



## **Focus on Prevention Overarching Results**

Every person is born into a family, and all of us are stronger when we have the support and love of a family, be it a family of birth, a family of choice, and/or a community of people bonded by a commitment of love to be family to each other.

The Focus on Prevention Initiative is building a movement to strengthen Stanislaus County families, and the neighborhoods and communities, schools and businesses, and other institutions that help them thrive. This movement emerged from a passion among leaders to support our county's families, and a deep concern about how many of our children are growing up without the active support and engagement of their fathers and other loving adults.

We have started this effort by building a movement to prevent homelessness. We started here because people who are homeless, or are struggling to avoid becoming homeless, have often become separated from strong families and communities—with typically tragic consequences.

While we have started by focusing on people who are homeless, ultimately we are building a movement that supports and strengthens every family in our county. This movement is driven to achieve and sustain four results:

1. Our families are healthy—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
2. Our families are supported by strong and safe neighborhoods and communities.
3. Our children and young people are getting a first-rate education—from cradle to career.
4. Our families are participating in and supported by a healthy economy.

In addition to these overarching results, we have also articulated two results to guide our efforts to prevent homelessness:

5. People who are homeless in Stanislaus County permanently escape homelessness.
6. People who are at risk of homelessness in Stanislaus County do not become homeless.

These six results are not mere aspirations or feel-good statements. They reflect a passion for change that is at the heart of the Focus on Prevention initiative, and a commitment to hold ourselves—all of us who call Stanislaus County home—accountable for demonstrable and sustained progress toward these results.

## **Why this is Different**

Ultimately this movement is about who we are as a county. One of the defining values for this effort is a simple declaration: “there is no other.” What this means is that it’s up to us, all of us together, to create the future we want for all of our families and communities.

We have a long history of coming together in this county when it matters. The Focus on Prevention movement builds on this spirit of community. We are indebted to the many efforts that have gone before us, and that are already underway to improve the lives of our families and communities.

Unfortunately, while substantial resources are spent each year addressing the symptoms of our challenges, we still are not seeing the progress we hope for. Too many of our families struggle to make ends meet. Too many of us are homeless, or at risk of becoming so. Too many of our children grow up without the support of their fathers or enough other loving adults. Too many of our young people are not succeeding in school, and are not prepared for success even when they graduate. Too many of us suffer from physical and mental illnesses and distress without access to the care and support we need to heal. Too many of us are isolated and fearful, our neighborhoods beset with petty and profound violence.

The Focus on Prevention movement is about doing better, much better. How? First, by *focusing on prevention*, by moving more of our resources and attention to addressing root causes and the long term conditions that lead to families and communities struggling in our county.

Second, by working together. Local government acting alone cannot create the future we hope for. Businesses by themselves cannot strengthen and expand our economy. Hospitals and health care workers by themselves cannot improve the physical and emotional wellbeing of our families and communities. Community and faith leaders by themselves cannot help our neighborhoods thrive and become safer and more vibrant. Teachers and school administrators by themselves cannot improve the graduation rates and reading levels of our children. For us to significantly improve the wellbeing and futures of our families and communities, residents and leaders from across the county must act together.

Third, by committing for the long haul. The results we seek will not be achieved in a few months, or even in a year or two. The results we are after will require sustained engagement by ever growing numbers of people across the county.

And finally, what truly makes this effort different is a resolute commitment to learning and mutual accountability. Acting together is not enough. Many of the challenges we face do not have simple or obvious solutions. We must learn together, and learn how to learn together, especially when we hold different stories from each other, or when we try something and the results are disappointing. This means we must be committed to collecting good data, and reflecting unflinchingly on what the data is revealing so we can get better.