

County of San Diego
TBS Community Conversation Report
October 29, 2009

On October 29th San Diego County convened its second Community Discussion forum required for 2009. This forum was well attended with 55 community participants involved and approximately 15 TBS provider staff facilitating small group discussions. The participants included a cross section of stakeholders from all regions of San Diego County. Participants included those who have used TBS on a regular basis to those who have never referred to TBS. Those organizations represented included the following: Parent Advocacy Programs and parent partner programs, outpatient clinics and school based programs, emergency crisis services, AB2726 Assessment, SD County Juvenile Probation Department, psychiatric hospitals, Child Welfare Services, San Diego Unified School District, Group Home staff, Day Treatment programs, Disability Rights representative, emergency shelter programs, wraparound programs, and foster family agency staff.

The conversation began with a welcome from our Mental Health Director Alfredo Aguirre, followed by an overview of Emily Q by Katie Astor, Children's Mental Health Services Chief. County TBS and our two TBS providers utilized a power point presentation to share what has transpired since the last forum, how forum feedback has been incorporated in TBS, changes made in TBS service delivery, education and outreach efforts, and improved collaboration within systems. Please see attached power point.

The participants then worked for about one hour in eight small breakout groups to respond to four questions designed by County TBS. The four questions were an outgrowth of the original State questions and tailored for San Diego County. Rather than repeat the previous questions, this county elected to expand on them and to build on the initial forum discussions.

In addition, the Roundtable Family Partnership program conducted one adolescent youth forum held at a group home site on October 8, 2009. Twelve adolescents participated. In addition to this, telephone surveys were conducted with ten families to solicit their feedback. It is necessary to capture the voice of those family members and caregivers who cannot attend a meeting or community discussion. Please see attached reports from these meetings and surveys.

As with the first Stakeholder Forum, San Diego County found the Community Conversation to be a valuable exercise for eliciting feedback and suggestions from our community partners. It also highlighted how far we have come in our efforts to increase and improve access to TBS. The following is a summary of the responses to the questions posed to the participants.

Question # 1: Are you or your program more aware of TBS and how it can benefit clients?

Overwhelmingly, each group stated they and their respective programs were more aware of TBS since the last forum in June. This is due in large part because of the outreach and education conducted primarily by the Mental Health Plan TBS staff. Programs have been visited by County TBS and presentations were held in weekly meetings capturing management and line staff within the programs. A total of 45 presentations have been conducted in various venues reaching over 600 consumers, line staff and managers in Mental Health, Child Welfare, Probation and Regional Center.

Participants mentioned how the referral process has improved due to streamlined requirements and expanded eligibility. They stated they feel more comfortable in referring clients because they better understand TBS. "Perceptions of who can refer has changed, renewed excitement, new resource, word is getting around" were some comments made by participants that demonstrate increased awareness and utilization of TBS. There were still some participants who verbalized confusion about the criteria, and the age requirements. (Note approximately one third of the participants had not attended the initial forum or participated in outreach presentations). It is clear that consistent and continuous education and outreach is critical to not only promote the program but to educate and inform the community about how TBS functions, how it can benefit youth/families and the criteria for participation.

This question elicited suggestions about TBS reaching out and working with adoption agencies/clients and children/youth with attachment issues. Concern was expressed that existing providers of TBS need to increase their coaching capacity so that there will be no wait lists when referrals increase (although this issue was addressed in the power point presentation).

Question # 2: Have you maintained or increased your referrals to TBS?

Many of the participants report that their programs have increased their referrals to TBS in large part due to outreach and education. However it was noted that outreach needs to continue to keep TBS "fresh on people's minds". Expanding the eligibility criteria was seen as another reason for increased referrals. For those who answered that they have not increased referrals to TBS, this question gave them an opportunity to discuss continuing barriers/concerns which surfaced as a theme in the previous forum. Some of these concerns were that coaches need to have specific expertise be able to work with special needs clients, the Developmentally Disabled population, and attachment issues. Participants commented the following:

- TBS is time consuming for foster parents who are already burdened with multiple kids in the home.
- Coaching hours needs to be more flexible at the beginning.
- Working parents may not be able to handle the intensity of TBS service hours.
- Continued interest expressed about offering TBS in the schools.
- There was a suggestion that school based programs might look to referring to TBS which might decrease the need for schools to refer to AB2726.

Question #3: How can collaboration improve between TBS and you or your program to work together on behalf of children, youth and caregiver?

- This question elicited good suggestions and discussion about how TBS can improve collaboration with programs/professionals while recognizing that communication is the responsibility of all the relevant parties. Collaboration and direct communication between the SMHP and the coach was listed over and over as an important and necessary step to improve service delivery. Other suggestions included:
- Coach attendance at all TBS team meetings was suggested for improved understanding of TBS intervention and progress
- “Get necessary people to meetings”.
- If team members are unable to attend, phone calls need to be initiated to keep everyone involved and informed.

Some comments for Outreach included;

- Coach inclusion in community outreach presentations.
- When outreach is conducted it needs to be not only with the managers but with the line staff because information often does not filter down to staff that is making the referrals.

It was seen as important for the TBS staff and the SMHP to work together to develop the client TBS plan. Open discussions are necessary between the SMHP and TBS staff regarding family history, issues and limitations and what to expect when TBS is in the home. The comment was made that SMHP’s would like help to “sell” the TBS program to families at the point a referral is being considered. Note: this issue comes up frequently in the outreach discussions and County TBS staff has made recommendations of how to introduce TBS to families.

Child Welfare Services staff would like to see more TBS participation at regional CWS case consultation meetings as well as the current residential/interagency and with the Adoptions Unit. Representation or a presentation at the Children’s Mental Health System of Care Training Academy was also suggested.

Question #4: How do you think that we can get more people to refer and participate in TBS?

This question elicited some creative thinking about how to generate more referrals. The following are some examples:

- Providing incentives (presumably to the referring party),
- Have a TBS case manager assigned to larger service providers to help facilitate and coordinate referrals,
- Provide coaching hours in the classroom to help children with transition times,
- Offering a success story in TBS brochure and
- Ice cream socials funded by the County.

Continuing to provide outreach and education to our community partners and to parents/caregivers is essential to keep reminding everyone of TBS as a valuable resource. Outreach is needed on an on-going basis. Participants suggested personal outreach as well as quarterly email reminders. "If it is not in front of you, you forget it is there".

Several times the importance of identifying the differences between TBS and Wraparound was brought up. It is clear from both the forums and from questions raised during outreach efforts that the community is confused about the distinction between the two, and whether TBS and Wraparound can be concurrent. If services are concurrent there was concern that this may be overwhelming for families.

Finally, it was suggested that TBS in foster families is an area that can be expanded. Some agencies working with foster families were represented and they indicated they would be willing to give TBS brochures to every foster home with whom they have contact.

San Diego County TBS implemented a Survey Monkey to obtain feedback from the forum participants about the Conversation. Seventy One percent of participants responded to the survey. The questions included

1. Was the TBS Conversation helpful for your work with clients?
2. Did you learn anything new?
3. What did you like most about the Conversation?
4. What could we do to improve future forums?
5. Would you be willing to participate in another forum or focus group?
6. What time of day is best for participating in a forum or focus group?

The Survey Monkey provided the County with additional information and suggestions that will be incorporated into the next Community Discussion and in our outreach and education activities.