

UNCONDITIONAL CARE MODEL

Seneca Family of Agencies

www.senecacenter.org

YOUTH THRIVE™

PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

AT-A-GLANCE

Initiative Start Date:
1985

Initiative Location:
Statewide



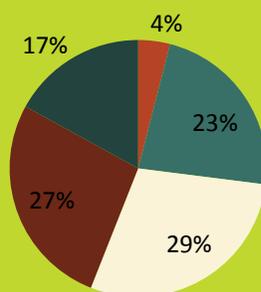
Initiative Budget:
\$80 million

Age Range of Youth:
1 – 21 years old

Number of Youth Served:
5,700 annually

Diversity of Youth Served:

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Latino/Hispanic
- White/Caucasian
- Other/Unknown



ABOUT

Unconditional care is what drives Seneca Family of Agencies' (Seneca) efforts to enhance the well-being of children and families during the most difficult times in their lives. Seneca puts that value into action in numerous ways, including its commitment to never discharge a youth for exhibiting the behavior that brought them to Seneca in the first place. In 12 California counties, Seneca has integrated their treatment model of unconditional care across a comprehensive continuum that includes in-home and school-based services, foster care, rapid crisis response and short-term residential services. A core component of this continuum is Seneca's wraparound program that serves youth referred from the child welfare, mental health and juvenile probation systems. Using a community-based, team approach, their unconditional care wraparound process is an alternative to placement in a group home, detention or treatment center. These services are designed to be as flexible and creative as possible to meet the needs of every youth and family, no matter what their life circumstances are.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Multidisciplinary Treatment Teams** – partner with youth and families; carry out assessment and intervention in three areas:
- **Relational** – understand youth's patterns of attachment and reshape to promote a positive sense of self.
- **Behavioral** – define the motivators of youth's challenging behaviors and promote pro-social alternatives.
- **Ecological** – influence systems and the environment with which youth and families interact.

HIGHLIGHT

Seneca staff are determined to give youth and families an experience that is different from past experiences with other services that may have failed them. Seneca's commitment to families is made tangible in myriad ways. For example, support is available 24/7. Meetings take place when and where is convenient to youth and families. Relationships are characterized by warmth, honesty, acceptance and optimism about growth and change. Even when initial efforts are unsuccessful or rejected, Seneca relentlessly pursues engagement. "We don't consider a family 'resistant' to services," says Wendy Durst, Seneca's manager of strategic partnerships. "Rather than blaming them, we recognize we haven't figured out how to engage this family yet. What are the obstacles for them to access help?"

Youth Thrive is a research-informed framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy that identifies five protective and promotive factors for youth (age 11-26):

- Youth Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Adolescent Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence

The goal of Youth Thrive is to increase the likelihood that all youth are supported in ways that advance healthy development and well-being and reduce the impact of negative life experiences. Youth Thrive focuses particularly on vulnerable youth, beginning with those involved in the child welfare system.

CSSP conducted a national search to identify initiatives that provide compelling examples of programs and policy efforts that build the five protective and promotive factors for youth in the child welfare system. This is a profile of one of the 15 selected exemplary initiatives.

BUILDING THE PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS

The exemplary initiatives address all or most of the protective and promotive factors. Here are several examples:

Youth Resilience: Seneca's unconditional care model helps youth identify strengths, understand their challenges, manage adversity and heal from the effects of trauma. The program also teaches youth how to work with purpose to achieve goals and seek help when needed. Youth develop self-esteem while improving their decision-making and problem solving skills. Improving these skills can help mitigate the negative impact of chronic stress and promote well-being.

Understanding Adolescent Development: All new staff – whatever their job title – attend a comprehensive two-week training where they gain an understanding of child and adolescent development and engage in the same type of self-reflection that is asked of clients. Recognizing that some youth may engage in unsafe activities, Seneca supports parents/caregivers to provide appropriate levels of supervision and autonomy for youth.

USING DATA

Seneca is committed to continuous program improvement and uses an approach called FOCUS-PDCA (based on the Plan, Do, Check, Act cycle). Interdisciplinary teams are formed to assess individual programs by delving into data in order to identify and address problems areas. For its wraparound program, measures include: client and caregiver satisfaction; average length of stay in program, school attendance, attainment of service goals and placement at discharge. For example, for Seneca's San Francisco Connections wraparound program, results for 2011-2012 were:

- 253 children served.
- 14 months average length of stay.
- 121 children discharged from services; 62% living in family settings at the time of discharge.
- 93% of youth and 100% of caregivers surveyed said they got the kind of services they thought they needed.
- 13% average decrease in problematic behaviors e.g., significant improvements in youth's school behavior, oppositional presentation, anger control and social risk-taking.