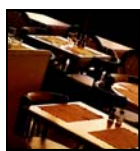


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Using Social Media to Connect with Human Services Customers

★ **JIM ASHMORE**

Performance Improvement Administrator, Hamilton County, Ohio

★ **JOEL POTTS**

Executive Director, Ohio Job & Family Services Directors' Association

Hamilton County, Ohio's Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) has faced a tremendous challenge the past two years: how to serve more people with fewer resources. Ohio's dismal economy has resulted in two divergent trends: fewer dollars for government operations and more people in need of public assistance to meet their daily needs.

Since 2008, the agency has lost more than 800 positions and is now operating with half the people it did a few years ago. Meanwhile, since January 2008, food assistance rolls have increased by nearly 50,000, to 125,000, and Medicaid rolls have shot up by 30,000, to 145,000. In one of Ohio's largest counties, with Cincinnati at its epicenter, that's about one in every six or seven residents.

The agency responded in many ways, but one of the more attention-grabbing was an aggressive social media campaign designed to educate and engage the public, as well as alleviate crowded lobbies and busy phone lines. First instituted by newly-appointed JFS Director Moira Weir to improve accountability and transparency, social media efforts were ramped up to assist the reduced staff in meeting the community's growing needs.

The centerpiece of the social media effort is an Internet chat platform that is used to both disseminate public information about important, broad topics and to conduct private, one-on-one chats about case questions. The public chats get nearly 100 views each, while more than 200 people per day sign into the private chats to get answers on their cases. The cost? -- \$39 a month.

The social media campaign also includes the dissemination of important information via the agency's Web site (30,000 visits per month), Facebook groups (more than 500 "fans"), Twitter (340 followers), a Director's Blog (17,000 views in a little over a year), audio podcasts (2,000 visits per month), YouTube videos (13,000 views in three



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The President's Desk



★ BY JO WEBER

Director, Human Services Department
Sonoma County, California

As I began to write this column I found myself lamenting about the state of the economy, the fact that we have more clients and fewer resources, and that our staff appear more visibly stressed than I have ever seen before. I wondered what I could say that would lift us up, instead of make us feel more exhausted, and I thought about an ongoing discussion I've been having with my colleagues about leadership.

During these times, leadership is more important than ever. The future of our communities, our clients and our staff depend on our ability to overcome these challenges. We all know that there are many leaders at all levels within our organizations (The 360 Degree Leader by John Maxwell provides a good discussion of being a leader from any position in an organization). As we continue our journey through this unprecedented time it might be worth an exploration of what leadership is for you and those in your organizations.

I've been asking myself, within this new environment, what is it we want to accomplish, and how can we support each other in achieving the outcomes we want without adding to the burden we already feel? As I've explored my own beliefs, I realized that who we are is central to the way we lead. Our leadership style is derived from very personal experiences that we have had in our lives. My own experiences have shaped the foundation of my belief system. Life is not, and should not be without challenges – challenges form the character of a person. People come into this life wanting to succeed yet sometimes people falter because of circumstances that are out of their control. With some compassion and empathy, people can and do change. We are all diminished when one of us fails – and we all thrive when we commit to helping each other.

This foundational belief system is why I entered this profession and forms the core of who I am as a leader. The operational application of my leadership approach within my organization is my vision that we treat staff with the same empathy and compassion that we ask of our staff for our clients. In so doing, we add value and pride to our whole community.

Through my own leadership exploration I have learned what I've always known on some level - leadership is about being an example...it's about who you are, and being willing to share yourself for a common good. Knowing yourself is central to supporting and leading yourself and others. And, knowing yourself is attainable. For some reason, learning this was a relief to me. Somehow, knowing leadership was within me, and not yet another thing I needed to learn or 'get' or do allowed me to relax. I realized that leadership is not something I had to add to my list of things to do, but it is the basic foundation for each thing that I do. I hope it helps the others within my organization relax, too. Goodness knows, we can all use some of that!

Hoping to see you in Reno in July!

Crisis in the Midst of Change

Clark County, NV staff refocus on basics in the face of recession, budget cuts

★ BY NANCY MCLANE

Director, Clark County Social Service, Clark County, Nevada
Chair, Social Service Administrators of Nevada

In Nevada, counties are responsible for assisting indigent individuals not eligible for other programs, primarily childless adults under age 65 who are not disabled. All counties deliver an array of safety net services codified in state law, including payment for necessary medical care, financial assistance for housing, indigent burials and cremations, and transportation to return individuals to their support system outside of the county if they find themselves adrift in the highly transient boom towns of Nevada. In Clark County's Social Service Department, the work had become increasingly task-oriented over the years, with eligibility and check processing taking precedence over client outcomes.

Social work had taken a back seat to transactions.

Increased client demand, the agency's first indicator of the great recession, was initially thought to be a continuation of the population boom. After all, the Las Vegas Valley regularly appeared at the top of the list of growing metropolitan areas, and construction, a key economic engine in southern Nevada, was still chugging along. The skyline changed with the completion of high-rise condos and new resorts, and new single family homes pushed up, and sometimes over, the hills fringing the valley.

However, in January 2007, clients requesting services jumped nearly 23% compared to a year earlier. Double-digit increases became the norm beginning in July of that year. Fiscal year 2008 posted a 26% increase in requests for assistance over the previous year (approximately 112,000 additional requests for service), followed by a 30% increase in fiscal year 2009 (about 143,500 additional requests for service). A 40% spike in service demand in a single month signaled the shutting down of a major construction project and an influx of newly unemployed workers who didn't know where to turn for help.

At the same time, a quiet transformation of the culture at Social Service had exploded into a full-fledged re-engineering effort targeted at procuring a new case management system to replace an aged mainframe application nearing the end of its useful life. Two changes of agency leadership occurred in less than two years, stalling the project and leaving the staff off-balance in the face of increasing service demand.

In July 2007, the change effort began to regroup, and with the help of a consultant, re-engineering began in earnest. Case management and coordination functions had been piloted at a satellite office, and efforts began to replicate and refine the model at all locations. Cross-functional groups of employees were selected for change management teams, and a vendor began work on the new technology solution.

By mid-2008, with the economy in steep decline, lines began form-

ing outside every office by close of business each evening, queuing up for the next business day. By the time employees began arriving for work the next morning, hundreds of people were waiting for the doors to open. Interactions among and between clients and staff often erupted into verbal hostility and physical intimidation. A place at the front of the line became a commodity that was bought and sold through the night, resulting in considerable frustration when individuals moved from the back of the line to the front. In the interest of everyone's safety, the presence of both security and house-keeping were dramatically increased, police consultation was requested, and regular overtime was implemented in an effort to deal with the crush of residents seeking assistance. However, even with extended hours and additional workers seeing clients, less than half of the demand could be met. The remaining clients returned day after day, compounding the effect of increasing traffic.

Despite this client surge, implementation of redesigned processes continued. A commitment had been made to a technology solution structured around case management and improved client outcomes, requiring that a new way of doing business be implemented agency-wide, so employee teams continued their work.

Unfortunately, the roller coaster ride continued.

The Nevada Legislature redirected a portion of the county's property tax revenue to state coffers, necessitating a \$9.3 million budget cut in the agency's non-medical fund by July 1, 2009. This resulted in both service cuts and layoffs. One satellite office was closed as a consequence of eliminating 19% of the agency's funded FTEs. The recently implemented case management/case coordination model played a vital role in rolling out program reductions. Block appointments have replaced long lines, and client assessments now drive the decisions regarding the duration of assistance, with social workers providing continued monitoring even after benefits have been exhausted.

The devaluation of real estate in southern Nevada has significantly reduced property tax revenue. With more than 90% of its funding derived from property taxes, Social Service has been required to cut next year's budget by 15%. Another reduction in staff is expected; however, employees were so effective at implementing the last round of program changes that additional service cuts have been deferred.

The silver lining in this bank of storm clouds has been that employees at all levels of the department have exhibited resilience, innovation, perseverance and professionalism in the face of great challenges. They have sought opportunities for improvement and engaged in creative problem solving, demonstrating that transformation can be achieved by staying the course in times of crisis.

Washington Watch

How Long Does the Soup Have to be on



★ **BY TOM JOSEPH**
NACHSA Liaison, Waterman & Associates

Congress has been stirring the main ingredients for an alphabet soup of health and human services programs in the pot for months, but it doesn't seem to be able to serve it to local governments and their low-income residents.

The ingredients include....

FMAP, TANF-ECF, UI, and COBRA.

While not common household acronyms, Congress is struggling to find the billions of dollars necessary to continue the assistance to struggling families and county budgets that this alphabet soup represents.

The temperature setting...

1 to 60

Those numbers continue to be the elusive magic numbers necessary to enact those investments.

And, with each passing week, finding the one vote in the Senate to get to 60 to adopt legislation to extend FMAP, TANF-ECF, UI and COBRA is becoming increasingly difficult due to the exploding federal deficit. As the November elections approach, more and more moderate House and Senate Democrats in competitive races are becoming more skittish about voting for any bill that adds to the debt. The path to extending the benefits behind the acronyms remained unclear of this writing. But all of them have had past legislative successes.

FMAP: Once a rather obscure term, FMAP, or federal medical assistance percentages, has become the main focus of over 30 state governors and legislatures. Referring to the federal match for funding Medicaid benefits, they assumed that the enhanced FMAP for Medicaid and IV-E foster care initially enacted under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) would continue for an additional six months, through June 30, 2011.

That assumption was a relatively safe one until a few weeks ago.

The Administration had proposed the \$24 billion extension in its FY 2011 budget and the House and Senate have each

adopted the proposal in the past few months, albeit in different bills containing other dissimilar provisions that have different funding sources and controversial items.

It was added yet again to the latest jobs/recovery bill before the Memorial Day recess, only to be dropped less than 24 hours before the House voted, due to fiscally conservative Blue Dog concerns that the overall package was adding more than \$50 billion to the deficit.

So the responsibility for the boost was placed in the laps of the Senate Democrats, who were already struggling with how to pay for the slimmed-down House bill.

TANF-ECF: Also enacted initially as part of the Recovery Act, the \$5 billion Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Contingency Fund (TANF-ECF) program got off to a slow start, due to the time required for HHS to develop guid-



the Stove?

ance on allowable uses, especially for the subsidized employment component of TANF-ECF. The funding for jobs has accelerated, with 60 percent of the funding claimed by states in the third quarter going to that component. By September 30, it is projected that approximately 180,000 jobs will have been created under TANF-ECF.

States and counties are pushing to extend the program for one more year, funded at \$2.5 billion in FY 2011, with any remaining funding in this current fiscal year available to be drawn down to continue jobs filled by September 30, 2010.

Despite the program's success, without legislation adopted soon, counties will be forced to begin ramping down their jobs programs so that employers and employees can plan for a September 30 end to the initiative. Stakeholders continue to educate members that the program is not a regular welfare program creating long-term welfare dependency.

UI: Record levels of long-term joblessness continue, but Congress has only found the funding to extend Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits for a month or two at a time since December 2009. Congress has extended it three times to provide UI for up to 99 weeks, depending on the state's unemployment rate.

Without Congressional action, the extended federal benefits will phase out fast. Workers will be allowed to finish their current tier of benefits, but will not be able to reach the full 99 weeks even if they live in high unemployment states. By the end of June, 1.2 million workers will be cut off jobless benefits, and the number could grow to more than five million by the end of the year.

COBRA: Enacted under ARRA, unemployed workers have received a 65 percent federal subsidy to pay for their health care benefits offered by their former employer. The U.S. Department of the Treasury indicates that 15% of UI recipients were relying on COBRA benefits. If Congress does not renew this assistance, as many as 150,000 workers each month could lose out on the subsidies that they need to be able to afford this coverage.

Unfortunately, COBRA was also dropped from the House bill and has not yet made it into the Senate's version.

With every passing week, Democratic Senators and Representatives running for re-election in competitive districts are increasingly concerned about adding to the \$13 trillion federal debt. No one is willing to talk about increasing revenues to pay for investments – a political 'third rail' in election seasons



compounded by the fact that some would say it was the wrong prescription for a nation moving out of a deep recession.

Many NACHSA members did their part this month by using a toll-free number to call their Senators to extend the FMAP and TANF-ECF investments. As of this writing, Senate Democrats were still looking for the magical 60 votes to pass the bill.

While the Senate continues to stir the HHS alphabet soup, NACHSA members will continue to work to remind them that while the recession seems to be abating somewhat nationally, the real human and county budget pain continues in communities.

Let's hope that the soup will be served soon.

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<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Making Benefits Work Better for Clients in Need

Gainesville/Alachua County tests use of SNAP in restaurants by homeless clients

★ BY JOHN SKELLY

Poverty Reduction Director, Alachua County, Florida

The establishment of a pilot project that will allow homeless individuals use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamps program) benefits EBT cards at area restaurants is one of 90 recommendations contained in the Gainesville/Alachua County Hunger Abatement Plan. At this juncture, we are within weeks of initiating this service alternative for homeless SNAP benefits recipients. Homeless people who have no facilities for cooking a safe and nutritious meal will now have an alternative. Homeless individuals who cannot get to one of the various feeding sites operated by local charities will now have an alternative. Homeless workers who cannot arrive at charitable meal sites due to their hours of employment will now have an alternative. Homeless residents who are turned away from local emergency shelters due to lack of food or other limits on the number of meals that can be served will now have an alternative. But first, a little history.

Community-wide concern over the growing problem of hunger in Gainesville, Florida and Alachua County led the County Commission's Poverty Reduction Advisory Board (PRAB), to undertake a study of the 'big gorilla in the room', i.e. the under-utilization of the Food Stamps Program. With technical support from the Florida Department of Children & Families, which administers the federal SNAP program, the PRAB spent the better part of a year burrowing into the details of how the program worked. We examined the administrative policy options adopted by the State of Florida, the recipients benefits levels, state budgets and funding for staff to conduct intake, and developed an analysis of the reasons why applications were denied, an analysis of the demographics of who received benefits, and an analysis of the understaffed statewide call center system.

The results of PRAB's work were twofold: a recommendation that the county, at least temporarily, fund a SNAP Hotline; and the encouragement of county staff to initiate planning for a community 'town hall' type meeting on hunger in Alachua County. The community town hall meeting had been originally suggested to the Alachua County and City of Gainesville Commissions by two local advocates for the homeless.

Consequently, both County and City Commissions approved the concept and committed their respective governments to

support a Hunger Summit event on September 18, 2008 to commence a process of developing a Hunger Abatement Plan (HAP) that would comprehensively address all discernable causes and solutions to hunger in the county. A summit event planning team was assembled. The planning team recruited the support of four additional co-sponsoring organizations: United Way of North Central Florida, School Board of Alachua County, Florida Department of Children & Families, and Alachua County Medical Society.

The invaluable support of each of the six co-sponsors enabled the six committees appointed at the Hunger Summit I to do their work.

At the September 18th event, keynote speaker Kate Houston, lead administrator of the SNAP program nationwide, along with Florida Department of Elder Affairs Secretary Doug Beach, Department of Children & Families (DCF) Deputy Secretary Don Winstead, and Janie Williams, Chair of the Alachua County School Board, all addressed the appropriateness of and need for the development of a comprehensive Hunger Abatement Plan. Each gave suggestions about how to approach the task, and how to try to ensure the actual implementation of recommendations. It was decided to use six committees, composed of area agency staffs and local citizen advocates, each of which were to focus on different aspects of the hunger problem.

The six committees began their work in October 2008, meeting every 2 to 4 weeks, for nine months. The SNAP Committee took a field trip to the DCF Call Center in Jacksonville, to observe first hand, the operations of and challenges to the understaffed, underfunded portal to gaining benefits. The co-chairs of the six committees met twice towards the end of that nine month planning period to exchange information about their committee's work and set a course for final compilation and presentation to the community of the HAP. John Skelly, Director of the Alachua County Poverty Reduction Program functioned as staff for the six committees, assisting with the recordkeeping details of multiple meetings, and keeping each committee informed of business and issues being considered by the other committees.

The contributions of the DCF ACCESS program staff cannot be overstated. They provided outstandingly helpful information to the committees regarding: the ACCESS program itself and its efforts to expand partnerships with other large and small organizations; the DCF SNAP application process; information about processes necessary to



maintain access to benefits after initial application approval; and the nature of the working relationships among DCF, the Agency for Work Force Innovation (AWI), and Child Support Enforcement (operated by Florida Dept. of Revenue), among other vitally relevant topics.

Like the development of the HAP itself, the job of implementation of its recommendations was assigned to the community of service provider agencies which, for this purpose, formed themselves into a local association, the Alachua County Nutrition Alliance (ACNA).

Upon completion of the HAP in June, 2009, the ACNA formed and immediately began collaborations with state and local agencies to implement the recommendations in the HAP. Among the 90 recommendations was the following:

“The State of Florida should contract with local restaurants that agree to participate with the SNAP to provide hot meals to homeless individuals, as allowed under federal legislation.”

Led by county staff, on August 21, 2009 the ACNA met with DCF administrators and policy officials to review the list of recommendations from the HAP. During this initial meeting it was clear that DCF was interested in pursuing all possible avenues for increasing SNAP utilization. Pursuing the recommendation about allowing homeless individuals to use their SNAP EBT cards at area restaurants, we immediately began a series of bi-weekly conference calls among DCF administrators in Tallahassee, DCF administrators in Alachua County, county staff, and administrators of the local Alachua County Coalition for Homeless and Hungry, Inc. (ACCHH). The critical role for the local Coalition for Homeless and Hungry was certification of the homeless status for those homeless individuals who were receiving SNAP benefits.

Over the last 6 months, we have continued those conference calls wherein we outlined all that needed to be done in preparation for initiating this new service. DCF took the lead in working with USDA, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) to establish processes for establishing selected local restaurants as SNAP program vendors. County staff together with DCF staff identified and visited local restaurants,

explained the idea and process, and with assistance from a supportive county commissioner, succeeded in recruiting 8 area restaurants to participate in the pilot project in Alachua County. At the end of the planned 6 month pilot project, we will evaluate our experiences to both identify our successes and remaining challenges, and to determine whether DCF will roll out this pilot statewide. It is the intent of DCF to expand the project statewide if possible. We know several other states have already done this, so we are confident that it can be done.

We have created an intake and certification system that relies largely on the HUD mandated Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which local level recipients of HUD homelessness oriented funding must participate in. The ACCHH developed the capacity for issuing picture ID cards to local homeless individuals who have received services from any of the areas agencies which serve the needs of homeless individuals in the community.

In conclusion, the problem was identified by the community, and a plan to address the problem was created by the community. The plan is now being implemented by the community.

The community is us – federal government agencies, state government agencies, city and county government, local citizens, local non-profit agencies, faith based organizations, and the homeless residents of the county. It is tremendously satisfying to be in a position within county government that mandates that I act as a catalyst for altering the status quo through collaboration. Indeed, as challenging as collaboration seems at times, little gets accomplished without it.

It is tremendously satisfying to be working with professional, dedicated, knowledgeable, motivated and successful members of our community. All of us could have remained satisfied with the status quo, all of us had enough work to do, all of us have too little time and other resources to meet our current obligations, all of us committed ourselves to finding a way to make this happen. Be impatient, collaborate, plan and implement. Then get impatient again.

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PA Counties Fight to Restore Flexible

★ **BY KELLY SPARVIERI**

Executive Director

Pennsylvania Association of County Human Services Administrators

Pennsylvania's flexible funding for safety net programs is slated for huge cuts, but its counties are fighting back.

Nagwa Cramer, Housing Coordinator for Carbon/Monroe/Pike Mental Health Mental Retardation Agency, is seriously concerned about the further drastic cuts proposed to the State's Human Services Development Fund (HSDf) – a fund considered by many to be the safety net for human services in Pennsylvania counties. As a result of recent cuts, Cramer's agency's ability to provide necessary services to children and young adults with mental disabilities and emotional disturbances has been severely limited.

Last year, Cramer's agency received over \$69,000 in HSDf funds, and was able to assist 207 seriously emotionally disturbed or at-risk children, adolescents, and young adults. Without these funds, Monroe County would be unable to provide these services. As Cramer explains, "there exists a population of needy children whose parents are 'working poor,' underemployed or underpaid who are at great risk of developing more severe problems without access to less restrictive outpatient interventions. HSDf provides access for this population who would otherwise fall through the cracks."

HSDf is a Pennsylvania state-only fund that has existed since the mid-1980's with the goal of giving counties greater flexibility in addressing their human services needs. The funds can be used by counties for the following services:

- ◆ Categorical Services for:
 - ◇ Low-income adults
 - ◇ Homeless persons
 - ◇ Aging and aged persons
 - ◇ Drug-addicted and alcohol addicted persons
 - ◇ Persons with mental health problems

- ◇ Persons with mental retardation; and/or
- ◇ Dependent and delinquent children
- ◆ Service coordination
- ◆ Generic Services defined as meeting the needs of two or more client populations
- ◆ Specialized services defined as new services or a combination thereof designed to meet the unique needs of a client population that are unmet by the current categorical programs.

Due to the flexibility of HSDf, Pennsylvania counties use the money to fund a wide variety of programs; particularly those each county determines are most needed. HSDf-funded programs range from home delivered meals for the elderly to tutoring and safe haven programs for at risk teens and low income youth to educational programs for adults recently released from prison.

Despite the fact that HSDf funds critical county human services programs, it has been cut significantly in the past few years and is facing a drastic cut for FY 2010-2011. Pennsylvania's human services professionals know that funding for many programs nationwide has been decreased due to the current economic climate. However, among county human services programs in Pennsylvania, HSDf is facing a pronounced and noticeable reduction in funding.

Since FY 2002-2003, HSDf funding has been reduced by 38 percent from its allocation of \$41 million, with the largest cuts occurring in the past two years. The state proposes a further cut to \$25.3 million, 29 percent less than the amount allocated to HSDf two

years ago.

This decrease has forced counties to scale back and even eliminate programs that are not only necessary, but actually save money in the long run. For example, chore services programs for adults with disabilities which are regularly funded by HSDf are exponentially cheaper than institutionalization. In addition, HSDf-funded case management programs for adults recently released from





Funding for Safety Net Programs

prison reduce recidivism and assist individuals to achieve sustainable employment.

When asked to brief state legislators on the status of HSDF funding, Pennsylvania Association of County Human Services Administrators (PACHSA) President Dave Schwille, Human Service Administrator, Venango County, remarked, “When safety net programs such as these that help individuals to become more self sufficient are cut, costs only INCREASE over the long run.” These thoughts are echoed by most PACHSA members. As PACHSA member Ruth Kranz-Carl, Director of Human Services, Chester County, explains, “During times like this it is even more important to focus on human services funding and to convince legislators that human services that support basic needs of individuals such as food, shelter, and clothing are critically important. HSDF provides and connects people to those safety net services.”

In order to combat the devastating effects of the cuts to Pennsylvania’s safety net, PACHSA members, assisted by the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP,) turned to grassroots lobbying efforts to garner support for the restoration of funds. At a time when counties are facing decreased funding across the board, PACHSA members are aware that it will take more than just usual budget advocacy efforts on their parts to make a difference. Accordingly, county officials and staff created an “HSDF Action Advocacy Plan,” to assist members in undertaking an intensive grassroots effort.

The plan included steps aimed at increasing awareness and support for HSDF, advocacy at the local level, and an emphasis on using specific statistics showing the effect of funding cuts on constituents served. The plan also emphasized provider involvement, noting, “groups that rely on HSDF funding will have to be an integral part of advocating for its restoration and putting forth the CCAP message of restoration to legislators.” Some other specific steps outlined in the action advocacy plan were:

- ◆ Develop talking points and templates for media outreach by members and other interested groups, and promote use of the CCAP legislative action center
- ◆ Develop a list of and contact various non-profit organizations affected by the cuts to HSDF to ask for their assistance in advocacy
- ◆ Contact commissioners in each county to engage them in advocacy efforts and increase statewide

message consistency and exposure

- ◆ Contact state officials and employees to keep them apprised of the situation and advocacy efforts
- ◆ Encourage and plan county and PACHSA staff visits with local legislators to relay message
- ◆ Compile a list of providers for each county and ask providers to assist in advocacy
- ◆ Compile a list of consumers for each county that would be willing to assist in advocacy efforts
- ◆ Encourage each county to contact media and arrange local events to advocate for HSDF
- ◆ Provide lobbying/grassroots training to counties
- ◆ Develop effective and consistent “marketing” tools to relay message statewide – i.e. slogan, buttons, signs, postcards, etc.

As a follow-up to the Action Advocacy Plan, grass-roots training was provided by CCAP Deputy Director Brinda Carroll Penyak.

When the HSDF Action Advocacy Plan was introduced, it was unclear whether members would be willing or even able to spend the time needed to follow the plan outlined. Moreover, there was a unspoken feeling among members and staff that in light of the economic climate of the past few years there may be little that could be done. In addition, the Governor’s proposed budget had several revenue gaps, and counties were cautioned that they may even be facing larger across-the-board cuts in the budget process.

Despite a less than hopeful outlook, PACHSA members used the action plan and advocated locally. Counties held legislative breakfasts and lunches, scheduled press conferences, sent letters and informational packets to legislators, and scheduled meetings with legislators, providers, consumers, and the local public to get the word out. Over 1000 buttons, supplied by CCAP, were circulated among Pennsylvania communities. Counties of various sizes, demographics, and geographical locations were equally committed. In Lehigh County (population of 312,090) located in eastern Pennsylvania, the Human Services Department hosted an informational session inviting providers who receive HSDF funds and educating them on the impact the reduction of funds has on the community. At this informational session providers were asked for assistance in contacting legislators to restore these funds and information materials and buttons were provided to those who attended.



NACo's Annual Conference to Focus on Health Care Reform, Economic Recovery Programs

★ BY MARILINA SANZ
NACo Associate Legislative Director

NACo will be holding workshops on implementation of the health care reform law, and several of our subcommittee and committee meetings will also be devoted to specific aspects of the law at our Annual Conference in Washoe County (Reno), Nevada July 16-20. Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich will be one of the Opening General Session speakers when he will speak about where he thinks the economy is headed.

NACHSA and the National Association of County Aging Programs (NACAP) will meet jointly. Presentations will be made on the long-term effects of poverty on children and ways to increase senior citizen participation in the SNAP programs.

Two of the Human Services and Education Steering Committee's subcommittees will have joint meetings with two of the Health Steering Committee's subcommittees.

The subcommittee on **Welfare, Social Services and Immigration** will meet with the **Health Disparities** subcommittee. Their featured speaker is Tony Iton, Senior Vice President for Health Communities at the California Endowment, who will speak about the social determinants of health and what can be done to fix them.

The subcommittee on **Aging** will meet with the **Long-Term Care** subcommittee and will have a presentation on the aspects of the health reform law that affect senior citizens, such as the new Elder Justice Act.



Robert Reich

The subcommittee on **Education, Children and Families** will meet to discuss proposals to refinance child welfare. Casey has committed to send a speaker to report on their proposal and we are also hoping to have someone discuss the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators' initiative.



Assistant Secretary for Children and Families Carmen Nazario, and Assistant Secretary for Aging, Kathy Greenlee or their representatives have been invited to address the Human Services and Education Steering Committee. The committee will consider a new resolution on the Older Americans Act, which is due for reauthorization next year. All existing resolutions and the NACo platform sunset at the annual conference, so the committee will take action on those as well.

At right are the meeting times, plus a list of workshops that might interest NACHSA members. All meetings will be held at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center. Please go to our conference website at www.naco.org for updates and registration information, as well as conference hotel information.

I look forward to seeing you in Washoe County.

NACHSA Meets on July 16 at NACo Annual Conference in Reno

NACHSA will be holding its next meeting during the National Association of Counties' Annual Conference in Reno. In addition to the sessions outlined on these pages, NACHSA will be meeting on July 16 from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm to learn about the latest health and human services developments in Washington and share ideas of how to address the service delivery challenges directors face at home and how the federal government may assist in those efforts.

Look for further conference updates in upcoming NACHSA e-Alerts. To learn more about the conference, go to NACo's website at www.naco.org.

Descriptions of Select NACo Educational Sessions

For full descriptions, visit [this link](http://www.naco.org) at www.naco.org.



Workshop Block 1

Sunday, July 18 – 1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

There's No Place Like Home: Foreclosure Crisis Impact In Your County

Is there a county not affected by the foreclosure crisis? The recent economic downturn impacted county revenues on multiple fronts, assuring difficult budget years in the near term. One of the most significant impacts has been felt by the home foreclosure crisis, hurting counties the most because property tax collections are the largest source of self-generated revenue for counties. One response to this issue has been to develop and implement county foreclosure prevention programs. This workshop will discuss economic trends and analysis, show how county budgets are responding to the crisis and present a profile of a county foreclosure prevention program.

Workshop Block 2

Sunday, July 18 – 2:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Oasis in a Food Desert: Counties Invest in Local Food

As the number of food deserts across the U.S. has increased, the issue of local food has jumped to the front lines of local government

interests. Many urban and rural communities are seeking local food systems by leveraging resources of local farms, natural areas and homegrown businesses while providing fresh, healthy food to residents. These policies increase residents' access to affordable foods and improve wellness through investments in resources like local farms, new farmers and community gardens. Come to this workshop to learn how innovative strategies create and maintain local food systems that can benefit citizens' health and your local economy.

Workshop Block 3

Monday, July 19 – 9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

Increasing Staff Performance with Low-Cost eLearning

Electronic learning (e-Learning) enables county leadership and training directors to develop, deliver, manage and track a wide variety of learning experiences and administrative tasks through an internet-based learning portal. By significantly expanding access to learning materials, E-learning increases your county's capacity to train more employees and reduces travel costs associated with traditional classroom training. In this workshop you'll see how NACo's Network of Care e-Learning platform offers ease, affordability and results.

NACo Annual Conference—Agenda At a Glance

Friday, July 16

12:15 p.m. — 1:45 p.m. Health Steering Committee: Health Care Reform Subcommittee Meeting (A19-A20)

1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Joint NACHSA/NACAP Meeting (D9-D10)

5:30—7 p.m. NACo/State Association Legislative Staff Roundtable (A17)

Saturday, July 17

8:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Subcommittee Meetings:
 8:15-9:15 Education, Children & Families (D6)
 8:15-9:15 Public Health, Healthy Committees (D4-D5)
 10:15-11:30 Aging and Long-Term Care (Joint, D4-D5)
 11:30-12:30 Welfare, Social Services & Immigration and Health Disparities (Joint, D4-D5)

1:15—4:15 p.m. Health Steering Committee (D4-D5)

1:30 – 4:00 p.m. Human Services & Education Steering Committee (A6)

Sunday, July 18

9—11 a.m. Opening General Session (Hall #3)

1—2:15 p.m. Workshops of Interest:

- *There's No Place Like Home: Foreclosure Impact in Your County*
- *Working Smarter: Libraries Partner to Support Workforce Development*
- *County Agencies Partner to Invest in Community Health*

2:45—4 p.m. Workshops of Interest:

- *Children and Disasters: Our Role in Protecting this Highly Vulnerable Population*
- *Oasis in a Food Desert: Counties Invest in Local Food*
- *The Local Safety Net in a Reformed Health System*

Monday, July 19

9 – 10:15 a.m. Workshops of Interest:

- *Using Data-Driven Decisions to Improve Community Health and Maximize Public Health Dollars*
- *Increasing Staff Performance with Low-Cost e-Learning*
- *E-mail and Other Forms of Telecommunication: Do Employees Have an Expectation of Privacy?*

7– 9 p.m. Conferencewide Event Hosted by Washoe County (off-site at the Reno Ballroom, Grand Sierra Hotel and Casino)

Tuesday, July 20

8:30—9:45 a.m. Workshops of Interest:

- *How Will Health Reform Affect Your County Employees' Health Benefits?*
- *Justice for All: Effective County Juvenile Justice Efforts*
- *Stay Ahead of the Story: Media Relations in Tough Times*

10 a.m.—Noon NACo Election of Officers and Business Meeting

7—9:30 p.m. Inaugural Gala Reception (off-site at Reno Ballroom)

Using Social Media to Build Community

An interview with Jim Ashmore and Joel Potts about their view of Internet chats, Facebook, and other technology

years), an RSS feed (2,000 visits per month), BlogTalk Radio interviews (40 downloads per broadcast) and weekly emailed headlines. The results have been stunning, with record numbers of individuals regularly accessing information about the agency.

Jim Ashmore, Performance Improvement leader at the Department, and Joel Potts, Executive Director of the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association, are both members of the Board of Directors of the National Association of County Human Services Administrators. They discuss Hamilton County's success:

Q. Do you feel the use of social media can help forge relationships with consumers, the public, taxpayers, etc?

Potts: Absolutely. Times are changing and we need to change with them. The younger generation is much more adept to utilizing social media and it is an ever-growing means of communication. Government needs to fit more into society instead of trying to force everyone into our means of messaging. Historically our communication tools are lengthy, bureaucratic and difficult to understand. We need to be faster, clearer and more consistent. By utilizing social media, we can rapidly increase accessibility and engage the public, ultimately enhancing relationships and furthering the goals of modernizing social service delivery.

Q. What is happening in Hamilton County that is not happening elsewhere? How can it be duplicated in other counties?

Potts: Hamilton County is way ahead of the curve in making use of new media tools. I am not aware of any other community in the state that has taken advantage of all of the media options to the extent that Hamilton County is utilizing them. Not only can other counties easily replicate what is taking place in the County but counties should be able to also share information with

each other and communicate with clients and the public throughout the state much faster and consistently than is currently occurring.

Q. What kinds of questions do you get in the public chats and how do you feel they are helping the public?

Ashmore: The norm seems to center around "am I eligible" and/or "what documents do I need to get help for my household." Frankly, one of the biggest benefits of the public chat is the ability for folks to just view the questions and responses. Often, they don't want to ask, but they sure want to know the answer since, often times, the onlookers are in a similar financial situation.

"From the customers to our service providers, all seem to be in agreement that it's a major step forward."

— Jim Ashmore

Q. What kinds of questions come in the private chats?

Ashmore: A lot center around "when will my case be authorized" and "did you get everything you need to process my case". From questions like this, it becomes a great eye opener for us as an agency to make sure we do a better job of explaining the process of approval during the initial interview or review of eligibility.

Q. What impact are chats having on reducing phone calls and lobby traffic?

Ashmore: Time will only tell how popular this tool becomes but, we've already seen an impact. While we only expected a few folks to utilize the chat on day one (due to limited marketing), nearly 200 people tried it, and the responses seemed very positive.

Q. In a time like this, with budget cuts and record

Relations, Connect with Clients



Ashmore: Definitely! From the customers to our service providers, all seem to be in agreement that it's a major step forward.

Q. How do other directors feel about using social media?

Potts: Human service leaders are curious and engaged in the conversations, but have been slow to utilizing social media thus far. Success from Hamilton County, along with education on practical applications, will go a long way towards other county involvement in this news means of communication.

Q. Why is Hamilton County a leader on this front?

numbers coming for help, is this a good tool for the tool box?

Potts: This is a great way to improve quality services and make the best use of limited resources. I anticipate large-scale movement towards incorporating social media tools as we struggle with ways to reduce the number of individuals coming through the doors of the local agencies as well as speeding up the time to process cases while improving access. A considerable amount of caseworker time is spent in meetings and answering calls that could be easily taken care of through other means of communications, increasing the amount of time workers have to provide services.

Q. How does staff feel about the chats?

Ashmore: A range of emotions. Some are very excited but others are nervous. The excited ones seem to be saying "it's about time we catch up with technology" while the nervous ones are just a little fearful of another new way of doing business.

Q. Does the public seem to appreciate the chats?

Ashmore: Not to brag but, I think we just have a tremendous commitment from staff and management. With our workforce being reduced by 50% in the last 18 months, we've had to find ways to build a better mousetrap...which is a good thing. A little creativity and a strong sense of purpose will go along way!

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Partnering to Prevent Foster Care Re-Entry: The RePreve Model

★ BY RYAN UHLENKOTT
Riverside County, OH Children's Services

Two years ago, Riverside County, California's Children's Services Division found that its foster care reentry rate was higher than the state and national average. It decided to tackle that issue head on.

The County's percentage of children who reentered the foster care system after they reunified with their families and their cases were closed was 14.6%, higher than the State's rate of 12%, and the national re-entry standard of 9.9%.

To improve this reentry rate, Riverside County partnered with the Healthy Families Foundation to solicit grant funding from the Marguerite Casey Foundation (a philanthropical arm of the United Parcel Service) for a reentry prevention program targeting the Coachella Valley area of the County. In the fall of 2008, Riverside County and Healthy Families were awarded grant funding, and the reentry prevention program, also known as RePreve, began.

RePreve's goals are three-fold: 1) to solicit participation from families with the potential for reentry before their court case is closed; 2) to keep participation and engagement in any services offered voluntary; and, 3) to support and encourage families for an additional 90 days after their case is closed.

Due to the established relationship between the case-carrying social worker and the family, it was important for this social worker to initiate the invitation to the families for their participation in RePreve. If families saw RePreve as another way for Child Protective Services (CPS) to further monitor their lives, they will more than likely decline. If, instead, the social worker accurately describes the program in terms of the added support and services it can offer, the families will more than likely accept the assistance. As is often the case, returning children to parents who are perhaps newly sober, newly employed, and/or challenged with demonstrating newly learned parenting skills can be daunting. Though families may not desire further intervention from the County, often



support is often needed.

The second tenet, voluntary engagement in RePreve, is critical. Families have to want to participate, and can opt out at any time. Since CPS became initially involved in these families' lives, everything has been court-ordered and in the realm of the "have to" rather than the "want to." But it is the "want" that sees the highest levels of engagement and participation, and the highest levels of success. Those families with the desire to change, rather than being forced to, see the lowest levels of child abuse and neglect recidivism.

Support and encouragement for families engaged in RePreve comes from the Healthy Families Foundation. These paraprofessionals meet with clients in their homes, and address real, ongoing needs like housing, employment, child care, transportation, and access to services. RePreve home visitors are bilingual and are connected to a myriad of community resources to help families find what they need to be successful in their communities. RePreve is offered for up to 90 days, substantially and tangibly easing the transition from CPS dependency to independence.

I had the opportunity to attend a Team Decision Making



meeting in February. The meeting was being held for a father who had successfully reunified with his five boys under the age of 12. The mother had failed to complete her substance abuse program or to take advantage of any of the services that CPS offered, so the recommendation was sole legal and physical custody to the single father. When the announcement of the Department’s intent to close his case was made known, this father’s excitement at having completed his program turned to concern, and then to despair. He tearfully thanked CPS for its support, but feared caring for his boys alone. Two months behind on his rent, he cried recalling how his oldest child asked for money to buy clothes at Wal-Mart, and how he had to tell his son, “No.”

“The father’s anxiety turned to excitement—given needed support and resources, he was optimistic about a future without CPS.”

The RePreve worker sat across the table from the father. She listened patiently to his concerns, and took notes. The RePreve worker detailed steps the father could take to secure low-income housing, child care, and even free karate lessons for his boys. When the father appeared overwhelmed, the RePreve paraprofessional joined him on the other side of the



table, gave him the notes and contact information she had written down, and assured him that she would be there for the next 90 days to ensure services were in place. The father’s

anxiety returned to excitement – given needed support and resources, he was optimistic about a future without CPS.

Since the first concept meeting in November 2008, the Desert Region of Riverside County has referred 38 families to RePreve. An impressive 30 of those families have either initiated or completed services. And though it’s too soon to conclude anything from data so recently gathered, the reentry rate in the Desert has fallen from 15.1% in the first six months of RePreve, to 10.15% as of March 2010.

Sometimes families return to the attention of child welfare because the problems or difficulties they were encountering reappear. Sometimes new problems present themselves which place the child’s safety in jeopardy. And sometimes, families are reunified and cases closed because everyone did what they needed to at the time, however, the underlying stress factors like stable housing, employment, and a lack of community resources were not adequately resolved.

The RePreve program, and the paraprofessionals who make-up the Healthy Families Foundation team, address all three causes of potential re-entry. It is a partnership and a model that is looking to expand beyond the Coachella Valley to all of Riverside County. And if successful, it may one day serve as a model for California child welfare programs.

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Results Focus Revolutionizes Social Services

Wilson County, NC DSS is seeing positive results for citizens with its Leading By Results performance management philosophy

★ BY J. GLENN OSBORNE

Director, Wilson County, NC Department of Social Services

The Wilson County Department of Social Services (WCDSS) in Wilson, NC is focused on results and making a positive impact on the lives of its citizens. For the last seven years the agency's vision and focus has been directed by the Leading By Results (LBR) performance management philosophy. The agency has met many challenges to bring about the positive changes and innovations needed to help citizens be safe, secure and self-sufficient.

"Every meeting is focused around our results and the impact they are having on Wilson County. It keeps us focused and reminds us of why we are here."

— Glenn Osborne

"We have made a positive impact in our efforts to support children, older adults and families to live in safe secure homes and many families are becoming economically stable," said Glenn Osborne, Director. "We do this by maximizing our resources to achieve quality results."

WCDSS is helping families increase their wage earnings and helping teen parents through the Success in Schools initiative, where 87% of teenage custodial parents are staying in school and graduating. In the agency's programs for older adults, prevention services reduced substantiations of repeat maltreatment to a success rate of 100%.

In child welfare programs over the past three years, all of the families that have completed the county's prevention program have not had contact with the child welfare system. In the child support program, the county is one of two (out of 100) counties in the state performing above 90% in all performance categories. In terms of automation, WCDSS will be a completely paperless agency across all programs by January 2011.

All of these results illustrate how LBR has created a focused culture of performance.

"There is a saying, "What gets measured, gets done." While that is true, we think it is much more. We truly see this as a driving force to positive, high-impact results that brings our staff and the community together around common initiatives," said Osborne.

Wilson is one of twenty-nine North Carolina social services agencies

that adopted the LBR approach. While the results-based frameworks are similar in counties across the state, the details and emphasis differs from county to county.

"Some counties may choose different measurements. Some counties choose to let their local Department of Social Services (DSS) board drive the process and there are many other differences," Osborne explained. "We chose a team-based approach, where our local employee teams working with our customers are driving the process while our management and board are steering the vision. Everyone is working together to improve our citizens' lives," he added.

Planning, developing and implementing occur on a two-year results-based continuous improvement cycle that is focused on five key result statements. The result statements are approved and adopted by the DSS Board. Individual teams begin working on indicators that will measure the progress to make a positive impact on the results.

Once finalized, teams develop strategies that will be the actual day-to-day work that moves the indicator in a positive direction. The DSS Board reviews progress at its monthly meetings and performs an annual



agency performance evaluation each July.

Currently the five key areas of focus are Safe Children, Thriving Youth, Healthy Adults, Self-sufficient Families, and Reliable Service. All areas address the entire family and the agency's service delivery, which is also measured. Currently the agency receives a 95% customer service rating from customers stating they were treated with dignity and respect.

All is not perfect, however. Wilson County DSS does experience some results that may not go in a positive direction.

"We do not see this as a negative," Osborne said. "In fact, we embrace these learning opportunities to see how we can improve our services to our citizens. It tells us what is actually working and not working."

The agency then starts work to improve the measurement and move it in a positive direction. Results cannot be achieved without a successful engaging relationship with community partners.

LBR has revolutionized the way WCDSS does many things, including meetings. Both DSS Board & Executive Management team meetings made a shift in the way they are conducted each month. Osborne further notes, "every meeting is focused around our results and the impact they are having on Wilson County. It keeps us focused and it reminds us of why

we are here."

What does the future hold for Leading By Results in Wilson County?

"The beauty is that we don't know, because LBR is not a fad or a new trend. It's the way we do business. It is part of our agency culture. What we do know is that as the future of human services changes, we will be focused on areas that make a positive difference in the lives of people, and we'll have the data to prove what is working," Osborne concluded.

Initiation of Leading By Results was a joint effort between the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services, the North Carolina Association of Community Boards of Social Services and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services in 2003. Wilson County started its efforts shortly thereafter and has been full steam ahead since that time.

FOR FURTHER INFO

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Reflections on A Life Dedicated to County Human Services:

Building a House with the Proper “E’s”

★ BY GERALD HUBER

Director

LaCrosse County, WI, Department of Human Services

After 27 years working in county human services within the states of Minnesota and in Wisconsin, my family recently decided to move back to the East Coast where I spent my childhood. I have accepted a position with the state of New York directing their Developmental Disability office in Long Island. My wife and I are excited about this opportunity and being closer to our daughter who will live nearby. My wife has been a pastor and feels a calling to work with those with serious and persistent mental illness. As I begin my new work, she will receive further training and will find ways to get faith communities more involved in working with this population.

As I reflect back over the past few years in Wisconsin, I realized that local and state human services are at a critical junction. The impact of the recession has very obviously hit state and local budgets while at the same time the demand and need for human services has hit historic highs. This crisis has created the need and perhaps opportunity to begin to discover the “new normal” for human services delivery in our country based on the likelihood of longer term impacts of the recession.

Back in 2003, several human services directors and county board members met in Wisconsin to discuss the current and future budget woes facing the State’s delivery of human services. The first sentence of what we called our “Visions” report summarized the entire document. We stated that the current structure and funding of human services within the state of Wisconsin was broken and unless there was significant policy discussion regarding its future, the state was certain to be faced with challenging times ahead. This was well before the current fiscal recession and the stress on most state governments due to falling revenues. What we lacked in Wisconsin then was a political window in which to raise the cautionary flag that something needed to be done to “reconstruct” the human services system and begin the process for various reforms.

Around the same time when the “Visions” report was written, Wisconsin was one of the last states to have its inaugural federal Children and Families Safety Review (CFSR). I sat on the team that developed the first Program Improvement

Plan following the CFSR for Wisconsin, and realized that we really missed a golden opportunity to allow county human services to “have its day before the legislature” to focus on what works well in a human services system that is strongly county-based and county-funded and what does not work well in such a system.

That day never really came. We have just completed our second CFSR and also have begun to revise our “Visions” report and give it “flesh and bones” in recommending to the state departments and hopefully the legislature, a “new normal” of how human services could be funded and organized here.

Several months ago, I spoke to the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and discussed this “new normal” for human services. I used the illustration of a house in which each of our customers or clients coming into human services would first enter.

The reforms in human services need to be based on what I call the 3 E’s:

- We need to refocus on who *enters* or is determined to be *eligible* for our various programs. This hit home in my county several years ago when we had a good friend of mine, Mark Carey, evaluate our Justice Sanctions programs, which are alternatives to incarceration. Mark indicated in his study that many of those in our justice system were there for minor offenses and usually for the first time. These he referred to as “self-correcting” in which little intervention is needed to prevent recidivism. Yet often in corrections and in human services to a certain extent, we tend to want to serve and intervene with everyone who walks through the front door with the variety of services we have to offer. This approach often depletes the resources we have for those who would benefit the most and research has indicated, at least in corrections, worst outcomes result in



PA Counties Fight to Restore Flexible Funding for Safety Net Programs

providing the full array of services to those who are self correcting.

- Once we have people through the front door, we need to do better in determining which room, so to speak, that we lead them to in order to get the services they need. This relates to determining the *effectiveness* of services we have to offer. The buzz word for the last ten years has been on *evidenced based services*, which really means that what we need is the time to really determine if we are providing the right services to the right people and getting the results we hope for. In lean fiscal times, the resources needed to do this type of evaluation are going to be hard to find but never more relevant.
- Finally, in numerous evaluations of our programs in La Crosse and in Wisconsin, research has shown that we do not do an effective job in developing *exit strategies* or leading people we work with to the back door where they can begin to reintegrate back into the community. Fear of liability and failure of the client in not being able to make the transition from services is a major factor in not developing these exit strategies. However, if we believe in aspects of recovery for our clients and customers of human services and if we are effective in developing community capacity (we are calling it Community Bridges in La Crosse), we are likely to have greater resources for all our citizens who need our services and likely better outcomes.

I know that I will be working with counties in my capacity in New York and as we all face an uncertain future, I do wish all of you the very best and know that we can use this current crisis to develop an even more effective human services system.

FOR FURTHER INFO

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On the other side of the Pennsylvania, in Fayette County (population 148,644), the county's Office of Human Services worked to supply all of their HSDF providers with materials to provide to legislators, including letters of support, client petitions, and client testimonials. They also released a statement to the press, which ran in the local newspaper. Jill Streit, program specialist for the Fayette County Office of Human and Community Services and Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation, shared the press release as well as a description of what Fayette County is doing to advocate for HSDF with other PACHSA members, noting, "We are all in this 'fight' together."

In total, over 25 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties provided information regarding local advocacy efforts that they had undertaken. While some counties have not reported a favorable response, others have said the response from legislators has been promising. A few PACHSA members have even reported success with finding legislators who, after receiving education on the issue, now support restoration.

At the time this article went to print, Pennsylvania does not have a final FY 2010-2011 budget, so the HSDF funding level is unknown. PACHSA members are certainly hoping that their hard work will result in an increase, even if HSDF is not restored to the 2003 level. It is clear, however, that the efforts of PACHSA members have gone beyond what is included in their job descriptions, and will continue into the next fiscal year and beyond.

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Editors' Notes

BY KELLY SPARVIERI



We are over halfway through 2010, and I am finishing up my first six months in my new position as the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of County Human Services Administrators. Entering this position somewhat new to the field of human services, I continue to be amazed at how much there is to learn about the administration of county human services and the intricacies that this field entails.

Unfortunately, much of my time during my first six months in this position has focused on funding issues and cuts to integral human services programs due to the struggling economy as well as state spending cuts and revenue issues. Through my position as Networker Editor, I realize that these are the same issues that most county human services administrators are dealing with across the country. Funding is being slashed, state budgets have been cut, and in light of the economic climate we are all being forced to do more with less, which can become a daily struggle.

Recently, however, I have realized that there may actually be a silver lining to the economic situation. The first time I realized this was at the NACHSA meeting held during the NACo Legislative Conference this past March, when members went around the table to discuss what was going on in their counties. While many members were discussing how cuts had affected their programs, even more members were discussing how an increased need for services had created an awareness of the importance of quality human service programming. In essence, funding cuts had given administrators a unique opportunity to educate the public and garner support for programs that could not have been done if the need was not so great.

As we head into the second half of 2010, I hope that we can all see the “silver lining,” and use this as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of providing quality services to those in need.

Hope to see you in Reno at the NACo Annual Conference in July!

-Kelly

Our Mission

To promote and strengthen networks of county and community human services that protect children, families and elderly, and that support self-sufficiency of disadvantaged populations. And, to participate in formulating and advocating the human services policies of the National Association of Counties.

The **NACHSA Networker** is published quarterly by the National Association of County Human Services Administrators, an affiliate organization of the National Association of Counties. Submissions are welcome from all members. The **NACHSA Networker** is not responsible for errors in submissions and reserves the right to edit all articles for publication.

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NACHSA Networker

