

# Human Services Planning: Familiar Problems New Solutions

In a recent article in the National Journal, Rochelle L. Stanfield, staff correspondent, wrote:

To most thoughtful critics of the New Federalism the President's proposal is neither the perfect solution nor the wrong one, but is a starting place for a comprehensive re-consideration of intergovernmental relationships.

Some may be led to believe that human services are facing the current situation only as a result of the most recent budget consolidations and reductions. However, the debate on the roles for federal, state and local governments and the voluntary sector in providing human services is not new. It was an important concern during the formation of the Republic, in the Roosevelt Administration, during the Nixon Administration, and now under President Reagan.

Human services at the local level are facing a longer term problem than just the actions of the current administration. It is a problem that consists at least of: continued reductions in some programs, no real growth in funds for others, inadequate staffing, and community criticism over the effectiveness of local services. These realities will be with us regardless of the national administration.

So far, the majority of the discussions and decisions surrounding the "New Federalism" have been at the federal and state levels. Little activity, except of a reactionary nature, has taken place at the local community level. The human service field at the local level is entering an important era, where different methods will be needed for making the decisions to provide local human services.

For elected officials, administrators, and funding bodies the past two years have been filled with anticipating and monitoring the changes. Finding a way to minimize the budgetary effects has been particularly difficult because some states already faced some form of financial difficulties before the federal budget reductions.

Perhaps the most difficult issue has been the effort of understanding the structural and procedural changes in roles between the state and federal government. This has provided a tug-of-war in many states between the executive and legislative branches of state government, as

the state's role escalated to that of a key actor in distributing funds and making program decisions.

In many instances, the states decided to pass the federal reductions straight through. That is, the states took no action to offset the reductions. The situation is similar for local governments which, for the most part, lack the flexible financial resources to make up for the budget reductions that have already occurred, much less those that are proposed for the future. In addition, escalating demands for relief by taxpayers is having a strong affect on local governments.

A survey recently released by the U.S. Conference of Mayors entitled "Human Services in FY82: Shrinking Resources in Troubled Times" found that 70 percent of the cities felt they were not adequately involved in planning or implementing programming or fund allocation for block grants; 75 percent of the cities felt the pass through of human service funds has been in-

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adequate. To make up for budget cuts 54 percent of the cities were using general revenues; 60 percent reported increased private sector contributions; and 12 percent have tapped into other federal resources. Twenty of the cities indicated they used CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) money to help support human service programs.

The effects of the reductions and changes are also felt by voluntary funding bodies (VFB's) such as foundations and the United Way. Their ability to offset federal and state reductions by expanding their revenue and services is a serious question. It is also debated whether or not the VFB role is to provide these types of services.

As legislation authorizing and appropriating funds for new program efforts has occurred, many divisions and specializations have developed. Leonard M. Greene, President of the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies has stated, "The

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nation's social welfare system is less a system than a series of well-meaning, but often contradictory, programs and dictums." For the last decade, policy planners and program developers have struggled with the answers to fragmentation, contradictions, and problems of duplicate effort. The solutions have been slow in coming.

#### Past Accomplishments

At the turn of the century government performed few services, but the depression and urbanization in the U.S. greatly accelerated the demand for human services, complicating the relationships between federal, state/local govern-

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SUCCESSFUL HUMAN SERVICES PLANNING CANNOT BE THE EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF ANY ONE INDIVIDUAL OR OF ANY ONE EXISTING AGENCY

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ments and voluntary funding bodies. In a 1982 report, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) found that from 1960 to 1981 the number of federal grant-in-aid programs to states increased from 130 to 534.

Federal and state governments created authorizations for special grants in response to the pluralism of American life. The grants provided the means to assist in solving the problems, but through the political process the grants became isolated from each other. The grants were categorical and served only certain persons at certain times with varying degrees of regulations and eligibility requirements.

In many cases each program carried with it separate planning, reporting, and organizational requirements. This proliferation created plans and programs without regard for similar existing programs. This surge of conflicting regulation and program structures created significant barriers for human services planning at the local level.

General systems theory and new management practices affected social welfare administration by stimulating thoughts on how to "make sense" out of the planning and delivery systems. The notion was extended that fragmented programs

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ESCALATING DEMANDS FOR RELIEF BY TAXPAYERS IS HAVING A STRONG AFFECT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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could be tailored to fit a pattern which would produce a whole greater than the sum of its parts. This emphasis led to the concepts of integration and coordination/consolidation as a solution for the implementation problems.

From the New Federalism policy of the Nixon and Ford administrations a number of programs were consolidated under Title XX, Community Development Block Grant and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.



Functional planning, PPBS (Planned Program Budgeting System) and MBO (Management By Objectives) attempts made an impact and led to the development or adoption of a number of "tools" and "methods" in the effort to improve planning and decision making. Tools such as the Delphi technique, model building, and scheduling techniques like Gantt charts or PERT (Performance Evaluation Review Technique) were utilized. Methodologies for evaluating services and agencies developed, as did the methodology for setting service priorities.

#### Future Direction

To date, local actions have been reactionary. The greatest efforts have been monitoring the recent changes in terms of the net loss of dollars to a local community and finding ways, where possible, to compensate for the losses within the existing management and services framework.

Other efforts have been rekindling interest in "private sector initiatives" on the part of business and churches, especially in smaller metropolitan areas. Efforts such as soup kitchens, food closets, clothes closets, and to a certain extent financial assistance, and housing, have begun.

It is hard to estimate the longevity and continuity of these efforts. Most observers believe many of these newest local initiatives will evaporate when the economic conditions begin to improve. Others believe that the task of providing social services is too large and complex to be done by ad hoc, spontaneous actions and that they act to cause further fragmentation.

However, for policy makers, planners and administrators the recent events afford the respite needed to re-evaluate what has occurred in the past, and examine what is likely to occur in, or to stimulate new organizational changes for the future.

It is safe to assume that as more control is delegated to the state and local levels, and competition between programs is increased, the demand for all aspects of community planning will increase. If only as a result of the political plan for both public and voluntary sectors trying to make decisions with some sense of responsibility, will a demand for planning capabilities increase.

Even though recent events suggest a more involved role for planning, James E. Mills, executive director of the Community Services Planning Council in Sacramento, California states that planning may be jeopardized because there will be a tendency to:

- Cut research, staff development and evaluation activities even further.
- Develop governmentally controlled planning and allocation mechanisms.
- Give highest priority to the protection and enforcement responsibilities of the public sector.
- Protect existing institutions not only from the standpoint of bureaucratic theory, but also in relationship to civil service systems and public employee union pressures.

In light of this situation, Mills presents three questions concerning human services planning.

1. Will the need for planning be recognized?
2. If recognized will planning be employed to merely rationalize difficult political judgements and/or provide a veneer of objectivity to the allocation process?
3. Will planning be funded with adequate resources in an era of scarcity?

In the past, the function of planning, like that of direct services, has been largely categorical, especially in the areas of criminal justice, manpower, and health. Primarily because it was thought that government should adequately meet the needs of persons on a longterm basis, and voluntary organizations should provide supportive services. However, these traditional and established roles by both public and voluntary funding bodies need to be closely ex-

amined. The human services provided by government and those provided by voluntary funding bodies, can no longer afford to exist in a vacuum, as if each were separate and distinct from the other, if we want to be reasonably sure adequate services are being provided.

Local policy makers, planners and administrators should begin to examine ways to build a joint structure and process to handle human services problems for their communities with participation from public and voluntary funding bodies. Successful human services planning cannot be the exclusive responsibility of any one individual or of any one of the existing agencies in the community. In order to be sustained, planning must be built into the total process of the current and future provision of human services. Several cities are currently using a joint structure for inter-governmental problem-solving.

The development of a joint structure between public and voluntary funding bodies will produce an accountable and effective mix of human services available at a level that will benefit local residents on a continuing basis. Such a process can go a long way toward insuring that the limited monetary resources available for a community are used properly.

A joint process could include at minimum: a uniform data base, human service information system, new services or modifications of existing services, specific problem solving, service evaluation/monitoring, and joint participation, for example, in the allocation of Community Development Block Grant and Title XX funds.

