



# Newsletter

*Linking individuals and families to resources*

July 2005

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**Go Live:** We are thrilled to report that ConneXions went live on July 1, 2005! After two years of intensive, community-wide planning and development, we now have twelve ConneXions sites operating in our five counties. ConneXions staff were on site partnering with the Thurston County Food Bank staff on July 1, talking to clients about the program and making appointments to conduct the screening and assessment process. By the end of the day, ConneXions had enrolled our first 61 clients! United Churches of Olympia is coming on soon as the first ConneXions referral site. We are finalizing a screening form that will assist United Churches staff in guiding clients to services.

Over the last months, we have been meeting with local organizations in all five counties regarding partnership opportunities, resource and referral development to make this happen. We have given presentations to eight faith –based organizations in Thurston County alone since March and held two community meetings in Thurston and Mason counties.

Phase II of ConneXions is scheduled to begin October 1. Is your organization ready to become a site in Phase II? Need more information? We would be happy to come and speak to your organization and staff about ConneXions and demonstrate the system. A user training for new ConneXions partners will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 12:30 to 4:00 PM, at the Bower Learning Center. Call Tina Simcich today at 493-5561 to discuss the opportunities for your organization.

**Next Steps:** Over the next three months we will be working closely with the Crisis Clinic to update partner's information in the resource database. Please help us by watching for the new agency information form and completing it as soon as possible.

## **Access and Case Management Information System (ACMIS)**

CHOICE has selected a new information system (IS) for ConneXions called Pathways, which offers higher functionality and the latest software. Pathways has been developed by a HCAP community in Georgia for state-wide use, and is also being used in Florida, Montana and North Carolina. Pathways will handle the major IS aspects of ConneXions, enabling CHOICE to focus on programmatic work. So far, we have been very pleased with Pathways' user-friendly and thoughtful design. The system offers the ability to screen clients for eligibility, make shelter reservations, track clients by household, create both shared and individual agency case notes, communicate with other agencies, and set goals. Pathways is a Housing Management Information System (HMIS), a critical need for agencies that receive federal funding for programs to assist homeless populations. Please take a look at the Pathways system by going to [www.connexionsnw.org](http://www.connexionsnw.org), Test our new system, and then enter choice.demo as the log-in, and "password" as the password. We invite you to send any questions or comments on Pathways to Holly Detzler at (360) 493-5566 or [detzlerh@crhn.org](mailto:detzlerh@crhn.org).

**Basic Food Education and Outreach Contract:** CHOICE has been selected as the new primary contractor for the Basic Food Education and Outreach Program in our five counties. CHOICE has identified seven community partners as Basic Food subcontractors to perform outreach, application assistance, group enrollment and education about the food stamp program. CHOICE will also provide training, oversight and support to subcontractors; distribute approved brochures, forms and packets; coordinate group intake efforts; and coordinate language-appropriate publicity. This contract will provide important opportunities to leverage local funding with federal funding.

### Lead Agencies Host Local Community Meetings

We continue to make good progress in customizing ConneXions locally in our counties. The Mason and Thurston Lead Agencies submitted the following county reports:

- **Mason County:** The Mason ConneXions Work Group met on April 21. An overview of progress in Mason County was followed by a discussion of how to best implement ConneXions in Mason County over the next year. On June 22, partners were invited to attend a demonstration of ConneXions information system, and by the end of the meeting all agreed that this software would enhance their work with clients. In other news, Mason Matters, the ConneXions Lead Agency in Mason County, partnered with Educational Service District #113 to submit a Readiness to Learn grant. The grant request was successful, which means that ESD #113 will be funded to provide 2 FTE ConneXions resource coordinator positions serving four Mason County school districts. Contact Kim Klint, Mason Matters at (360) 427-9670 ext 543 or [kak@co.mason.wa.us](mailto:kak@co.mason.wa.us), for more information.
- **Thurston County:** The first ConneXions community meeting for Thurston County was attended by thirty people on May 5, 2005. The meeting was convened to solicit community feedback on the location of ConneXions enrollment sites and updating the Crisis Clinic resource database. Some of the criteria offered for locating ConneXions sites included proximity to public transportation and coverage of rural areas of the county. A progress report from the ConneXions Advisory Board was presented, with updates on the sustainability plan, meetings with government partners and faith based communities, and continued work on implementation planning for ConneXions sites. Participants expressed interest in “trying out” the ConneXions information system to better understand how the screening, assessment and referral process will work. In response, CHOICE held community demonstrations of the system on June 21 in Thurston County. Contact Holly Detzler at (360) 493-5566 or [detzlerh@crhn.org](mailto:detzlerh@crhn.org) for more information.

### Other Accomplishments

With the help of the Advisory Board, we have made significant progress in other areas:

- **Sustainability:** After numerous conversations with community organizations, the Advisory Board approved a sustainability plan on June 6 which incorporates a sliding scale fee structure. The plan includes fees ranging from \$250 to \$4,800 a year, based on organizational expenses. Non-governmental agencies that cannot afford the fees will be eligible for subsidies (75%, 50% and 25% over the first three years), dependent on availability of funds. Fee revenue will cover the costs of the central functions performed by CHOICE as the organizational home and vendor contracts with Pathways and Crisis Clinic. (Please go to [www.connexionsnw.org](http://www.connexionsnw.org) and click on ConneXions Sites, Functions and Benefits and Fees for details.)
- **Fundraising:** ConneXions has received grants from three local funding organizations recently: \$19,618 from United Way of Thurston County, \$5,000 from the Lassen Foundation, and \$3,000 from the Gannett Foundation. We also have collaborated with the United Way of Thurston County to submit a federal Healthy Communities Access Program New Start (HCAP) grant and a Robert Woods Johnson Local Initiatives Funding Program grant.

- **Communications:** The ConneXions website is up and has already been updated! Please check it out at [www.connexionsnw.org](http://www.connexionsnw.org). By clicking on ConneXions FAQs, you can read an overview of ConneXions. Please send any feedback on the website to Tina Simcich at 493-5561 or [simcicht@chrn.org](mailto:simcicht@chrn.org).
  - **Getting Involved:** If you or a local organization would like to help ConneXions become a reality in your community, several possibilities exist:
    - Join the local committee to start customizing ConneXions in your county
    - Become a ConneXions enrollment or referral site
    - Share your organization's resources and information services
    - Volunteer your time to help people in need at a ConneXions site
    - Make a financial contribution to support a ConneXions site
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ConneXions is dedicated to linking individuals and families to community resources. The ConneXions newsletter will be emailed periodically to keep friends of ConneXions informed and involved. Please visit [www.connexionsnw.org](http://www.connexionsnw.org) for previous newsletters and other information about ConneXions.

To receive this newsletter or to be removed from the list, please send an email to [simcicht@crhn.org](mailto:simcicht@crhn.org).

For more information, please contact: Holly Detzler, Program Director, CHOICE Regional Health Network, [detzlerh@crhn.org](mailto:detzlerh@crhn.org) or (360) 493-5566.