

# INCLUDING CHILDREN & YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES IN SAN FRANCISCO

*Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP) Interagency Council*

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## Strategic Plan

*September 2007*

*Prepared for:*

Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF)  
City and County of San Francisco

*Prepared by:*

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## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

We want to thank the following agencies, organizations, and associated individuals for their time and energy in crafting this strategic plan, and for their continued commitment to ensuring that all children and youth with disabilities have access to inclusive opportunities and activities:

### **Lead Agencies:**

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities (SFCD)	Children’s Council of San Francisco
Hearing and Speech Center of Northern California	Jewish Vocational Service (JVS)
KIDS (Keys to Introducing Disability in Society) Project	Operation Access
Wu Yee Children’s Services	Child Care Law Center
Community Alliance for Special Education (CASE)	

**Strategic Planning Consultants:** Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc. (MIG)

### **SNIP Interagency Council Members:**

Edgewood Center	High Risk Infant Interagency Council	Improving Transition Outcomes Project (ITOP)
Family Developmental Center		

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DCYF program staff, focus group participants, focus group facilitators and recorders, survey respondents, and the many program staff, parents, and youth who participated in this process.

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## 1 : I N T R O D U C T I O N

The full participation of children and youth with disabilities in all of San Francisco’s city-funded activities and services is a key goal for the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF). The city is committed to creating an environment in which all children and youth can be full and equal participants in all opportunities. To that end, the Special Needs Inclusion Project was launched to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to support the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in all DCYF-funded programs.

### **About the Special Needs Inclusion Project**

The Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP) is a project of the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF) and provides DCYF-funded agencies with free training, resources, and the support they need to successfully include children and youth with disabilities and their families into their agency’s programs. The SNIP Interagency Council is composed of representatives from community-based organizations, parents, and people dedicated to making San Francisco a city that includes all children and youth in its programs and activities.

The SNIP Interagency Council provides a sustainable foundation of collaboration and problem solving that will enable San Francisco’s DCYF partners to better serve all children and youth. In the first year of the project, the council conducted a two-phase needs assessment, completed a landscape document to map current resources, and provide staff training and program development to community-based agencies. The Council also developed and submitted this strategic plan. In addition, the SNIP Council will set up and direct the following activities over the coming months:

- Provide DCYF agencies with free training, resources, technical assistance, and the support they need to successfully include children and youth with disabilities/special health care needs and their families in their agency’s programs;
- Coordinate citywide inclusion strategies and activities to maximize resources and minimize duplication;
- Make inclusion and referral resources easily available to families and agencies; and

- Identify and prioritize inclusion issues, needs, and concerns of DCYF agencies and children/youth with disabilities and their families.

### **About the SNIP Strategic Plan**

The SNIP 2007–2010 Strategic Plan provides strategic direction to help shape DCYF policy and action over the next six years in ways that will ensure the inclusion of all children and youth, with and without disabilities, in San Francisco programs. The plan presents a broad overview of the current state of inclusive practices within DCYF-funded programs and provides both standards and strategies for improving inclusion citywide.

### **Planning Process**

The planning process for the SNIP Strategic Plan began in late 2005, when the SNIP Interagency Council first met to begin preparing for the research and surveying that would be necessary to create the groundwork for the strategic plan. Initially, the SNIP Council distributed a preliminary needs assessment to DCYF-funded programs to gain immediate feedback on program needs. The Council then offered a series of trainings to meet some of the needs expressed most frequently. The group then produced a landscape document, conducted a series of focus groups, and distributed a more comprehensive needs assessment.

The results of these activities culminated first in the creation of standards for the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities, and then in the development of a strategic plan. Finally, the group created its first annual action plan.

The primary phases of the planning process are outlined below:

#### ***Step I: Preliminary Needs Assessment & Initial Trainings (Spring 2006)***

- Assess immediate needs of DCYF-funded programs
- Offer trainings to begin to meet many of these needs in the short term

#### ***Step II: Landscape (Summer 2006)***

- Collect data and research on current population of children and youth with disabilities in San Francisco and on existing resources, best practices, and models

***Step III: Focus Groups & Comprehensive Needs Assessment (Summer & Fall 2006)***

- Conduct focus groups with families and program staff to identify strengths, challenges, and solutions for the effective inclusion of children and youth with disabilities
- Develop and distribute a comprehensive assessment of program needs around inclusion

***Step IV: Inclusion Standard Development (Fall 2006)***

- Based on the Landscape and Needs Assessment results, work with DCYF to develop standards for the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in DCYF-funded programs

***Step V: Strategy Development & Overall Plan Development (Fall 2006 & Winter 2007)***

- Develop strategies to address concerns and issues identified in the Landscape and Needs Assessment documents; identify timeframe, cost, and lead agency for each strategy
- Create performance measures to monitor the successful outcomes of each strategy
- Draft an annual action plan, to be updated each year, to initiate the process of implementing these strategies

**Organization of the Strategic Plan**

This plan is organized into the following sections:

- Introduction
- Vision, Goals & Standards
- Challenges & Opportunities
- Strategies
- Performance Measures
- Implementation

## 2 : V I S I O N , G O A L S & S T A N D A R D S

This section of the plan provides an overview of the SNIP Council's vision and goals for children and youth with disabilities in San Francisco, as well as Inclusion Standards developed by the SNIP Interagency Council as a set of guidelines for the effective inclusion of children and youth with disabilities into agencies' programs and activities.

### **Vision**

Children and youth with disabilities are safe and healthy, have a sense of belonging, and have a full range of opportunities to participate meaningfully in the community and reach their full potential.

### **Goals**

- 1) Children and youth with disabilities and their families are valued and supported participants in programs, services, and activities offered in San Francisco.
- 2) Families are informed and educated about options relevant to the inclusion of their children in San Francisco programs.
- 3) San Francisco providers are informed and educated in how to include and support children and youth with disabilities and their families.
- 4) San Francisco programs fully include children and youth with disabilities.
- 5) DCYF provides leadership, guidance, and support for the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities.
- 6) San Francisco human service systems are coordinated, accountable, accessible, and designed to include children and youth with disabilities and their families.

## Draft Inclusion Standards

The following draft standards for the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in DCYF-funded programs were crafted by the SNIP Council in consultation with DCYF in the summer and fall of 2006. The Council recommended that these standards be adopted by DCYF. Standards are presented in two categories:

- *Minimum standards:* All programs should ultimately meet these standard, although it is expected that existing programs will need support to prepare staff and facilities to meet these standards.
- *High quality standards:* Programs should strive to meet these standards whenever possible, but it is expected that not all programs will meet all high quality standards.

### *Minimum Standards:*

#### **1.1 Policy/Regulation/Law**

The agency staff and volunteers are trained in and comply with current laws regarding reasonable accommodation for children and youth with disabilities.

#### **1.2 Practice of Inclusion**

Staff identify and understand the unique needs of participants with special needs to ensure that children and youth with disabilities are active participants in the program routines and activities, and have the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities.

#### **1.3 Outreach**

All program descriptions and outreach efforts encourage individuals with disabilities to participate in the program's routines and activities.

#### **1.4 Health, Safety, and Emergency Preparedness**

The agency has policies and practices in place to ensure the appropriate health, safety, and emergency responses (including individual, program, and large scale emergencies) for all participants, with particular provisions, as necessary, for participants with disabilities.

**1.5 Individualized Planning & Accommodations**

Staff partner with families and collaborate with other agencies to develop and implement a family centered individualized plan, and periodically review the plan.

*High Quality Standards:*

**2.1 Philosophy**

The agency has a formal statement (philosophy, mission, value, goals, etc) which specifically addresses inclusion, and which is prominently displayed.

**2.2 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Programs and activities are planned, regularly monitored and evaluated using indicators of successful inclusion, and adjustments are implemented as needed.

**2.3 Targeted Outreach**

Outreach activities and efforts specifically target and form linkages to engage individuals with disabilities to participate in the program routines and activities.

**2.4 Staff Development and Resources**

Staff and volunteers have the skills, training, and knowledge to implement inclusionary practices, participate in on-going training to continuously improve inclusionary practices, and are linked to the appropriate resources for training, support and technical assistance.

**2.5 Physical Environment**

Children and youth with disabilities have physical access to all activities and services and interact with their peers.

In order to guide the work of SNIP, the SNIP Council developed a project framework based on SNIP's vision, goals, and the Inclusion Standards which is shown on the following page.

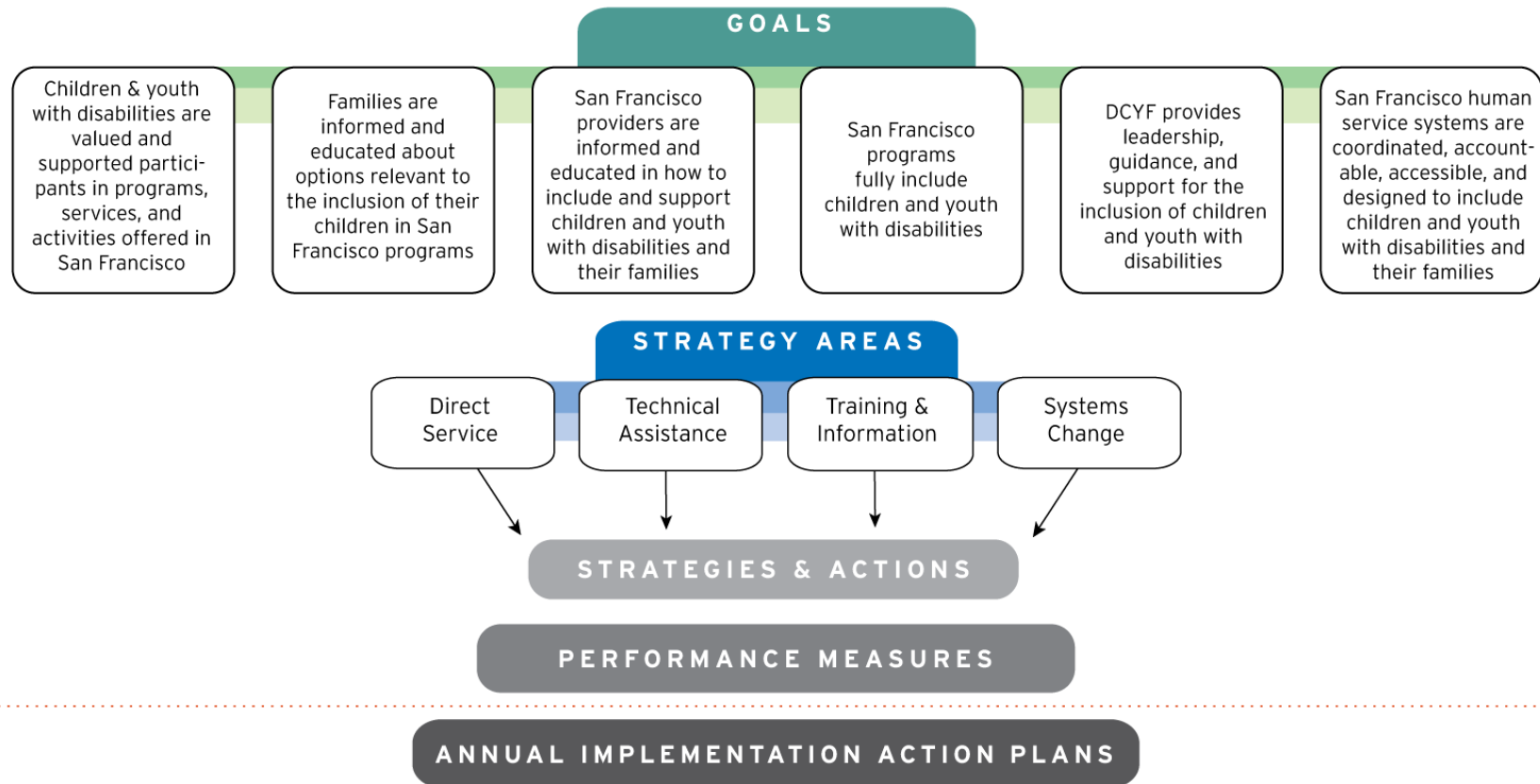
## VISION

Children and youth with disabilities are safe and healthy, have a sense of belonging, and have a full range of opportunities to participate meaningfully in the community and reach their full potential.

## MISSION

The DCYF Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP) provides DCYF agencies with free training, resources, and the support they need to successfully include children and youth with disabilities into their agency's programs.

The SNIP Interagency Council provides a sustainable foundation of collaboration and problem solving to coordinate citywide inclusion strategies and activities to maximize resources and minimize duplication, make inclusion and referral resources easily available to families and agencies, and identify and prioritize inclusion issues, need, and concerns of DCYF.



### 3 : C H A L L E N G E S & O P P O R T U N I T I E S

During the early stages of the strategic planning process, the SNIP Council conducted a series of activities to assess the existing state of inclusive practices and opportunities for San Francisco's children and youth with disabilities in DCYF-funded programs. This involved four primary activities:

#### *Preliminary Needs Assessment*

The needs assessment process began with a preliminary survey of all DCYF-funded agencies designed to identify any immediate training needs that council members could meet in order to facilitate the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in these programs.

#### *Focus Groups*

A series of focus groups with families of children and youth with special health care needs and service providers followed in the spring of 2006 to gather input on key barriers to inclusion and potential solutions to those barriers.

#### *Landscape*

As an initial step in the strategic planning process, the landscape report provided an overview of existing inclusion practices and resources in San Francisco. Specifically, the report addressed the need for inclusion in San Francisco, the affected children and youth, the existing resources to support the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities, and the best practices for inclusion.

#### *Comprehensive Needs Assessment*

Finally, the SNIP Council conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to identify weaknesses, strengths, and gaps in DCYF-funded agencies' inclusion practices. All DCYF-funded agencies received the comprehensive needs assessment, and the SNIP Council provided incentives to encourage participation. Over 90 agencies participated in the comprehensive needs assessment.

#### **The Need for Inclusive Practices and Opportunities**

The 2004 American Community Survey estimated that nearly 108,000 children and youth under the age of 18 lived in San Francisco that year, representing nearly 15 percent of the city's population. Asian and Asian American children and youth constituted the largest group of young people in the

city in 2003, followed by White/Caucasian, Latino/Hispanic, and Black/African American children and youth.

According to the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs, nearly a quarter of children and youth in California have a condition that impacts their activities usually, always, or a great deal. An estimated five percent of the children and youth ages 5 to 15 living in San Francisco in 2003 had a disability. This figure does not include children and youth with disabilities who have not yet been assessed and/or diagnosed. Of those children and youth with a disability, approximately nine percent lived below the poverty line.

The 2004 San Francisco Community Health Assessment, developed by Building a Healthier San Francisco, a collaboration of San Francisco hospitals, clinics, city departments, philanthropic foundations, and community organizations, reported that there are children and youth ages 5 to 15 with disabilities in every neighborhood and community in San Francisco. Large numbers of children and youth with disabilities live in the Mission, Excelsior, and Bayview neighborhoods.

### **Existing Supports for Inclusion**

A number of organizations and agencies across San Francisco are already actively supporting the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in programs and services. The primary program addressing inclusion within San Francisco is the Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP), a project funded by DCYF to coordinate and build inclusive practices in DCYF-funded programs. The project provides training and support to program staff to ensure that children and youth with disabilities have opportunities to participate fully and meaningfully in all program activities. SNIP is led by nine key partners: Support for Families of Children with Disabilities, Operation Access, KIDS (Keys to Introducing Disability in Society) Project, Jewish Vocational Service, Children's Council of San Francisco, the Hearing and Speech Center of Northern California, Wu Yee Children's Services, the Child Care Law Center, and the Community Alliance for Special Education (CASE). In addition, a number of other agencies and organizations across San Francisco support or facilitate successful inclusion in DCYF-funded programs or in other similar programs.

## Identified Barriers

The SNIP Council identified a number of critical barriers to the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in DCYF-funded programs through the focus groups and needs assessments. These barriers included:

### *Direct Service in San Francisco*

- Lack of funding for inclusive programs and related services (e.g., transportation, assistive technology, etc.)
- Inadequate staffing levels and staff retention
- Lack of structure in existing programs
- Inadequate diversity of programs with respect to time, location, and content

### *Technical Assistance for Program Staff*

- Inadequate on-site technical assistance and support for program staff

### *Information & Training for Staff, Families, and the Community*

- Inadequate training and ongoing support of program staff
- Lack of staff understanding of the meaning and practice of inclusion
- Inadequate information and training for families
- Lack of a single, comprehensive information source for families
- Lack of communication between families and program staff
- Lack of understanding of children and youth with disabilities from other community members—and especially from peers without disabilities

### *Systems Change in San Francisco*

- Inadequate funding for inclusion support

- Lack of communication and coordination between families, program staff, school, and service providers
- Inadequate transition between early childhood and school-age services

### **Promising Solutions**

The SNIP Landscape documents a number of promising practices and case studies from organizations around the country for integrating inclusive practices into programming for children and youth. The SNIP Council identified many of these practices that could be applied in San Francisco as well. In addition to pursuing new and innovative strategies for inclusion, results from the focus groups and needs assessments indicated that training in both the meaning and practice of inclusion is critical for program staff, as is ongoing support and technical assistance for inclusion.

These and other promising solutions are presented as a series of strategies to support the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in San Francisco's DCYF-funded programs. These strategies are presented in Section Four of this plan.



## 4 : STRATEGIES

The SNIP Council developed a series of strategies in four key areas to improve the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in DCYF-funded programs across San Francisco.

### Strategy Areas

#### *Direct Service*

These strategies propose projects and resources that can enhance the ability of DCYF-funded programs to serve children and youth with disabilities within the existing city infrastructure.

#### *Technical Assistance*

This strategy provides direct on-site inclusion assistance to staff of DCYF-funded programs, including assistance with individual client, staff and/or program issues, evaluation of sites for accessibility, assistance in crafting inclusive written policy statements, and assistance in adapting activities and curriculum to better include children and youth with disabilities in program activities.

#### *Training & Information*

These strategies focus on providing training, information, and ongoing support to the staff of DCYF-funded programs, to families, to children and youth, and to the community at large.

#### *Systems Change*

These strategies suggest broad changes to the existing San Francisco systems supporting children and youth with disabilities. These changes may require advocacy, extensive interagency coordination and collaboration, DCYF and city leadership, and direct policy action.

### Costs

Estimated costs for each strategy are shown as follows:

- \$ = under \$5,000
- \$\$ = \$5,000 - \$10,000
- \$\$\$ = \$10,000+

### SNIP Strategies

#	Strategy Area	Strategy	Goal(s) Addressed	Standard(s) Addressed	Key Partners	Time Frame	Cost
1	Direct Service	Create new inclusion resource materials, including an inclusion manual, a resource list, and a website.	3	1.2	SNIP, CPAC	1	\$\$
2	Direct Service	Create a program such as Round Table or MAT to provide coordinated referrals for children older than five, and to identify the needs of children who are found ineligible for disability specific services and advocate for services for them.	6	1.5	SNIP	3+	\$\$\$
3	Direct Service	Create a pilot project through Operation Access to ensure access to inclusive services are available year round, including activities that take place during critical times such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Weekends</li> <li>▪ Summer</li> <li>▪ School breaks</li> <li>▪ After school</li> </ul>	4, 6	1.2, 2.5	OA, DCYF, GGRC, SFUSD, Janet PomeroyCenter, SF Park & Rec	2	\$\$\$
4	Technical Assistance	Provide on-site technical assistance to program staff, including staff-specific, client-specific, and/or situation-specific assistance.	3	1.2, 2.2, 2.4	SNIP	1+	\$\$
5	Training & Information	Provide training for program staff and leadership on practical disability-related skills and family-centered care in order to assist staff in defining and fostering the practice of inclusion, increase their responsiveness to families, and increase their ability to work effectively with children and youth with disabilities in general.	3	1.2, 2.4	SNIP	1+	\$\$

SNIP Strategies (continued)

#	Strategy Area	Strategy	Goal(s) Addressed	Standard(s) Addressed	Key Partners	Time Frame	Cost
6	Training & Information	Educate and inform program staff and leadership about existing inclusion resources in San Francisco (including financial resources available to improve physical access to their programs, and examples of promising practices for successful inclusion) and facilitate the use of these resources especially through interagency communication and collaboration.	3	2, 4	SNIP	1+	\$\$
7	Training & Information	Provide families with access to multilingual resources and information in multiple formats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Open Gate</li> <li>▪ Via the telephone hotline</li> <li>▪ Single resource</li> <li>▪ San Francisco 311 system</li> <li>▪ 24 hour/seven-day-a-week talk line</li> <li>▪ Community events</li> <li>▪ Website</li> <li>▪ Mailing lists</li> <li>▪ Funded programs</li> <li>▪ City departments</li> <li>▪ Family resource centers</li> <li>▪ Traditional advertising</li> </ul>	2		SFCD	1+	\$\$
8	Training & Information	Develop mechanisms and provide training to enhance communication between families and program staff, and school and program staff.	1, 6	1.5	SNIP, SFUSD	1	\$\$

SNIP Strategies (continued)

#	Strategy Area	Strategy	Goal(s) Addressed	Standard(s) Addressed	Key Partners	Time Frame	Cost
9	Training & Information	Provide training for families on inclusion topics such as advocacy, disability-related issues, and any other inclusion topics identified by families as important.	2		SNIP, SFCD	1+	\$\$
10	Training & Information	Increase inclusion awareness for children and youth with and without disabilities, families of children with and without disabilities, community members, teachers, and others.		1.2, 2.4	SNIP	1+	\$\$
11	Systems Change	Institutionalize the use of minimum and high quality inclusion standards for all DCYF funded agencies and monitor the effectiveness of programs in meeting these standards using review and ongoing evaluation.	4, 5	all	DCYF	1+	\$\$\$
12	Systems Change	Advocate for funding to ensure the completion of all strategies outlined in the SNIP strategic plan.	3		SNIP	1+	\$
13	Systems Change	Create a pool of care providers, including on-site mental health specialists, who are trained in working with children and youth with disabilities, and provide programs and families with access to these supplemental staff in order to lower staff-child ratios and provide one-on-one support.	4, 6	2.4	DCYF	1	\$\$\$

SNIP Strategies (continued)

#	Strategy Area	Strategy	Goal(s) Addressed	Standard(s) Addressed	Key Partners	Time Frame	Cost
14	Systems Change	<p>Advocate for mechanisms to ensure that hard-to-reach families are able to access services for their children and youth, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outreach</li> <li>▪ Services located in communities and/or at school sites</li> <li>▪ Incentives to encourage hard-to-reach families to use services</li> </ul>	1, 2		SNIP	2+	\$
15	Systems Change	<p>Advocate for the development of programs for families, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mentoring programs</li> <li>▪ Buddy system</li> <li>▪ Crisis services</li> <li>▪ Respite and child care</li> </ul>	1, 6		SNIP	2	\$
16	Systems Change	Develop mechanisms that encourage and allow DCYF funded agencies to share existing resources such as volunteers.	6	1.5, 2.4	SNIP, DCYF	1	\$\$
17	Systems Change	Provide programs with incentives to recruit and retain trained staff and ensure ongoing staff support, including incentives for youth leaders to participate as support staff to assist with inclusion of children.	4, 6	2.4	DCYF	2	\$\$\$

SNIP Strategies (continued)

#	Strategy Area	Strategy	Goal(s) Addressed	Standard(s) Addressed	Key Partners	Time Frame	Cost
18	Systems Change	Increase the availability of specialized services on-site (physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, etc) to maintain children and youth with disabilities in inclusive settings.	6	2.5	SFUSD, CPAC	2+	\$\$\$
19	Systems Change	Provide reliable, accessible transportation for families and children/youth to and from programs to increase their ability to participate in programs and services.	1, 6	2.5	DCYF, SFUSD, SFRPD	1	\$\$\$
20	Systems Change	Coordinate services between inclusion councils to maximize efficiency and reduce duplication, and undertake an outreach campaign to ensure that families and service providers are able to access the resources provided by the appropriate council.	6		SNIP	1	\$

## 5 : P E R F O R M A N C E M E A S U R E S

The following measures will be used by SNIP to assess the effectiveness of the strategies in this plan in meeting SNIP's goals of increasing inclusion opportunities and access for children and youth with disabilities in San Francisco. Baseline data will be gathered during the first year of the plan in order to set measurable goals and assess the effectiveness of strategies during subsequent years.

### OUTPUTS:

#### **Goal 1: Children and youth with disabilities and their families are valued and supported participants in programs, services, and activities offered in San Francisco.**

- Number of agencies who increase access to services for families of children with disabilities.
- Number of families who report an increase in their ability to access services.
- Number of new inclusion programs/strategies implemented by DCYF funded community based organizations
- Number of families of children with disabilities able to access reliable transportation
- Number of school and program staff who participate in training regarding enhanced communication between families, program staff, and the school.

#### **Goal 2: Families are informed and educated about options relevant to the inclusion of their children in San Francisco programs.**

- Number of families who access the Open Gate resource center for information
- Number of hits to the SFCD and ITOP web sites
- Number of family members attending training on inclusion and/or disability related topics
- The inclusion of recreation options for children and youth in Individualized Education Programs.

**Goal 3: San Francisco providers are informed and educated in how to include and support children and youth with disabilities and their families.**

- Production of a SNIP web site
- Production of a SNIP Inclusion “tool kit”
- Number of hits to the SNIP web site
- Number of Inclusion “tool kits” distributed
- Number of agency staff who attend SNIP trainings
- Number of agencies requesting on-site technical assistance
- Number of agencies requesting information about inclusion (eg. Financial resources)

**Goal 4: San Francisco programs fully include children and youth with disabilities.**

- Creation of a pool of community service staff trained to work with children and youth with disabilities.
- Development of incentives for programs to recruit and retain trained staff
- Inclusive services available year round

**Goal 5: DCYF provides leadership, guidance, and support for the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities.**

- Institutionalization of minimum and high quality inclusion standards by the DCYF.

**Goal 6: San Francisco human service systems are coordinated, accountable, accessible, and designed to include children and youth with disabilities.**

- Development of mechanisms that encourage and allow DCYF funded agencies to share existing resources.
- Development of a program such as the Round Table to provide coordinated referrals for children older than six.

- Identification of strategies to coordinate services between inclusion councils

#### OUTCOMES:

All products and services developed/delivered by SNIP receive an average rating of 4 or higher on satisfaction surveys completed by families and/or program staff (where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent).

There is an increase in the number of families of children with disabilities served by DCYF funded programs who report feeling supported and valued, and satisfied with the inclusive services they have received (as measured by client satisfaction surveys).

There is an increase in the number of participants with disabilities and/or special needs who are included in DCYF funded programs.

The percentage of children and youth with disabilities included in DCYF funded programs reflects the estimated percentage of children and youth with disabilities living in San Francisco.

## 6 : I M P L E M E N T A T I O N

The SNIP Council will continue to meet for the duration of this plan to gather baseline data and develop annual action plans to guide the implementation of each of the plan's strategies. For a copy of the most recent annual action plan, please contact the DCYF SNIP Coordinator, at (415) 282-7494 or at [snip\\_coordinator@supportforfamilies.org](mailto:snip_coordinator@supportforfamilies.org).