Matthew Stone, State Manager, Youth Villages, Massachusetts, New Hampshire

Assess the current conditions in the organization such as the change leader's competencies, the perceived need for change, and the readiness for change in the organization.

As state manager, Stone leads the expansion of Youth Villages services throughout Massachusetts and New Hampshire, with a focus on the program “Intercept” which is in home, residential treatment for troubled youth. YV has quite a few funding support agencies in place including Edna McConnell Clark organization, which vigorously supports efforts to grow YV and help reshape philosophies and policies related to working with troubled youth and families. As state manager, Stone has set lofty gross goals to expand the reach of Youth Villages’ services. Clark organization has helped YV design their second of 5-year growth plans with certain benchmarks and growth goals listed and set forth by Stone and his crew to achieve. “We are held accountable to achieve,” he says. The perceived need for change is visible through the “Intercept” program, a focal point of the program helps troubled youth get counseling “inside” the home, as opposed to an outpatient facility.

Analyze the leader's change management methods. What methods, processes, and assumptions does the change leader use?

Goals are set by Youth Villages top leadership including CEO and COO. Methods include ensuring adherence to established clinical models and best practices, advocating through civic and legislative action to improve services provided to troubled children and families, specifically to reduce overall utilization of out of home placements for children and drive the state toward intensive in-home services more effective and much less costly. There are trained counselors working with caregivers helping manage.
What YV is trying to achieve in Massachusetts and New Hampshire is to kill the old idea: There have been 13,000 out of home placements in Massachusetts. If a family is struggling, the answer is to put the young people in a facility with other troubled kids, foster homes or group homes. In 1994, 13,000 families across Tennessee had youth in an out of home facility. The program YV proposed was called Intercept.
“The problem is the kids don’t get better. As soon as they go back to home to that same environment, they go back to those same behaviors. It is not very effective today.” For Youth Villages, out of home is also very expensive with a bunch of other teens, building costs, staff and overhead costs…”it is bad for the kids and the families.”
“By doing in home services, we started showing people all across the state, juvenile court judges, mental health specialists and healthcare workers it was possible to provide intensive services in their home. We provide a highly intensive in home therapy program. It is better for families and much less expensive than putting a kid in a residential facility."

Compare the leader's change management approach to the theory and processes you selected. Were the interviewee's responses consistent with the theory you selected?

The theories I looked at were commitment vs. compliance and yes, this state manager was consistent with what I selected. He is committed to what is better for the young people and their families, while also complying with the in-house service as a less expensive alternative. Massachusetts + New Hampshire are where Tennessee was in 1994. Now, every year 6-7,000 in Tennessee need out patient help. If young people are actively suicidal or homicidal it is not good for them to get therapy at home. “We should get the kids stabilized and bring back home as quickly as possible. There is a variety of different reasons why a kid would need to get treatment outside of the home. That would include an abusive family. Being removed from family is traumatic. If services can be provided in homes, then that is where they should…the dollars go a lot further with fewer kids in placements. Our goal is to change the philosophy. Our overall success rate is 80% two years post discharge success rate. Compliance is when someone believes in the leaders creating the vision and willingly follows the rules, working diligently to make that vision happen.

Assess the progress of the change and discuss the factors that are contributing to the success or failure of the change. How does your theory help to explain the current status of the project?

Stone, in his words as a change leader is “changing the human services system in Massachusetts.” There are some things needed to change for his operations. One thing is establish a leadership council in Massachusetts. There are quite a few high level high profile civic leaders and politically connected leaders that are keen on the philosophy of providing in-home services. But there is a need to continue building and expanding the influence of the leadership counsel in trying to establish positive partnerships with other like-minded providers. The leadership counsel has been influential in public opinion and other legislative councils.

Describe what you have learned from this experience. What did you learn about barriers to change, skill building, outcome measurements, et cetera?

The programs at YV are primarily state funded. YV does not depend on leadership council for fundraising and development. Having said that, another program for kids aging out of the state foster home program is called Transitional Living and it does rely on state and privately raised funds. For example, a 10 year old is pulled out of home and placed in foster home, for the next eight years bounces back and forth until age 18: at 18, you have to be going to school, working, drug screens---in Massachusetts, there are 7-800 young adults who age out of the state program annually. “We have to raised money for transitional living because it is partially state funded, and depends on a public-private partnership to survive. Young people who go through the state program and then end up on their own at 18 have extremely high rates of homelessness, high crime rates, already with babies….nationwide, over 29,000 throughout the country. The country is spending a lot more money on putting criminals in jail or for those who end up homeless.

Develop five to seven recommendations to improve the leader's change management success.

NOTE : I am still working on compiling thoughts for this part of the analysis:
1. I want to focus more on this change leader’s need to building more philanthropic support to encourage these in-home treatment therapies as well as continue the aging out of foster homes program called Transitional Living. It is much better to invest in Youth Villages programs because the returns are going to be better and more economical.
2. Barriers of Change: I would say the lingering philosophy needs to be changed and that is the best answer for serving troubled kids and families is to put them in out of home placements.
3. Identify the strong competition from service providers that YV is up against. Some YV are competing with have been around since the last century. In the late 1800s in Massachusetts, orphanages popped up everywhere. One of the biggest competitors: “The Home for Little Wanderers.”
4. Create a bigger impact on how residential places in Massachusetts want to keep kids in their beds and beds filled. There is stiff competition from very entrenched residential community.
5. YV is a new organization entering a new state. When any organization expands in new territory, states like Massachusetts advertise that they want to use home grown providers. It doesn’t help that Youth Villages headquarters is in Tennessee. Anything new or highly innovative in Massachusetts is not thought to come from Tennessee: regionalism, regional prejudice.

References:

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