



*Linking individuals and families to resources*

# Newsletter

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## Implementation Update

Since ConneXions went live on July 1, over 1,800 clients have been entered into the ConneXions system. Many of these clients were assisted with applications for Basic Food, Basic Health, Medicaid, Children's Medical, and prescription assistance. We have also been connecting people to a wide variety of other resources, the top needs being utility and rental assistance, food, shelter, and employment.

## ConneXions In Action:

Jerry, 61, is living in his truck. A local church referred him to a ConneXions site where a staff person helped him address several barriers he was facing in finding low-income housing. During Jerry's visit, the staff person learned that his work as a gardener meant he was unemployed every winter. ConneXions referred Jerry to the local WorkSource office, where he found out about a local employer who hires homeless people and helps them get regular work. Jerry also mentioned during his initial interview that he used the local free clinic to get medical care, but it was only open one night a week. ConneXions helped Jerry apply for Basic Health Plan, using the church as an address. One month after contacting ConneXions, Jerry is on the road to affordable housing, health insurance and regular work. Jerry is no longer living from crisis to crisis.

Our vision of ConneXions continues to mature as we have worked with clients and engaged in many discussions with community partners. We see ConneXions as a way of fostering:

- **Social Justice:** A system of care where individuals and families find relief, hope and the means to permanently transcend challenges.
- **Belonging:** Where every place a person goes for help feels like the right place.
- **Stewardship:** A process for surfacing and leveraging community and client assets.
- **Shared Learning:** Expectation that leaders in the community will strategically combine their talents to create an abundance of accessible and integrated resources.

## Partnership Update

We currently have 14 ConneXions organizations with 33 sites in our five counties who are all in the early stages of operation. We know that the success of our partner organizations in implementing and using ConneXions is essential to the success of the overall program. CHOICE staff is committed to working with ConneXions partners to develop customized processes. Since every agency works with a unique group of clients and has unique work flows and procedures, this is a time consuming process necessary to ensure

our partners are successful. Our Help Desk is up and running to assist sites with technical and resource questions at (360) 493-5561 or [randm@crhn.org](mailto:randm@crhn.org).

### Trainings

The ConneXions User and Confidentiality Training were conducted on October 27 and December 20 for new agencies. The six hour user training is an orientation to the ConneXions software while the one hour confidentiality training is designed to ensure that all ConneXions staff and volunteers understand the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations and how to protect client privacy. Further trainings for new users will be held in February and in the early spring.

### Partnership Recruitment

Over the last five months, we have presented ConneXions to 18 local organizations in our region to discuss partnership opportunities and resource and referral development. We have given presentations to nine faith-based organizations in Thurston County since March and held two community meetings in Thurston and Mason counties (see County Reports).

**Resource Directory Update:** To make ConneXions as effective as possible, it is critical that the resource directory be truly comprehensive and up-to-date. In September 2005, the Crisis Clinic Resource Network and CHOICE sent out a joint letter to over 900 agencies requesting updated information. We have received 250 responses, which is a great start, but **we want to create the best resource directory in Washington State!** Please see <http://crhn.org/connexions/agencies/AgencyForm.asp> to electronically submit your agency information to Mike Rand at [randm@crhn.org](mailto:randm@crhn.org) or fax to (360) 493-5688. We appreciate your assistance with updating this essential community resource.

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

Version 4 of the Pathways software went live on Sept. 6, with several improvements including new fields giving the capability to track health status more efficiently and to make shelter reservations. The ConneXions system now offers the capability to electronically fill in Basic Food, Basic Health, Medicaid and Children's Health applications and print them out for the client's signature. At the CHOICE ConneXions sites, staff now have wireless capability enabling them to offer the web-based ConneXions services in remote rural areas. We invite you to send any questions about Pathways to Holly Detzler at (360) 493-5566 or [detzlerh@crhn.org](mailto:detzlerh@crhn.org).

**Basic Food Education and Outreach:** As the new primary contractor for the Basic Food Education and Outreach Program in our region, CHOICE has conducted five subcontractor trainings in Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific and Thurston counties. Trainings have covered eligibility criteria, application assistance, and billing and reporting. Our BFEO subcontractors include Thurston County Food Bank, Mason County Public Health, Senior Services of South Sound, Refugee and Immigrant Services Center, ROOF, Olympia Union Gospel Mission, and Lewis County Senior Services.

### County Reports

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

- **Grays Harbor County:** CHOICE staff met with faith community representatives during the fall to explore participation in ConneXions. CHOICE staff is currently seeing ConneXions clients at Grays Harbor Community Hospital, Grays Harbor Health Department and Mark Reed Hospital.
- **Lewis County:** Valley View Health Center is currently a ConneXions site staffed by CHOICE. We are also exploring opportunities for local organizations to become sites.
- **Mason County:** Over 20 people attended a ConneXions community meeting on Sept. 29 to learn about ConneXions. On October 28, a meeting of Mason County community partners interested in the Readiness to Learn grant and ConneXions was held in Shelton. The group

discussed ways to build momentum for this work and identified other community partners who may be interested. This major expansion of capacity in Mason County will present a great opportunity for learning how to customize ConneXions in a rural setting. Currently, ConneXions organizations in Mason County include: CHOICE, Educational Service District #113, Mason Community Network, Mason County Boys and Girls Club, Mason County Health Department, Mason County Shelter and Mason General Hospital. Please contact Kim Klint at Mason Matters at (360) 427-9670 ext 543 or [kak@co.mason.wa.us](mailto:kak@co.mason.wa.us) for more information about local activities.

- **Pacific County:** CHOICE staff is exploring potential grant opportunities in conjunction with the Shoalwater Bay tribe to fund ConneXions sites in Pacific County. ConneXions clients are currently being seen at Willapa Harbor Hospital by CHOICE staff.
- **Thurston County:** On Oct. 29, about 35 people representing about 15 local churches attended a meeting at the Olympia Center to explore the participation of local faith-based communities in ConneXions. The meeting featured a live demonstration of the system and question/comment period for all faith communities. Matt Hornyak gave an implementation update while Mark Dowdy and Kristen Batchelor from United Churches shared client stories with the group. ConneXions organizations in Thurston County currently include: CHOICE, Neighborhood Free Medical Clinic, Olympia Union Gospel Mission, Refugee and Immigrant Services Center, ROOF, St. Benedict's Episcopal Church, Senior Services of South Sound, Thurston County Food Bank, Westwood Baptist Church and United Churches. Contact Holly Detzler at (360) 493-5566 or [detzlerh@crhn.org](mailto:detzlerh@crhn.org) for more information.

### Other Accomplishments

**Hurricane Evacuees:** At least 15 families who relocated to our region due to the hurricanes have been connected to resources and programs through ConneXions. United Way of Thurston County awarded a grant of \$2,000 to ConneXions to provide staffing and resources to respond to the disaster. We are excited to report that two other community organizations have chosen to funnel resources raised for hurricane victims through ConneXions. Temple Beth Hatfiloh raised \$1043.06 for hurricane evacuees at their November benefit concert/dance, and Interfaith Works has chosen to funnel all Katrina-specific donations from faith community members to ConneXions to be distributed to evacuees.

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

- **Fundraising:** ConneXions was awarded a grant of \$39,940 from the Boeing Employees Community Fund for implementation and IS staffing in Lewis and Thurston Counties. Many thanks to United Way of Thurston County for their support of ConneXions' application. Also the Thurston/Mason Labor Council awarded \$500 to ConneXions for implementation activities.
- **Sustainability:** The Advisory Board amended the fee structure to include a flat fee of \$250 a year for churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious organizations.
- **Communications:** The ConneXions website now includes a support feature for ConneXions partners to submit requests to our Help Desk for assistance. Please take a look at the website at [www.connexionsnw.org](http://www.connexionsnw.org). Several marketing pieces are now available, including a ConneXions brochure, door stickers, appointment pads, and posters. Please send any requests or feedback on the website to Tina Simcich at (360) 493-5561 or [simcich@chrn.org](mailto:simcich@chrn.org).

**Getting Involved:** If you or a local organization would like to help build ConneXions 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

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.