

Goal IV

quality of justice and service to the public

Superior Court of California,  
COUNTY OF NAPA

## NAPAHHELP.INFO COURT AND COMMUNITY REFERRAL SYSTEM

### Coordinating Outreach to Serve Families

Families in the [Unified Family Court \(UFC\)](#) program in Napa County often face challenges far beyond the legal system—homelessness and substance

abuse, for example—that create increased risk for their children. But without access to comprehensive information, the courts themselves may be unaware of available community services for families.

Discussions among stakeholders had shown that even referral professionals often did not have complete information about these services. So, in early 2005, the Superior Court of Napa County hired a specialist to help identify resources for children and families.

Under the UFC program, the court collaborated with the [Napa Valley Coalition of Nonprofit Agencies](#) to develop the [NapaHelp.Info Court and Community Referral System](#), which includes a comprehensive, easy-to-use, public database of community services, [www.napahelp.info](http://www.napahelp.info).

The system collects and shares information from more than 60 government and private nonprofit agencies and lists more than 300 human services programs. NapaHelp includes information about

- ▶ Basic subsistence—including emergency shelter, food, and money
- ▶ Physical and mental health—including programs on health insurance, alcohol and substance abuse, and child protective services
- ▶ Family support services
- ▶ Employment and vocational training
- ▶ Legal assistance—including landlord-tenant mediation



Each agency can regularly access the database, via the Internet, and update its service and program information. And many of the Web sites of member agencies have a link to the NapaHelp system. Says Family Court Services Manager Tammy Glathe, “The sustainability of the database was the most critical element for this project to be successful.”

To judge how much the database is being used, the court has an independent Web statistics company track the number of separate visitors to the site as well as the number of searches, pages accessed, and files requested.

The court now tracks referral activity for family court clients and keeps those details in confidential folders in clients’ case files in the case management system.

The court-community collaboration also formed a community task force to advise on developing and operating NapaHelp. It was important that the referral component

- ▶ Ensure timely and cost-effective service delivery
- ▶ Monitor the delivery of services to families referred by the family court
- ▶ Identify and meet regularly with court liaisons for each major community agency
- ▶ Share appropriate information with providers while preserving confidentiality and due process rights

Plans call for expanding access to Spanish-language speakers, when funding permits. On a vote by its executive board, the Napa Valley Coalition of Nonprofit Agencies has become NapaHelp's fiscal sponsor and is seeking additional funds for software costs and staffing.

On another front, [United Way of the Bay Area](#) hopes to expand its 211 call center to six additional Bay Area counties (including Napa) and may enter into a data-sharing agreement with NapaHelp.

## Impacts

- ▶ In its first year, NapaHelp was the source of more than half the referral actions taken by Family Court Services.
- ▶ The NapaHelp system projected a 46 percent increase in searches of its community services database in only its second year of operation.
- ▶ The system helps court staff to direct families to appropriate resources and providers, and track the results in confidential client files, thereby offering the public better service.

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## STEP-BY-STEP HELP—AND PRIVACY

*The [NapaHelp](#) database guides users through six easy steps to finding community resources. From the home page, users can*

- ▶ Identify, by either zip code or city name (within Napa County), nearby services
- ▶ Search for services by topic, keyword, or name of service provider
- ▶ Narrow the focus of the search by choosing among options
- ▶ Check any features that are desirable, including details about accessibility or services available in languages other than English
- ▶ See thumbnail descriptions of all services that match the search
- ▶ View details of any service in the search results, including hours of operation, eligibility requirements, cost (if any), directions, and instructions for referrals

*Users can also protect their privacy on [NapaHelp](#). If they have trouble using the system or finding particular resources, anyone who signs in can also send questions anonymously to the system administrator and receive replies in a private mailbox. When they sign in, users also get a private home page, which has tools to help them save resource information and program Web sites from their searches.*