## What is this?

#### The Little Book of Social Messes

The two pages to the right are from Chapter 3 of my book "The Little Book of

#### The concept of Social Messes

Russell Ackoff, of the Wharton School, originated the concept of the mess. He describes messes as collections of inter-related problems, suggesting that "no problem ever exists in complete isolation. Every problem interacts with other problems and is therefore part of a set of interrelated problems, a system of problems." In this mess map, the problems are highlighted in yellow boxes.

At MacroVU, we think of social messes as having these characteristics:

- complicated, complex, and ambiguous
- much uncertainty even as to what the problems are, let alone what the solutions might be
- great constraints
- tightly interconnected, economically, socially, politically,
- technologically
- seen differently from different points of view, and quite different
- contain many value conflicts
- are often a-logical or illogical

## Helping Task Force in Alameda County

In 2003, we helped a task force focused on improving the delivery of services to the elderly and disabled in Alameda County California.

## Mess Mapping Process

The Mess Mapping™ process is a general method for groups working on complex problems. In the Alameda context, we used it to capture and synthesize stakeholder expertise and create organizational alignment. It was based on the assumption that multidisciplinary task groups need special forms of group interactions in order to effectively use the expertise assembled. Nearly every expert in such a group has come to the table with their pet "solutions" to the "problem." This interferes with deeper exploration of the complexity of the mess as well as offer preventing creative exchange.

The use of the concept of a "mess" as a systemically inter-related set of problems breaks that initial mental set of the experts and challenges them to work together to produce an analysis they would not have produced by themselves or in a conventional group process. This changes their motivation from displaying their expertise to involvement in exploring new territory

The use of the physical metaphor of a "map" also intrigues them. It draws on their experiences of navigating in new territory as well as in the process of constructing the map which changes significantly over several sessions.

During the process, a large version (24 x 36 inches) of a "seed" mess map or template was placed on each table. An even larger, mural size version hung on the wall. The different tables contributed their understandings of the various interlocking problems and dilemmas. The MacroVU team together with the task



## Who participated in the process?

It is always important to have relevant representation from all stakeholder sectors for a successful mess mapping process. In this case, we had key participants from about 15 organization all of whom had some involvement in delivery of services. This enabled the description of the mess to come from the deep understandings of these participants, and also began to prime them for a more holistic look at the inter-related set of problems and dilemmas from multiple points of view

## Unique process AFTER mapping the mess

In the Alameda task force case, we did an unusual "next step." Instead of the isual solve-one-problem-at-a-time that many groups try to make work, we recognized that the Board of Supervisors could authorize many changes all at once, if we recommended solving them all at once. So we set about to do that. At the right is the recommendations report map that indicated to the Supervisors how to change many of the problems in the system of inter-related problems we call a

## How do I get updates & revisions and other info-maps in the series?

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# **Alameda LTC Plan for Improvement**

These recommendations are presented by the Alameda County Department of Adult and Aging Services, Linda Kretz, Director and the Alameda County Task Force on Long Term Care Integration.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish County Coordinating Council Includes all department heads whose departments touch Long Term Care:
  - Adult & Aging - Health Services
  - Social Services
- Mental Health Meets monthly
- · Develops own action agenda for
- coordination - info sharing
- regulatory simplification
- Implement AAA's Performance Outcome Measurement Program

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3. Move Public Assistance Programs to



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Advocate

legislation

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Levels of

Care

Advocate and develop pilots of PACE like ALTERITORS.

> Integration for Long Term Care

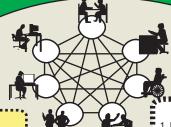
**Future** 

for Health Plan ATTITUTE TO THE Y Pur Pursue HCBS waivers

Develop

partnerships with

Alameda Alliance



Services

ummary of Problems

Lack of knowledge of or access to

Day care center's may not meet the eds of younger clients.
Disabled population does not want mix with the elderly

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-department Integra - Lack of sharing of best

Lack of funds.
Lack of effective communication with cities and other departments and

practices
Insufficient needs and

Develop coordinating mechanisms among multiple agencies for:

- Intake and referrals
- · Eligibility and enrollment, and Case management 2. Develop comprehensive
- geriatric outpatient program Implement quality improvement through outcome-based measurement

4. Develop intergenerational care approaches Attitude of the state of the st



VIIIIIIIIIIIII RECOMMENDATIONS

Consumer

use of the Network of Care vebsite in order to enhance knowledge of:

- Home & community
- based care
- Information about
- disease & conditions - Assistive devices
- Caregiving - Personal empowerment

& advancement Link from agency to agency



enrollment option on the website. 2. Provide funding to pilot a demand response paratransit for ambulatory and non-ambulatory users. 3. Conduct a feasibility study of demand response to other areas of the county.

RECOMMENDATIONS 1

. Develop a real-time transportation

4. Establish task force to develop paratransit driver training certification to raise the professionalism of drivers and standardize the training elements. Care website, a "paratransit portal" with

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5. Develop, as part of the Network of transportation information and real-time

## Alameda County Task Force on **Long Term Care Integration**

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Lack of understanding within the general public of LTC issues.

 Lack of understanding and

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Summary of Problems

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## Annumani in the same of the sa RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Convene meetings with representatives of the Medical Society, Bar Association, and Public Safety to:

- explore continuing education sessions on long-term care resources in the county.

resources in the county.

disseminate appropriate
information to and through
these providers.

2. Establish Task Force to develop
continuing education training program for nurses, social workers, and mental health professionals. 3. Establish protocol for public safety referrals to community based

organizations. 4. Conduct annual forum for policy 



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Summary of Problems

Sector

1. Develop initiatives to provide assisted living. 2. Develop a more stable supply of support services in congregate Senior

PECONICTION

RECOMMENDATIONS

housing.
3. Establish Alameda County as an AB 499 Site. 4. Expansion of HOPE program which combines section 8 housing and case management services.

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