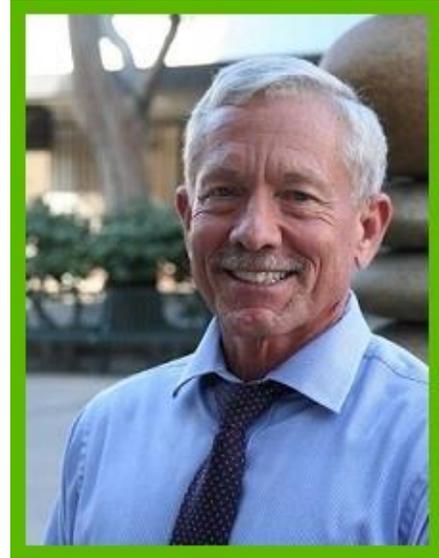


To *Your* HEALTH *Fresno County*

Highlighting public health issues and ways to improve personal, family, neighborhood and community health.



The MAP to Well-being in Fresno County

May 3, 2017

Imagine for a moment – demons in your head. Demons that have resulted from the imbalances in the neurotransmitters in your brain and the maladaptive nerve cell connections that have formed in a response to a lifetime of serial traumas. Those demons now ensure that your grasp on reality is intact only in ever decreasing and shortening intervals of time.

Over the last three years your friends and your family, have one by one detached themselves from your life. You haven't had a job for months. You have been in and out of the Fresno County jail several times and the only real meals you eat are those you have at the Poverello House when you manage to make it there. You don't have any identification papers and cannot remember your social security number. You self-medicate the demons with alcohol or methamphetamine when you can scrape up enough money (doing whatever it is the demons have you doing). And you sleep on cardboard, among a scattering of belongings, underneath a bridge near the health department downtown.

In some of those increasingly rare returns to reality, you try to reach out for assistance. However, responses are tepid, inconsistent, and, most importantly, without any follow up or follow-through. Often, it's just a bus token for an appointment far in the future to some service agency, without any assessment for, or recognition of, the mental health, substance abuse, and physical health issues that are destroying your life.

Mental illness is complicated. Solving homelessness is hard. Substance abuse complicates these situations. Individuals dealing with one or more of these conditions are among our community's most at-risk populations. Often these individuals place unnecessary demands on public safety services and congest emergency rooms because there has been no other solution. Far too often these individuals, in such desperate need, are shuffled back and forth between agencies due to lack of space, regulations, and funding restrictions, with considerable confusion as to who should go where, and when.

Now imagine how this could change if you happen to reach out for assistance someplace easily accessible, where you are made welcome and are immediately, appropriately and thoroughly screened for ALL services needed to begin to turn your life around.

Connections are rapidly made to ALL of these services with direct transportation arrangements. As service connections are made, a navigator is involved to work with you to develop a long-term plan tailored to you, and to follow your progress in your return to a normal life.

This successful approach to salvaging shattered lives is currently being employed by [County of Fresno Multi-Agency Access Points \(MAP\)](#).

Just over two years ago, a mental health collaborative lead by the Hospital Council's Community Conversations and the Fresno-Madera Continuum of Care envisioned a single front door into the community's system of mental health care, homeless services, and substance use disorder services.

On February 17, 2015 a pilot, MAP at the Poverello House opened. The Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health expanded the MAP project to other areas with critical need on January 10, 2017 when it executed a contract with Kings View Behavioral Health Systems, Poverello House, and Centro La Familia.

MAP is an integrated intake process connecting individuals that are facing housing, substance abuse, and/or mental illness challenges to ALL appropriate services. It provides clients with a single point of entry to access linkages to multiple behavioral, social and health services, supportive services, and housing programs.

Current MAP locations in urban Fresno can be found at the [Poverello House](#) at 412 F Street, [Centro La Familia Advocacy Services](#) at 302 Fresno Street, and the [Deran Koligian Ambulatory Care Center](#).

Rural MAP locations recently, or soon to be, in operation include Selma, Mendota, Huron, Orange Cove, and Kerman. Other critical sites are continually being considered such as the Fresno Needle Exchange and the Fresno County Jail.

These Multi-Agency Access Points are essential to the health and wellness of our community, and assure that those residents in most critical need are at the RIGHT place, for the RIGHT care, the FIRST time.

Here's to your health!



Dr. Ken Bird, Fresno County Health Officer

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