked for our input

- We need management to be held accountable
- We need clear vision of the future

Beginning with the end in mind, we proceeded to brainstorm what success will look like. We asked what outcomes must be achieved to recognize success. We stepped back and took a fresh look at the culture/climate survey, interpreting it from a holistic, rather than scientific, perspective. We hypothesized some of those outcomes from the perspective of staff and other stakeholders:

Visioning the Future: What outcomes are needed for staff?

1. Clear expectations
2. Leadership models behavior
3. Employees recognized/successes celebrated
4. Development plans in place/success plan
5. Workforce is diverse
6. No fear of retaliation
7. Employees as ambassadors

Visioning the Future: What other outcomes are needed?

1. Projects are prioritized and tracked
2. Policy and process and people are aligned
3. Partners exist in collaborative relationship with OYA
4. Families are engaged
5. Communication is institutionalized in culture
6. Case plan is simple

We broke into groups of three and created action plans to achieve some “quick wins,” namely initiatives that will make a difference and are near-term achievable. For example, my group selected “Leadership Models Behavior,” and we defined the scope of that goal, our desired outcomes, and actions we can take to achieve the win. Groups are reporting their quick wins and action plans to me now, and you’ll see them being rolled out over the next few weeks.

Our meeting concluded with each member of the Cabinet making a commitment to the team that would advance the work of the agency. They ranged from better communication to completing performance appraisals. One of my commitments was this message to you.

I am happy that our Cabinet members have been collaborative, thoughtful and engaged during my tenure here. Just by working together and defining common values, your Cabinet is beginning to think like a team. The capacity of this organization is great with the right leadership.

As each of you work in your teams, make our values central to your discussions, your goals and plans. The values will lead us to a better working environment, better outcomes, and a stronger organization.