Innovative Programs and Practices Emerging from the Implementation of Welfare Reform

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Innovative Programs and Practices Emerging from the Implementation of Welfare Reform: A Cross-Case Analysis

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ABSTRACT. Following welfare reform implementation, human service agencies are transforming themselves as they change their function from determining eligibility to enhancing employability. Most new programs are removing barriers to work force participation and facilitating self-sufficiency, while most community partnerships are providing a variety of support services. Administratively, human service agencies are incorporating private-sector organizational development functions, merging with other agencies, blending funding streams, and linking adult and child welfare services. This paper highlights innovative programs and practices emerging from welfare reform implementation, examines cross-cutting themes within a social development framework, and concludes with a discussion of challenges and lessons learned in the change process. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2001 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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The 1996 federal welfare-to-work program (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF) contains federal dependency-reduction measures such as benefit sanctions and time limits. Despite these policy constraints, human service agencies and their community partners are transforming themselves as they make the change from eligibility determination to employability enhancement. The shared goal is to build a more comprehensive human service system that enables low-income individuals and families to become self-sufficient.

The passage of TANF legislation required human service organizations to engage in a substantial reassessment of mission and organizational structure, changing from a hierarchical culture (characterized by rules, impersonality and accountability) to a clan/adhocracy culture (characterized by cohesiveness, participation, flexibility and creativity) (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). The innovative programs and practices described in this paper are summarized from longer, more comprehensive case studies describing the front line of organizational change in the San Francisco Bay Area, California. They reflect: (1) a new approach to delivering human services, (2) practices that enhance public/private community partnerships, or (3) a unique administrative process or change. After highlighting the cases, the paper identifies several themes, challenges and lessons learned from innovations emerging during the first two-and-a-half years of welfare reform implementation (January 1998-June 2000).

The case study method was used to develop the program and practice descriptions within the context of welfare reform implementation. According to Yin (1992), a case study is an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence. It analyzes in detail an individual, a situation, or a single phenomenon and identifies lessons learned (Dufour & Fortin, 1992). Conclusions are drawn by relating the cases with each other, using the comparative case study method to examine patterns systematically within and across cases, trace change over time, and offer an interpretation of the findings (Karbo & Beasley, 1999).

Each case study is based on information obtained from interviews with Bay Area human service agency staff and consumers as well as written documents and a literature review relevant to each program or practice. Guided by questions relating to program goals, history, chal-

lenges, successes and insights, social welfare graduate students collected data from June 1999 to August 2000.

The nineteen cases are summarized and clustered into three areas. The first area features new approaches to service delivery that help low-income working individuals find employment and become self-sufficient. The second area includes neighborhood and community-wide partnerships that provide affordable housing, education, job training and a variety of social, health and behavioral health services to low-income individuals. The third area involves organizational changes inside human service agencies brought about by implementing welfare reforms.

NEW APPROACHES TO SERVICE DELIVERY

The nine cases on service delivery innovations are divided into two categories: (1) removing barriers to work force participation, and (2) promoting self-sufficiency through support services.

Removing Barriers to Work Force Participation

In the booming post-welfare reform economy many TANF recipients have been able to find work without help or with limited vocational assistance. It has became clear, however, that in order to participate more actively in the labor force, a significant percentage of welfare recipients (about 20-30%) need services that address barriers to employment such as low basic work skills, mental health problems, chemical dependency, medical problems and lack of child care or transportation (Danziger, Corcoran, Danziger, Heflin, Kalil, Levine, Rosen, Seefeldt, Siefert & Tolman, 1999; Kramer, 1998; Olson & Pavetti, 1996; Pavetti, 1996; Pavetti, Olson, Nightingale, Duke & Isaacs, 1997; Urban Institute, 1999). Figure 1 describes several new Bay Area programs that are designed to address obstacles to self-sufficiency.

Self-Sufficiency Support Services

Edin and Lein (1997) show that after TANF recipients have found employment, they: (1) continue to be underpaid, (2) have little chance of promotion, (3) have increased expenses and (4) have almost as much difficulty balancing their budgets as they had when on welfare. As shown in Figure 2, human service agencies are helping TANF re-

FIGURE 1. Programs Addressing Obstacles to Self-Sufficiency

Connection Shuttle: To address transportation barriers, Santa Cruz County created a TANF-funded Connections Shuttle that provides about 133 free rides per day to family members who can prove that they are unable to commute to and from work, job training, school or child care using existing public transportation. The Shuttle program also includes a seven-month training experience for interested TANF recipients with clean driving records and negative drug tests to become paid drivers and dispatchers.

Guaranteed Ride Home Program: Also designed to address the transportation needs of TANF recipients, Santa Clara County's Guaranteed Ride Home Program offers car rides to and from the workplace and home, including necessary stops (e.g., child care facilities, schools, medical centers). Consumers are eligible to receive a total of 48 rides over a six-month period, and the service is always available (24 hours a day, 365 days a year) in all of the fifteen Santa Clara cities.

Training Child Care Providers: The Exempt Provider Training Program in San Mateo County helps to build the capacity of high-quality child care providers in the community by encouraging TANF recipients and others to launch and improve their own child care business. The training program focuses on the promotion of healthy infant and toddler development by recruiting, training and supporting unlicensed (exempt) providers who care for their own children, the children of relatives and/or the children of only one other family.

Co-Locating Support Services: In addition to the societal barriers of child care and transportation, several studies have found that personal issues such as mental health problems or substance abuse can interfere with employment (Bush & Kraft, 1998; Gardner, 1997; Grayson, 1999; Young & Gardner, 1997). Until recently, support services that address these issues were not a formal part of the welfare-to-work program (Pavetti, Olson, Nightingale, Duke & Isaacs, 1997). Sonoma County has responded to this need by co-locating mental health and substance abuse services for TANF recipients near the human services agency, making it possible for the consumer to access a wide array of services in a single visit.

Sheltered Workshop: Building upon the success of a traditional vocational rehabilitation facility, the San Mateo County Human Services Agency utilizes its Workcenter (founded in 1967 on a $200 grant) to address the work skill deficits of hard-to-place TANF recipients by hiring them to assemble, package and ship products while they look for permanent employment. Personal problems relating to substance abuse, health, mental health, literacy or domestic violence are assessed by Human Service Agency staff, and, if necessary, referrals are made to other County departments. The program assists TANF recipients by providing them with on-the-job training, a temporary income, rehabilitation services, and job placement and retention support.

cipients maintain self-sufficiency through family loans, mentoring, job retention telephone hotlines, and special access to training and employment.

PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The next set of cases, highlighted in Figure 3, features human service agency practices that enhance public/private community partnerships to

FIGURE 2. Self-Sufficiency Support Programs

Family Loan Program: With the support of the McKnight Foundation's (Minnesota) Family Loan Program, San Mateo County launched in 1998 a program for working families to help them deal with large or unexpected one-time expenses. It provides loans of up to $3,000 to eligible low-income individuals to help temporarily with vocational or educational expenses that include typically car purchase, car repair, work or school uniforms, tools for a trade, and child care. The loans are serviced by one of three local banks that are able to qualify for low-interest federal funds under the Community Reinvestment Act.

Adopt-a-Family Program: The Adopt-a-Family Program in San Mateo provides mentoring to low-income families over a period of one year by matching consumer families with godparents (i.e., mentors) who are carefully screened individuals and/or employees of local businesses. Godparents are encouraged to develop a relationship with the family and, in the tradition of holiday donation programs, contribute needed second-hand items (typically pots, pans, toys, clothing, bedding and cribs). The program has the advantage of being easy to replicate and expand as it is based exclusively on donations of time and materials and requires only one quarter-time employee.

Helping Consumers Stay on the Job: Designed to help TANF recipients retain their jobs and help the unemployed gain access to needed resources that may help them find a job, the Santa Clara County JobKeeper Hotline provides round-the-clock counseling, crisis intervention, and referral services. When calling JobKeeper, recipients reach trained, volunteer phone counselors who can actively listen and provide linkage to a network of community resources, including child care, employment services, education and training programs, legal services and transportation.

Hiring Your Own Consumers: While businesses have been encouraged to hire former welfare recipients, it is equally important for human service agencies to demonstrate employer responsibility as well. As an example, the San Mateo County Human Services Agency offers jobs to TANF recipients by employing them as welfare eligibility workers and support staff. Recipients who successfully complete the training period are hired, assisted in passing the civil service test, and offered full-time, permanent employment with comprehensive benefits.

address comprehensively the needs of low-income individuals who are making the change from welfare to work. The seven partnership cases are divided into two categories: (1) neighborhood partnerships, including self-sufficiency centers and a jobs program, and (2) community-wide partnerships, including a coalition to address homelessness, a transitional recovery community, a coalition of non-profit agencies, a community college collaboration and a collaboration to protect the elderly from financial abuse.

HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY RESTRUCTURING

The last set of cases, highlighted in Figure 4, reflects some of the organizational changes elicited by the implementation of welfare reform

FIGURE 3. Community Partnerships

Neighborhood Partnerships   Neighborhood Jobs Program: The Alameda County public-private Neighborhood Jobs Pilot Initiative (NJPI) was launched with a Rockefeller Foundation planning grant to develop one-stop employment resource centers in three low-income neighborhoods. Currently the county provides welfare-to-work funding and most of the services are delivered by community-based organizations.
Neighborhood Self-Sufficiency Centers: To increase low-income working parents' access to the resources they need to care for their children, Santa Clara County businesses, community groups, public and private agencies and public assistance recipients began to collaborate with the county Social Services Agency (SSA) in 1996 to develop one-stop, single point-of-entry neighborhood centers (six).
Community-Wide Partnerships   Coalition to Address Homelessness: In Napa County, a community coalition developed a proposal and received funding from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support an integrated network of services for the homeless in Napa. While the county human services department served as the lead agency, community-based non-profits provided the outreach services related to rental subsidies for transitional housing, case management, and referrals.
Building a Transitional Recovery Community: The Monterey County directors of housing, health, behavioral health and human services developed Pueblo Del Mar, a transitional recovery community offering eligible substance-abusing homeless families a variety of transitional support services. In addition to assisting with program planning and development, community-based organizations deliver all of the direct services while the county Housing Authority is the property manager, property owner and grant recipient of HUD funds.
Coalition of Non-Profit Agencies: The Napa County coalition of non-profit agency directors sought in 1996 to develop a comprehensive human service system for all individuals, regardless of their ability to pay, that addressed the multiple service gaps and fragmentation resulting from program closures. The Napa coalition of social, health and behavioral health service representatives obtained foundation and endowment support to subsidize a variety of services available to all in need.
Community College Collaborations: To help educate and train low-income individuals for employment as well as assist human service staff with skill enhancement, the local community colleges collaborated with the San Mateo county departments of human service, health and rehabilitation in order to develop a Human Services Certificate Program that prepares current human services staff, service consumers and other interested individuals for entry-level occupations (e.g., mental health case manager, job coach/employment specialist, community health worker and human service intake specialist).

in county human service agencies: (1) the hiring of an Organizational Development specialist to assist with changing the agency's culture, (2) merging a work force investment board and a social service agency into an employment and human services agency, (3) blending multiple funding streams into county welfare-to-work programs, and (4) restructuring agency programs to foster intra-agency collaboration between child welfare services and welfare-to-work programs.

FIGURE 4. Organizational Restructuring

Introducing Organizational Development: A department-wide staff assessment indicated that San Mateo County Human Services Agency personnel were struggling to keep up with the myriad of recent policy, organizational and personnel changes, including the emergence of welfare reform. Top management supported the hiring of an OD specialist to help improve the agency's problem-solving and learning processes, particularly through a more effective and collaborative diagnosis and management of the organizational culture (McLagan, 1989).

Merging Employment and Human Service Agencies: Currently the California one-stop employment centers are managed and operated jointly by the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBS were formerly called Private Industry Councils) and the county human service agencies to promote universal access to welfare-to-work services. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 created new Department of Labor funding and functions for the WIBS that overlapped with TANF funds and services. In some locations, such as Contra Costa County, the two organizations have actually merged into a single Employment and Human Services Agency.

Blending Funding Streams: Bay Area human service organizations have utilized the flexibility of the TANF block grants to creatively pool funding streams in order to design more consumer-responsive programs. The Sonoma County human service agency, for example, pooled financial resources to support community-based service programs. One advantage of pooling funds is that human service consumers can continue to receive services after their eligibility has expired for the TANF program. In addition, the human service organization can ensure the survival of programs that are struggling financially by blending funding streams.

Linking TANF to Child Welfare Services: Human service agencies are finding new ways to increase their intra-departmental collaboration. For example, to meet the needs of human service consumers who are involved with both child welfare programs (designed to protect children from maltreatment) and welfare-to-work programs (designed to facilitate economic self-sufficiency), Contra Costa human services agency staff deliver services jointly, promoting a dialogue about the consumer's program needs and collaborating with the consumer to develop a coordinated plan of action. The necessity of addressing the needs of these individuals has become apparent, as failure to fulfill child welfare responsibilities could result in the drastic decision to place a child in foster care, and the failure to meet welfare-to-work requirements could result in the loss of financial benefits.

DISCUSSION

Several cross-cutting themes emerge from this array of innovative programs and practices evolving during the era of welfare reform implementation.

Cross-Cutting Themes Emerging from Welfare Reform Implementation

In relation to the provision of direct assistance, human service organizations ensure *universal eligibility* to employment services, behav-

ioral health services, and services for the substance-abusing homeless population (e.g., the Napa County coalition of non-profit organizations and the Transitional Residential Alliance). The scope of services has also expanded, as human service organizations are *more actively assisting community residents with transportation and child care* (e.g., the Guaranteed Ride Home in Santa Clara County and the San Mateo County Exempt Provider Training Program). In addition, human service agencies are removing obstacles to labor force participation by *co-locating services in a single facility*, especially in one-stop employment centers (e.g., the Santa Clara County Neighborhood Self-Sufficiency Centers).

In relation to community partnership, human service organizations are *increasingly involved with community-based organizations and coalitions*. County human services agencies often lead administrative agencies due to their access to resources and their ability to leverage funds. In a similar way, community-based non-profits deliver many of the services because they understand local needs and neighborhoods so well. Human service agencies also are *increasing their partnerships with community residents*, as is evident in San Mateo County's Adopt-a-Family Program that recruits godparents to provide material and social assistance to TANF recipients.

In relation to organizational restructuring, human service agencies *combine funding streams to be more responsive to the needs of local residents*. This change is partly a result of the increased flexibility of federal TANF and work force legislation. Human service organizations are also finding more effective ways to deliver services by *merging with other organizations* such as Workforce Investment Boards, housing organizations, and health departments. Finally, human service organizations are *improving problem-solving and learning processes* by actively using organizational development techniques (e.g., staff feedback and self-assessment tools) to address issues such as cultural competence or feedback on implementing strategic plans.

The restructuring of human service agencies can be viewed as part of an ongoing process of increasing public accountability. The accountability process incorporates private sector principles (e.g., organizational development and a greater emphasis on accountability and cost-effectiveness) in order to foster increased flexibility (e.g., the combination of funding streams and programs) that is needed to address a wider range of human needs (e.g., in health, housing, transportation and child care).

The Emergence of a Social Development Model

We can describe cases in relation to service delivery, partnership and organizational restructuring as well as analyze the innovative programs and practices in relation to current concepts of social development. Midgely (1997) defines social development as "a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development" (p. 181). He describes three types of social development programs that promote economic growth by investing in social welfare. *Programs that emphasize employment* help low-income individuals and welfare recipients to participate more fully in the labor force, thereby reducing welfare dependency and increasing tax revenues. *Social capital programs* enhance cooperative networks, infrastructure development (e.g., clinics, schools, housing), and individual asset accumulation (e.g., matched savings accounts). Finally, *human capital programs* promote economic growth by investing directly in individual welfare (e.g., education, health care, nutrition). In Figure 5, the cases are clustered according to the definitions of the three types of social development programs.

Within this framework, most of the cases reflect an investment in employment and social capital related to the self-sufficiency emphasis of the TANF legislation. In other words, the first wave of welfare-to-work first strategies succeeded in reducing welfare caseloads, promoting employment and building community networks, yet future efforts are needed to help the low-income working population (1) further their general education, (2) advance their careers, and (3) access community supports to maintain long-term family self-sufficiency.

The Challenge of Sustaining Innovations

Underlying these cross-cutting themes are challenges that affect the innovative programs and practices. Perhaps the biggest challenge is managing new work-related expenses. The hard-to-place CalWorks recipient must contend with a very competitive work force environment and then retain employment by managing these new expenses (i.e., transportation, child care, medical care and work clothes). Another challenge is maintaining consumer confidentiality in integrated service environments that rely on intra-agency communication, resource-sharing and collaborative case planning. This is an effort despite having ob-

FIGURE 5. The Case Studies in a Social Development Framework

Programs/Practices that Emphasize Employment

- The JobKeeper Program
- The Neighborhood Jobs Pilot Initiative
- Neighborhood Self-Sufficiency Centers
- The Merging of Workforce Investment Boards and Human Service Agencies
- The Blending of Multiple Funding Streams into Welfare-to-Work Programs
- The Hiring of TANF Recipients in Human Service Agencies
- The Family Loan Program
- The Co-Location of Support Services in Welfare-to-Work Programs

Programs/Practices that Invest in Social Capital

- The Connections Shuttle
- The Guaranteed Ride Home Program
- Child Care Provider Training
- The Transitional Residential Alliance and Integrated Network
- Pueblo Del Mar
- The Financial Abuse Specialist Team
- The Adopt-a-Family Program
- The Behavioral Health Committee of the Napa County Coalition of Non-Profit Agencies
- The Introduction of OD Principles Within Human Service Agencies
- The Provision of Cross-Over Services to Individuals Receiving Both Child Welfare and Welfare-to-Work Services

Programs/Practices that Invest in Human Capital

- The Workcenter
- Collaboration Between Community Colleges and Human Service Agencies

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tained consumer consent to release information, and training staff to understand the funding and services of other programs.

Creating and maintaining collaborative partnerships is also a major challenge, as coalition building takes time and is often difficult due to diverse political perspectives and personalities. Furthermore, when relying on several different agencies for service delivery, it is often difficult to maintain consistency across the agencies in terms of the services consumers receive, staff responsibilities and organizational objectives. Finally, sustaining a collaborative vision is challenging when program implementation is often seen to be more difficult than program design, especially when there is a loss of momentum following the institutionalization of the innovation.

Lastly, several challenges relate to organizational restructuring. First, when new policies and procedures have not been fully implemented yet and staff positions change, there can be considerable confusion. Second, maintaining highly qualified staff members is difficult for most human service agencies, as there has been much staff turnover and new em-

ployees must be trained in the new family self-sufficiency service delivery model. Third, it has been difficult to structure multi-functional service delivery teams to deliver a wide range of employment and human services within the guidelines of welfare-to-work policy and, more generally, difficult to address the needs of local residents within categorical funding constraints.

Lessons Learned

Dealing with these challenges requires consensus building, motivation for organizational reform and maintaining momentum. These case studies illustrate several lessons that are organized into the categories of consumer services, staff support, partnership development and community building.

Lesson 1. In relation to consumer services, human service agencies have learned to *provide extra staff support and transitional time to individuals leaving welfare for work*. This contributes significantly to job retention and career advancement, especially through mentoring relationships and expanded work internship opportunities. Additionally, human service agencies need to *build strong working relationships* with local businesses, landlords, transportation agencies and child care programs in order to better *assist consumers with these common obstacles to labor force participation*.

Lesson 2. Human service agencies have learned to *select staff for planning committees who are most committed to promoting significant change*, and to define clearly the direction of the expected change to maximize committee progress. They have also learned to *anticipate and address proactively merger-related personnel issues* to underscore that the issues will be resolved eventually, yet not perhaps in the immediate future, and that change and risk are inevitable. Furthermore, human service agencies have learned to *schedule a substantial number of staff meetings to clarify changing roles in an evolving system*, and provide information to all levels of staff at the same time.

Lesson 3. With respect to developing partnerships, human service agencies have learned to identify carefully and *include all potential stakeholders* (especially local government officials who need to support new ideas) in program planning meetings in order to decrease bureaucratic opposition, facilitate project investment and strengthen working relationships. It is equally important to *promote team-building opportunities* for different public and private agency representatives in order to enhance partnerships, pursue common community goals, and build the

high level of communication and trust that is necessary for collaborative partners with different values or cultural practices.

Lesson 4. Finally, in relation to community-building, human service agencies have learned to *assess comprehensively the needs of the community* and balance these needs with programs or services that funders will support, especially *locating unrestricted funding* to cover administrative and start-up costs for pilot projects and services. They have learned to expand their media relationships in order to *increase public awareness and community support for new services* through the use of fliers, phone calls, websites and presentations. Human service agencies have also learned to expand their capacity to *provide outreach efforts that are culturally and linguistically appropriate* in order to address the needs of local residents (self-referral is not always effective in reaching socially isolated, low-income community members) and to *minimize bureaucratic procedures* and costs in order to facilitate consumer access to services.

CONCLUSION

The cases in this analysis describe programs and practices that were chosen by Bay Area county human service directors for their innovative contribution to welfare reform implementation, and are based on information obtained from interviews with human service agency staff, consumers and written documents.

The cases fall into three categories. Most examine new approaches to service delivery, including the removal of barriers to work force participation and self-sufficiency support services. In this category, most new programs involve vocational rehabilitation, transportation, child care, loans and other temporary assistance that facilitates self-reliance. Most cases in the second category, practices that enhance community partnership, involve local inter-organizational relationships addressing employment, housing, income, education, mental health and substance abuse issues. Finally, several cases describe human service agency restructuring, including the introduction of organizational development, the merging of employment and human services, the blending of funding streams, and the linking of TANF to child welfare services.

Within these categories, the successes and challenges reflected in the case studies can be understood best by examining themes. In relation to service delivery, human service organizations ensure universal eligibility, expand their scope of service (e.g., providing transportation and
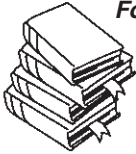
child care), co-locate services in a single facility (e.g., social, mental health and substance abuse services), and actively promote the employment of welfare recipients. The partnerships that are emerging are typically with community-based organizations, neighborhood coalitions, other agencies (state, county and city), and community residents.

When examined within a social development framework, most of the cases reflect investment in employment and social capital, whereas only two cases reflect investment in human capital. Using lessons from the first phase of welfare reform implementation, human service agencies can level this imbalance by increasing low-income family access to services that enhance educational attainment, career advancement and community support.

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