



Breaking Barriers

Introduction to Our Work

Breaking Barriers is a collaborative of leaders from across child-serving systems throughout California who are united by the conviction that only through collaborative planning and problem solving can we insure the educational, social, emotional, and behavioral wellbeing of California's children and youth. We are already at work with several counties from around the state, providing expert consultation to teams of local decision-makers as they develop shared outcomes for children, plan collaboration across systems, and build programs to address needs that no one agency can meet.

In the spring of 2016, Breaking Barriers hosted a Symposium in Sacramento to facilitate problem solving and program development by up to twelve interagency county leadership teams from throughout California. Participating counties involved decision makers from each of their local child serving systems, including social services, healthcare, juvenile probation, education, mental health, and regional centers. Expert facilitators supported both topical and county-specific working groups with goals including the development of shared outcomes, concrete strategies and timelines, and resource commitments.

The broader goal of the Symposium was to create a Community of Practice committed to developing a replicable continuum of academic, social, emotional and behavioral programs that can address the individual needs of all children. Our founding Advisory Board members have served in positions of responsibility in California's children's systems, and have come together around the realization that all too often we serve our children simultaneously but not together, and the consequences can be destructive for children and families. We would like to change that.

Attached please find additional information about Breaking Barriers Advisory Board, our current work with counties, and our plans for the future.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Estes
Founder, Breaking Barriers
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About Breaking Barriers Children's Interagency Collaborative

Breaking Barriers currently provides expert consultation to leadership in several California counties as they seek to improve systems and build effective programs to support vulnerable children and youth through the Children's Interagency Collaborative (CIC). Goals of the Collaborative include to: (1) Develop a comprehensive continuum of effective, collaborative programs across California's child serving systems; (2) Facilitate interagency collaboration,

planning, and problem solving; (3) Provide professional development and technical assistance; (4) Improve information sharing across systems; (5) Engage key stakeholders from the community, including youth, families, and caregivers from diverse backgrounds.

Breaking Barriers Leadership

Founder Elizabeth A. Estes is uniquely qualified as founder of the organization for both personal and professional reasons. In college, she found herself the victim of a violent hostage crisis that solidified her interest in education and making sure children and families receive the services they need to stay healthy and whole. Since then, she has spent over twenty years representing school districts and dependent children and is an expert in all aspects of special education and student services. Currently an attorney with the California education law firm Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Rudd & Romo, Ms. Estes is a frequent presenter at both state and national conferences and has been integral in training school personnel and attorneys statewide. She has been at the forefront of developing alternative dispute resolution processes for agencies seeking to preemptively address dispute and related costs and is currently working with numerous school districts and counties to navigate the laws which apply to provision of social, emotional and behavioral health services to children in California.

Breaking Barriers has already united an extraordinary network of influential leaders on children's issues from across California with the experience, expertise and commitment to make real change. The Breaking Barriers Advisory Council and Friends currently comprises:

- Jim Anderson - SELPA Director, Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Liz Blanco - Assistant Superintendent, San Francisco Unified School District
- Mildred Browne - Ascendancy Solutions; former SELPA Director, Mt. Diablo Unified School District; California Special Education Task Force Member; State Special Education Advisory Commissioner
- Maureen Burness - Chair, California Special Education Task Force; Former State SELPA Director
- Steve Collins – SELPA Director, West Contra Costa
- Reed Connell - Managing Partner, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Social Change Partners
- Steve Elson - CEO, Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families
- Ken Epstein - Director, Children Youth and Families System of Care, San Francisco DPH
- Elizabeth Estes - Founder and CEO, Breaking Barriers; Education Attorney, Atkinson Andelson Loya Rudd & Romo
- Troy Fennel - SELPA Director, California Division of Juvenile Justice
- Martin Giffin - Senior Vice President of SoCal Operations, Anka Behavioral Health, Inc.
- Rusty Gordon - SELPA Director, Butte County
- Wendell Greer – Associate Superintendent, West Contra Costa Unified School District
- Jenae Holtz - Chief Executive Officer, Desert Mountain SELPA, California Association of Health and Education
- Helen Kearns - Contra Costa County Mental Health
- Conde Kunzman - SELPA Director, Shasta County
- Patrick J. Mahoney - Judge, San Francisco Juvenile Court (ret); JAMS
- Fred Martin, Jr. - Former Government Affairs Director, Bank of America

- Lisa Miller - Special Education Director, San Francisco Unified School District
- Dave Nielson, Senior Mental Health Policy Advocate, California Alliance for Children and Families
- Sam Neustadt - SELPA Director, Solano County; California Special Education Task Force Member
- Sylvia Pizzini, Assistant Secretary, California Department of Health and Human Services
- Jessica Plauche - Assistant Clinical Professor, UCSF; Medical Director, Division of Infant, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry San Francisco General Hospital
- Ron Powell - Former Director, Desert Mountain SELPA
- Wendy Read – Child and Family Advocate and Former Juvenile Attorney, Santa Barbara County
- Rebecca Ross - Dependency Attorney, San Mateo County
- Rick Saletta - Former Special Master, Katie A. and Emily Q.; Commissioner, First 5 Placer County
- Ammar Sahili, Director of Support Services, San Lorenzo Unified School District
- Marina Tolou-Shams - Associate Professor, UCSF Department of Psychiatry; Director, Division of Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, San Francisco General Hospital
- Jim Voss - ERMHS Coordinator, Butte County SELPA
- Vern Wallace - Child and Adolescent Program Chief, Contra Costa County Behavioral Health
- Sheri Wilkins - President, Innovative Educational Solutions
- James Wogan - Foster Youth Services Liaison, Mt. Diablo Unified School District
- Shelton Yip, Director, Napa SELPA

You may also visit our website for additional information: www.breakingbarriersca.org