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Cumberland County's Patch Program:

A Pennsylvania Community Approach to Human Services

★ **KELLY ANDRISANO, J.D.**

Executive Director

Pennsylvania Association of County Human Services Administrators

As most of those involved in county human services know, one of the biggest challenges can be determining how to get services to those who most need them without exhausting administrative resources and funding. It can also be equally as daunting for someone who has just lost their job, their home, or who may have a mental or physical disability to be able to navigate the formal system to determine what services they are eligible for and who they can reach out to receive these services.



Combine these challenges with the constant cuts being made in available human services funding, and it is clear that there are often individuals who fall between the cracks and are unable to receive assistance.

While counties across the nation continue to try to meet these challenges as best they can, Cumberland County's Department of Aging and Community Services has been relying on a unique program to assist residents in the Newville area through a community approach to human services.

This program, referred to as the Patch Program, is based on the premise of community-oriented social work within a localized area. In general terms, the program places a social worker in a community who helps identify individuals or programs that can provide services to those in need. For example, if an individual had just lost their job and was having trouble affording food for the family, and there was a program at a local church providing groceries to newly unemployed individuals, the Patch program would be able to match the individual with a need to this specialized local resource. Aging and Community Services Director Terry Barley explains, "it is a way to bring resources and needs within a small community together that otherwise may not be utilized, while keeping individuals out of the more 'formal' system."

Cumberland County instituted the Patch program in 1995, after learning about it during an exchange done with social service employees from the United Kingdom. In the U.K., a

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The President's Desk



★ BY JO WEBER
Director, Human Services Department
Sonoma County, California

Summertime is here. For kids, it's a time when they can take a break from the three 'R's' of reading, writing and 'rithmetic. For us who are a little older, summer can be a time for three different 'R's': *recharge*, *refresh* and *reflect*. I hope each of us is able to take time to do each of these this summer.

Most human services administrators have been under intense pressures on multiple fronts for many, many months. We are encouraging and supporting our staff who have seen colleagues laid off at the same time that they are encountering scared individuals and families who have never needed help come into our offices to find that, while they feel that they deserve assistance, they still aren't eligible. We are doing our best to advocate for human services programs as our county boards decide not whether to cut, but by how much. And, we continue to monitor and try to push back on state and federal activity that continues to cut programs that we thought would never be cut so deeply.

NACHSA has heard from members that they no longer say that it "can't get any worse," because it does, that it has been "wildly busy" and that, due to retrenchment, they can longer pay dues to organizations.

So, as we enter the hot, and (hopefully at some point for each of you, "lazy") days of summer, it's time for each of us to take note of our three "R's." While my time to *recharge* and *refresh* hasn't gotten here yet, I did take time to *reflect* on the articles contributed in this *Networker*.

Our profession has a lot to be proud of, even during these uncertain times. Significantly, it is through the leadership and partnership of county directors, their staff and community stakeholders that:

- Foster youth in Humboldt County, CA who are transitioning from the system are being recognized and supported.
- The way human services are delivered in Southeastern Minnesota's counties is being thoughtfully analyzed so that it may be redesigned to serve consumers and the taxpayer effectively and efficiently.
- The uninsured in Alachua County, FL have health insurance options for their families.
- Residents in Cumberland County, PA have case workers located in their towns with the authority to tap into a variety of community-based resources to address their unique needs.

It is through county staff partnering with the private sector that the Beaufort County, NC Social Services Department is using technology to free up staff time to better serve the 40 percent of their county's population that is in need.

And, it is through the amazing efforts of my staff in Sonoma County, CA and over 50 community leaders that we are truly tackling the issue of determining which upstream investments in programs indeed would help to mitigate the enormous downstream social costs when we haven't made the early investments in our families.

So, while it may be daunting and grim when we are immersed in the day-to-day business of administering our departments, taking time out this summer to recharge, refresh and reflect will do each of us, our county colleagues and the families we serve a whole lot of good.

I hope to see you in Portland!

Jo

Innovating and Reinventing: *A Human Services System in Transition*

★ BY PAUL FLEISSNER

Community Services Director
Olmsted County, Minnesota

The current debate about the size of government isn't a new one. It's simply rhetoric, however, without the informed discussion of the role that government has in our community. As Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., U.S. Supreme Court Justice once said, "Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society."

The agency that I am responsible for, the Olmsted County Community Services Department (Rochester) consists of probation services, social services, public assistance and veteran services. It is the largest expense area in the County's budget. Because of that distinction, the pressure to reform, revise, innovate and reinvent is constant – both internally and externally.

I am extremely proud of our staff. They have risen to the challenge. We have redesigned our work to streamline our processes and we have a strong county-wide outcome measurement system called Measuring for Results that helps us determine if we are serving people well.

Since 2003 we have reduced staff in our department by over nine percent. Our staff has taken involuntary furloughs and we have had layoffs and retirements. At the same time, record numbers of people have come to us for help during this recession.

Is that enough? No. It is clear that our environment is continually changing and that government has to adapt and improve like the rest of the world. As a result, a few years ago 12 counties in Southeastern Minnesota formed a partnership to proactively build a regional human services system.

We recently completed the design work on a new model with our funding partner, the Bush Foundation. There are services that we believe could be centralized or operated by the State, our "low touch" types of services – those that lend themselves to consistent policy, rules, regulations, and technology solutions. For example, child support and public assistance programs do not involve a lot of direct client contact or local decision-making.

The overarching structure for this new system would be the Southeast Minnesota Results Co-op. This Co-op would not be dissimilar from an agricultural Co-op. Counties wanting to participate would buy shares in to the Co-op to get their internal support service needs met (i.e. administration, technology support, human resources support, training, contracting). The Co-op would provide the support services across the participating counties, eliminating the redundancy that currently exists.

Counties would also have the option of purchasing "high touch"

services from the Co-op. The high touch services such as child protection, adult protection, mental health services, teen parent services, chemical health services and services to the elderly and disabled could be purchased through the co-op from the counties and/or community providers. Some of our services like child protection are not voluntary, so we need to maintain mechanisms for assuring safety to vulnerable populations.

Additionally, without the same level of resources – people and finances - we must assist clients and their natural supports (friends, family, neighbors and their faith community) to leverage emerging technology. Imagine a virtual human services center where people needing help could find connections to local non-profits, the faith community, businesses and government through a simple application on their phones. This technology exists and is already being used. While not every one of our clients have the necessary technology, the vast majority does or have a support network that will. This model is intended to empower residents to use their natural supports and government would be the provider of last choice.

This idea needs a lot of work. Our next step is to move into planning to implement this large systems change. The Minnesota Department of Human Services is supportive and I believe foundations like the Bush Foundation want to support new models of government service that are more efficient and effective.

We will need the legislature to help us make this work. We need to simplify the programs in Minnesota. We need to modernize our technology systems. Our eligibility system is so outdated (DOS based) that the State cannot hire people to fix it. Counties will gladly trade accountability for meeting outcomes if we can get flexibility and less prescriptive rules.

It is time for change. Southeast Minnesota local leaders and staff are stepping up to create a dynamic new approach. This idea more effectively engages the community.

If you are interested in learning more, go to our website www.olmstedcounty.com and take a look at our design document found on the Community Services publications page. Let me know what you think and be a part of defining government's role in a civil society.

FOR FURTHER INFO

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Washington Watch

Tick Tock: Time is Running Out to Reach



★ BY TOM JOSEPH
NACHSA Liaison, Waterman & Associates

The federal budget clock is ticking...

Usually Congress can hit the 'snooze button' to delay any major decisions for a few weeks or months.

But, it's different this year.

By August 2, Congress will have to pass a measure to allow the federal government to issue more debt in order to pay its bills. If it doesn't, the United States will be in default. In the past, members of both parties have grumbled about having to raise the debt ceiling, but they have gone ahead and done so without any other legislative provisions attached to it.

That was then, this is now...

Washington faces a perfect storm of record federal budget deficits and a dramatically different political mix in the House of Representatives. The deficit is fueled by a weak economy, the extension of all the Bush Administration tax cuts, federal economic stimulus spending and continued growth in the entitlements, including Medicare and Medicaid. The new Republican House majority argues that Washington has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. So, to garner their support for an increase in the debt limit, immediate and long term federal budget cuts must be made, without any new taxes.

Unfortunately the all cuts and no revenues approach will not get us out of the deficit ditch. The numbers just don't add up. Even if every single domestic discretionary program was eliminated, from funding for the FBI to transportation to social services programs, the federal budget deficit this year alone would still be nearly \$500 billion out of a \$3.2 trillion budget.

While the budget numbers don't add up, the political numbers in the House do, and it is their distrust of government that is forcing a hard look at federal spending.

Ninety-four freshmen were elected to the House of Representatives last fall, including 85 Republicans. Over one-third of the Republican Caucus are new to

Washington, and most campaigned on smaller government and no compromises with the Democrats. More importantly, most of them owe their election to grass roots Tea Party support, with little owed to the incumbent Republican leadership.

The combination of 'no compromise' budget hawks and the unavoidable August 2 debt ceiling deadline heralds an unpredictable and volatile summer in Washington.

Leaders of both parties promise that there will be a budget agreement before then. But no one has any idea of what that agreement will look like.

As this Networker went to press, a small bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives were meeting on a regular basis with Vice-President Joe Biden to craft the outlines of a budget plan before the debt ceiling is reached. So far, they identified \$150 billion in savings over the next decade and only have a couple more trillion dollars to go.



a Budget Deal

Whether they will indeed reach an agreement is anyone's guess. Biden, however, is someone who has the people and negotiating skills to get something done.

While a long-term solution remains elusive, Congress is struggling to proceed on crafting next year's spending bills for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2012.

Using the House Budget Resolution as a blueprint, the House Appropriations Committee has begun its process by proposing to cut funding to all federal departments and programs with the exception of defense. The Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee allocation funding most federal human services programs is nearly 15 percent below the FFY 2010 level. That bill is slated for a markup in late July after all but one other bill is debated, so advocates of human services programs will have the summer to make their case for low-income programs.

For its part, the Senate Appropriations Committee has not announced a schedule, due partly to the lack of a Senate Budget Committee blueprint to follow. Given the likelihood of vastly different spending bills emanating from the House and Senate, it is very uncertain how the 12 appropriations bills will be reconciled later this year, if indeed bills even reach their respective floors.

Either due to inflation or actual cuts, the continuing erosion of federal funding for domestic discretionary programs does little to help balance the budget. Tackling the entitlements is a key component to reducing the debt. That plain fact places counties and persons they serve at risk.

While the House budget proposes to block grant Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), there is little chance those proposals will become law this year. The Democratic Senate and Obama Administration would thwart those efforts. But the chorus of calls from state governors for more administrative flexibility in operating Medicaid opens the door to future change.

The Medicaid budget is now larger than Medicare. The House block grant proposal is estimated save \$750 million over ten years – marking a 35 percent cut in federal spending in ten years. Using a county lens, those 'savings' are cost shifts to states and counties. Despite the Congressional focus on the program, the rank and file seems to be unaware that Medicaid is not only a low-income program supporting low-income families, it supports the middle class.



Indeed, it is grandma who may be affected most. Moms and kids are pretty cheap in terms of costs, it's middle class persons who have exhausted all their savings who can't live with their grown children for a variety of reasons, including multiple health conditions needing skilled and/or constant care.

Short of a block grant, however, is a proposal to allow states to allow states to ignore maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements to continue coverage with current eligibility standards in order to receive future federal health reform funding. Many of the 300,000 individuals the Congressional Budget Office estimates would lose coverage under the bill would become county responsibilities.

While it is expected that the Senate would reject the House measure, bills to reduce or eliminate MOE requirements could be a 'compromise' to counter the more radical attempts to block grant Medicaid if Congress decides to identify entitlement savings.

So too with SNAP. Through a block grant, House Republicans would give states the flexibility to operate the program, saving the federal government \$127 billion over 10 years. If the cut was applied across-the-board, benefits would be cut up to 20 percent or eligibility severely curtailed.

So, as the budget clock ticks, federal human services programs administered by counties continue to be at risk. Everything is under consideration, from domestic discretionary programs to entitlements reaching millions of individuals. NACHSA will continue to work on your behalf to protect programs. Stay tuned. It'll likely be a summer full of budgetary twists and turns.

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Humboldt County Lets Foster Youth Do the Talking

Transition-age foster youth participate in development of services for their peers

★ BY PHILLIP CRANDALL

Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Humboldt County, CA

What makes an excellent system of care for transition-age foster youth? Humboldt County believes there are no better experts than the youth themselves.

In 2008, the Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration ([HCTACY](#)) was launched in partnership with the Humboldt County



Department of Health and Human Services, the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project, California Youth Connection, and Youth In Mind. The goal of this initiative is to build an effective, responsive, and youth-informed system of care for transition-age foster youth.

Each year, more than 5,000 youth “age out” of California’s foster care system at 18 or 19 years of age, depending on whether they are close to high school graduation. Young people emancipating from California’s foster care system face a difficult transition to adulthood completely on their own, and are more likely to be incarcerated, unemployed and/or homeless, which results in extraordinary costs to public systems.

Humboldt’s HCTAYC youth told the County that [Committing to Youth Engagement](#) requires an environment that encourages and respects youth voices in meetings and decision-making. A seat at the table is not enough to affect true systematic change, they said, but a culture shift toward seeing youth as partners is the first step.

One of the most effective ways HCTAYC has engaged the county and community in this partnership is through [Digital Stories](#). Digital stories offer youth the opportunity to create short documentaries about their experiences with juvenile

justice, education, foster care, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and homelessness. Digital stories are a highly effective tool for others to learn from the perspective of the youth who have real-life experience with systems of care, but, above all, digital stories offer an opportunity for healing. The county found the process of creating the digital stories was a highly empowering experience for youth, as they were able to think about their story, tell it in their own way, and have it produced and used for the purposes of improving care for all foster youth.

In its first two years, HCTAYC authored policy recommendations to improve mental health services for transition-age youth (TAY) at the county’s psychiatric health facility, Children’s Center and crisis line. They secured two seats on the County’s mental health board dedicated to TAY. Humboldt County’s youth have also participated in events at the state Capitol in Sacramento, including testifying on May 10 at the California Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care and followed by Legislators for Youth Shadow Day at the Capitol the next day.

HCTAYC also provides leadership development and professional skills training to increase youth capacities in decision-making and policy setting. Youth members attend state and national conferences to develop their leadership skills and knowledge about policies affecting children and youth. Participation in the various conferences has allowed youth from Humboldt County to share their experiences with youth from different regions, and learn about larger issues facing TAY nationwide.

HCTAYC continues to build on its efforts to develop a county health and human services system that is more effective and informed on TAY issues, a strong community of youth voices in the county, and empowerment of transition age youth to shape the systems of care in Humboldt County and throughout the state.

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Alachua County, FL Responds to Growing Uninsured Population with CHOICES Program

★ BY ROBERT BAILEY
CHOICES Director
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Community Health Offering Innovative Care and Educational Services is not a phrase that trips easily off the tongue. But using the acronym CHOICES, the citizens of Alachua County, Florida are familiar with a County-managed program that provides primary care and preventative medical services for the working uninsured of the County.

The program has grown substantially in the past several years. In its early days, however, the CHOICES program had low membership, uninviting benefits, and community opposition.

What grew to become the CHOICES Program started as conversations in Alachua County's Department of Community Support Services (DCSS) in 2003. The Social Service Division was experiencing growing demand for primary care and pharmaceutical services. Its budget for those services was exhausted before the year ended. The discussion in and around Gainesville, Florida asked how the County might marshal resources to address locally the national issue of the uninsured.

Several months of meeting involving members of the County Commission, DCSS leadership, healthcare providers, citizens and others developed a proposal to place a referendum on the ballot in 2004 to add .25 cents to the county sales tax to fund a program for the uninsured. At the end of the campaign the measure passed by only 85 votes. After the vote, an implementation strategy was crafted.

Over the next year the County Board of Commissioners created a local Advisory Board to develop eligibility criteria and a benefit package for the working uninsured. The County Commission and the Advisory Board first decided that CHOICES was not to be a welfare program -- it would focus on the working uninsured. Initial eligibility requirements included a household income below 150 percent of the federal poverty level; working at least 32 hours per week; no access to other health coverage and being a county resident. The benefits included primary care services, drug, dental and vision services. There was no inpatient benefit.

Despite the efforts, the community response was underwhelming. At the end of 2006 (the first full year of operations) about 500 residents were enrolled. After another year the count was about 1,000.

While membership growth was slow, the revenue collection was fairly brisk. At the close of 2008 the cumulative CHOICES Fund Balance was over \$37 million with annual expenses under



\$3 million. In addition to low membership, the provider network was limited as providers had a difficult time serving CHOICES members as the program covered diagnostic and preventative billing codes but few treatment codes.

The Advisory Board studied the matter and recommended to the County that medical benefits be changed to mirror Medicare benefits in outpatient settings. Over the course of the next two years membership passed the 3,000 mark with membership last month surpassing 3,600. The provider network grew substantially, and the community attitude toward CHOICES changed. Where the main source of applications before 2008 was employers and providers, now over 40 percent came from referrals from family and friends. With benefits now covering diagnosis and outpatient treatment, providers no longer needed to consult billing code lists to determine if a procedure was covered.

As the economy worsened, the County responded by changing the eligibility criteria. The work requirement was lowered to 20 hours per week and the poverty threshold was increased to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. While the applications received by the program indicated that few members were affected by the work requirement, it did have an upward effect on the membership. The most significant factor, however, was aligning the benefits with the needs of the members and the providers.

The program now receives over 350 new applications per month and projects exceeding 4,000 members by the end of the County Fiscal Year (September 2011). The cumulative CHOICES Fund Balance is about \$40 million but the sales tax surcharge

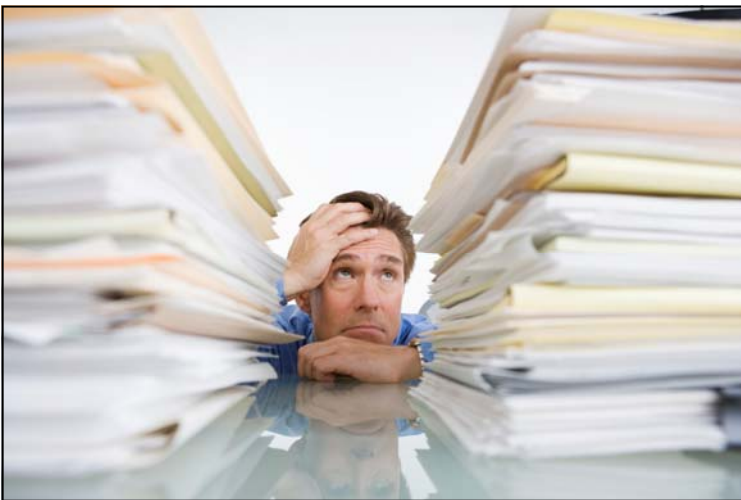
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Through Technology, Beaufort County,

★ **BY CARRIE SCHAFFER**
Marketing Specialist
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Known for its waterfronts and historic past, Beaufort County, North Carolina is home to 47,759 residents, over 19 percent of whom live below the federal poverty level. To help those citizens, the Beaufort County Department of Social Services provides assistance to eligible residents through a dozen different income maintenance and social work programs.

In the month of February 2011 alone the income maintenance staff served 18,967 clients, or 40 percent of the County's population. Serving that number of clients demands organization and easy access to documents. The state classifies Beaufort County as a Tier 1 county, which according to www.nccommerce.com "is given to the 40 most-distressed counties in the state." The agency and its 100 employees are constantly busy.



The Situation

The agency had previously attempted to employ a document management solution, but it had caused numerous issues for the agency, including lost documents, duplicates in the system and unreliable backups.

In short, the system was unable to do what the agency needed. Workers could not scan their own documents and relied on both paper and electronic records. Also, there was no sharing of files; workers in each program area scanned verification documents — drivers licenses, social security cards, bills, etc.

—for each client even though many clients had open cases in several programs.

"It was a mess, really. We were never really satisfied," said Lucinda Roebuck, IT Services Supervisor. "Finally the system just stopped scanning in new documents. We were relieved in a way."

The Solution

Once the previous system failed, the county began looking in earnest for a replacement. They had heard about Northwoods and Laserfiche® at a conference and contacted Kevin Smith of One Source, a certified reseller of Laserfiche® that partners with Northwoods to provide a solution tailored to North Carolina social services agencies.

While Laserfiche® provides the document repository and framework of the system, Compass Software® gives case managers the tools and features they need to do their jobs more quickly and efficiently. The Northwoods solution includes distributed capture of verification documents, electronic forms, business process workflow, and more, all backed with enterprise-level document management from Laserfiche®.

Compass Software® Implementation

Transfer from the previous system to the Northwoods solution was a success, with the entire solution going "live" on July 1, 2010. Northwoods' hands-on training approach made for a smooth installation, allowing benefits to be realized immediately.

"Training with Compass was awesome. There was no better training," said Roebuck.

Successes and ROI

With implementation complete and their staff trained and ready to go, Beaufort County began counting their "wins" immediately. Electronic document sharing meant they no longer needed to make copies of entire case files in order to give them to the appropriate case workers, thus dramatically decreasing the use of paper and toner. The task of scanning is much faster with the ability to capture double-sided documents, ID cards, and color documents with a single pass through the scanner. Drop color and instant adjustment



NC Lowers Costs and Boosts Efficiency



capabilities help ensure that images can be easily read.

“Scanning is quicker and now there are such a variety of ways of searching, it really helps,” said Roebuck.

Since many clients have multiple cases (and multiple case managers) in

the agency, the ability to quickly and easily search the system for the latest client documents saves time and reduces errors. Web pages and reports can be “printed” into the system with just a few clicks of the mouse, which is useful for tax office documents and similar web-hosted information. Supervisors can oversee their departments more easily, and case managers can share documents and tasks.

From an Information Technology (IT) perspective, the new system offers far more control of permissions and other key components. Previously, County IT was unable to make needed changes to the system. Social Security Numbers (SSN) were unique identifiers for clients and their documents in the system. If a case worker updated an incorrect SSN, any associated image was lost. The Northwoods system allows authorized users to edit keywords. A case worker can easily update names when a client marries or divorces and can correct errors to keywords with no risk of losing associated documents. Audits have been simplified with the ease of document sharing. Helping state auditors get what they need is as simple as burning the documents to a CD. Also, supervisors and quality control employees can easily check that applications are correctly processed with the necessary verifications.

The agency has experienced a 70 percent cost savings on supplies when comparing this year to last. These savings result from a number of factors, but the electronic conversion from paper and hard copy processing of just one form, known as the ‘8590’ has saved \$1,610 per case manager annually. In addition, the new system resulted in the removal of 15 filing cabinets, freeing up much needed space for other purposes.

Measuring success in numbers is just one way to rate the

effectiveness of a project. Often the human factor can mean so much more. For instance, one hospital case worker now uses Compass Software® and Laserfiche® on her laptop through a secure VPN connection. She is able to instantly access case document images with the click of a button – saving her 2-3 trips to the agency each week, helping her to see more clients and be more productive in doing so and to also save on fuel and the travel time.

“I couldn’t take it away from her if I tried,” said Derrick Leggett, Computer Support Technician, Beaufort County Department of Social Services.

Reducing the time it takes to perform job-related tasks can help make anyone happy. Sure enough, internal team morale is on the rise, and Beaufort County can now service its clients in a more timely, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

“We’d been down in the dumps for so long before Compass and Laserfiche®, that this is just amazing,” said Ms. Roebuck. When asked to give the first word that came to mind when thinking of Compass Software® and Laserfiche®, her response was “heaven.”

About Northwoods and Compass Software®

Northwoods is a proud corporate sponsor of NACHSA. Compass Software® from Northwoods is a complete suite of applications designed to bring time savings, ease and efficiencies to Human Services. From electronic forms and document management to client flow and scheduling solutions, Compass Software® and Northwoods can help agencies reduce costs while providing better service to more clients.



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

★ BY MARILINA SANZ
NACo Associate Legislative Director

Slated for July 15-19, 2011, NACHSA members will be joining other county colleagues at the National Association of Counties' (NACo) annual conference. To be held in Multnomah County (Portland) Oregon, the conference will feature ABC news correspondent Bob Woodruff and Aron Ralston, the mountain climber who was the inspiration for the movie 127 Hours.

Woodruff will speak during the Opening General Session on Sunday, July 17 and Ralston will speak during the General Session on Monday, July 18.

Using the latest in technology, NACo will be offering a new tool for attendees -- the live learning center. Delegates will be able to view up to 50 hours of sessions online, captured as true multimedia re-creations with audio synchronized to PowerPoint presentations. Unlimited access will be free as an attendee benefit.

NACHSA members will meet in Room B111 of the Oregon Convention Center on July 15 at 1:30 pm. During that meeting, they will receive briefings on the latest federal activity in Washington and learn from their



Woodruff



Ralston

colleagues the successes and challenges they have experienced as local administrators.

The Human Services and Education Steering Committee and the Health Steering Committee will continue their recent practice of having joint subcommittee meetings to discuss areas of mutual interest.

As part of these meetings, NACHSA President Jo Weber will give a presentation on Sonoma County's prevention strategies to a number of cross-cutting subcommittees.

The Human Services and Education Steering Committee meeting will feature presentations on fatherhood issues, including a discussion of Ohio's fatherhood commissions. Additionally, the committee will consider resolutions and platform changes. All resolutions and the platform expire at the annual conference.



NACHSA Meets July 15 at NACo Annual Conference in Portland

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 Friday, July 15 from 1 pm to 4 pm. Please plan to attend the meeting in order 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 17 – 1:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.

Local Public Health: Sharing Services Across Jurisdictional Lines

Sharing public health services across jurisdictions has been hailed by many as a strategy to improve local public health capacity. It has also been viewed as a potential cost-cutting measure in these challenging fiscal times. During this session, you will see findings from a recent Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report on cross-jurisdictional sharing. Two examples will be discussed that illustrate the challenges and opportunities presented by this strategy.

Workshop Block 2

Sunday, July 17 – 3:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Getting the Public Involved: Raising Awareness of County Government

Most people do not fully understand all of the services and support that county governments provide. President Glen Whitley has challenged NACo members to take an active role in raising public awareness by creating an award to recognize strong public awareness programs during National County Government Month.

Join this workshop to see tools and methods developed by these award winning counties that you can use in your own county.

Workshop Block 4

Monday, July 18 – 10:45 a.m. - Noon

Lights, Camera - Gulp!

A hot issue has erupted, and local media are making so many requests for interviews that you decide to hold a news conference. Media relations professionals from the National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO) will provide tips on preparing for successful news conferences. During this interactive session you have the opportunity to participate in a mock news conference, with NACIO volunteers acting as journalists.

Workshop Block 5

Tuesday, July 19 – 8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

How Sharing Information can Divert People with Mental Illness from Your Local Criminal Justice System

Growing jail populations continue to strain already tight county budgets. Find out how an effective information sharing program can streamline the availability of critical data from arrest through release, saving time and controlling costs for your county.

NACo Annual Conference—Agenda At a Glance

Friday, July 15

12:45 p.m. — 1:45 p.m. Health Steering Committee: Behavioral Health Subcommittee Meeting (B113-114)

1 – 4 p.m. NACHSA Meeting (B111)

5:30—7 p.m. NACo/State Association Legislative Staff Roundtable (D131)

Saturday, July 16

9 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
 9 - 10:15 Joint Subcommittee Meetings (D139-140)
Aging and Long-Term Care
 10:30 - 11:45 *Welfare, Social Services & Immigration; Education, Children & Families; Public Health; Healthy Communities; and Health Disparities*

1 p.m.—4 p.m. Health Steering Committee (D139-140)

1:30 – 4:00 p.m. Human Services & Education Steering Committee (B113-114)

Sunday, July 17

9:30 —11:30 a.m. Opening General Session (Portland Ballroom)

1:30—2:45 p.m. Workshops of Interest:

- *NACo's Prescription Drug Discount Program*
- *Counties Saving Money in the Cloud*
- *Local Public Health: Sharing Services Across Jurisdictional Lines*
- *Leading Together: 10 Ways to Enhance Collaboration*

3:15—4 :30 p.m. Workshops of Interest:

- *Exploring Online Technology Applications to Improve County Health Care Delivery*
- *Getting the Public Involved: Raising Awareness of County Gov't*

6—9 p.m. Conference Wide Event Hosted By Multnomah County

Monday, July 18

9 – 10:15 a.m. Workshops of Interest:
 • *How Sharing Information Can Divert People with Mental Illness from your Criminal Justice System*

10:45—Noon Workshops of Interest:
 • *Lights, Camera—Gulp!*

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

2:15—4 p.m. General Session (Portland Ballroom)

Tuesday, July 19

8:30—9:45 a.m. Workshops of Interest:
 • *Using Community Partnerships to Promote Community Health*

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

7—9 p.m. Inaugural Gala Reception (Portland Ballroom)

Patch Program Helps Connect County

Cumberland County creates community social work program

community approach to human services is the norm while in the U.S., including Pennsylvania, human services delivery is a much broader formalized system.

The name “Patch” actually comes from British slang, meaning one’s territory or jurisdiction. In Cumberland County, this “Patch” is the Newville area, which is a rural community located approximately 35 miles southwest of Harrisburg. The idea behind the program was to keep individuals out of the more “formal” system, by utilizing someone from the community, who is familiar with both the resources and needs of individuals in that community, to serve as a community social worker to educate residents about community services that are available. The Patch Community Social Worker provides information and referral services and serves as a first contact on a variety of needs including housing, utility assistance, fuel assistance, employment, health information, household help, transportation, counseling, and child care. In addition, the community social worker helps identify individual and community needs and then works with individual residents, schools, and agencies to try and meet these needs.

Cumberland County originally selected Julie Haubert to serve in the role of community social worker, and she has served in this role for the past fifteen years. Haubert is a native of Newville, so she knows the community resources such as church programs, local organizations,

and community members who can assist individuals with particular problems. Haubert explains, “As a native of the Newville area, I take a lot of pride in my community. I have a personal investment in the improvement of this community since it’s the place where I chose to live and raise my family.”

Haubert notes that a large part of her role is to find solutions to problems that at first glance may not appear to have one. This role requires her to be creative, as the Patch program is providing non-traditional services responding to each individual’s unique situation. If there is an elderly community member who needs a ride to their doctor’s office

“This model has been successful for us in a rural community, but would work anywhere where there is a strong sense of community.”

**— Terry Barley
Aging and Community Services Director**

for treatment once a week but is unable to drive, and there is a neighbor who regularly travels to the same doctor, Haubert’s job is to make this connection, match up these community members, and fill a need without having to identify any extra funding source.

For example, Haubert was contacted recently about some seniors needing rides to services on the western side of the County. Due to her knowledge about the community, she was able to quickly connect these individuals with retired members of the community who were willing to provide transportation. Haubert was also recently contacted by a young, single mom needing gas money to transport her child to the doctor. She was contacted a local community group that was able to provide the funding.

Due to Haubert’s work and the Patch Program as a whole, individuals with needs such as those mentioned above are not forced to find help within an already strained formal system. Instead, they are able to tap already existing community resources, which is ideal given the cutbacks currently facing county human service programs. Haubert points out, “there are so many more resources available than anyone realized. After being in the community for so long, people now call us





Residents with Needed Services

to assist needy residents

to ask where they can volunteer.”

Both Haubert and Barley emphasize the importance of a sense of community in the success of this program. When the program initially started, they conducted multiple meetings with local groups and community leaders to ensure those most involved in the community were knowledgeable about how to assist needy individuals they may come in contact with.

Barley explains, “this model has been successful for us in a rural community, but would work anywhere where there is a strong sense of community. If you have a person from the community who knows the people and resources, they can often help individuals without having to turn to the formal system.” To best reach individuals in the community, the Patch Program was originally based in Newville’s Community Center. The program has since been moved to the borough building, where it remains easily accessible to local constituents.

To be eligible to receive services through the Patch Program, individuals must be below 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Individuals may be exempt from these income guidelines if they are in one of the exempted categories, which include senior citizens, homeless individuals, those with disabilities, and those who are already involved in the Head Start, cash assistance, or medical assistance programs.

Unfortunately, while the program certainly helps to cut costs in human services since it utilizes already existing community resources, its funding sources continues to be cut in the state budget. When the program began in 1995, it was originally funded by a Community Development Block Grant. After three years, it was decided that the program would be funded through the Human Service Development Fund (HSDF), a flexible human services funding source for counties. Unfortunately, due to cuts to HSDF, the future of the Patch Program could eventually be in jeopardy. The fund



has been slashed by more than 37 percent in the past eight years. “The future could be tough,” Barley notes, “this is probably our largest HSDF cost center. Eventually we may be forced to ask if we can continue it.”

When asked what he is most proud of about the Patch Program, Barley explains that he is impressed with the success Cumberland County has had in focusing on community organizing, prevention and getting people in the community beyond the mindset of seeking out already existing formal programs when needing help. He noted that “this program has really helped bring resources and needs together that otherwise may not be utilized.” Haubert agrees with Barley’s comment, and adds, “over the last 15 years the Patch Program has really helped reinforce the sense of community here.”

FOR FURTHER INFO

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Uniting to Invest Upstream in Sonoma

★ BY JO WEBER
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Like many counties, more than half of Sonoma County's discretionary general fund is spent on criminal justice costs—and those costs are projected to continue to climb. When the Board of Supervisors, as part of the County's 2007 Strategic Plan, chartered the "Upstream Investment Project", they hoped to develop an understanding of the antecedents of criminal behavior and some ideas on how to reduce downstream criminal justice costs for the county.

But the research into Upstream Investments, sponsored by the Sonoma County Human Services Department, revealed much more than that.

The factors that lead to criminal behavior (and criminal justice costs) are also the factors that lead to the need for many other expensive services, including child welfare, substance abuse, mental health, and public assistance. Furthermore, research into the cost-benefit analysis of programs that address the "upstream" antecedents of those downstream problems showed that for every dollar spent anywhere for \$1.84 to \$55.84 is saved in reduced future government spending and/or increased tax earnings. Addressing these factors early is not only more effective in improving the lives of the clients; it reduces government spending and creates a more robust local economy.

The conclusion seemed obvious: rather than spending limited resources to repair difficult problems once they occur, targeting the factors that lead to those problems early, with evidence-based programs and policies, can prevent these problems from occurring at all—reducing costs for local, state and federal government programs. In 2011, the County of Sonoma, in partnership with many community organizations, launched the Upstream Investments Initiative.

The goal of the Upstream Investments Initiative is lofty (some have called it "audacious")—the elimination of poverty in Sonoma County in order to reduce serious social problems and their associated downstream costs. But the active Upstream Investments Initiative participants (over 50 leaders in local government, education and community based organizations) say they're not tilting at windmills.

Over a year of work has gone into laying the foundation, doing the research and agreeing on the six most important and effective factors to target; the 22 indicators of success that can be tracked to ensure progress is being made, and the eight measurable impacts of the Initiative. They created a Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs that can be used to inventory the Upstream work being done in the County to address the targeted

factors, prioritize funding, and for gap analysis. Upstream Investment committee members say this unique community-wide focus on the same indicators of success, outcomes-based upstream interventions, and a commitment to making a collective impact makes their goal as practical as it is audacious.

Sonoma County's Upstream Investments Initiative has just barely launched. The Portfolio of Model Upstream Projects (and



the web site) went live in March 2011. The outreach campaign also began in March, and the Initiative has already received widespread support. Two of Sonoma County's elected Supervisors serve on the Committee, but all five of the Supervisors have spoken out publicly in support of the Initiative and have hosted Public Forums to explain the

concept of Upstream Investments to the community. Within the first few weeks, 28 organizations submitted programs to be considered for the Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs and 15 submitted Resolutions of Alignment to show their support. Local papers ran articles and editorials in support of the Initiative's goals. One editorial said "the timing and need for this program couldn't be better..." Although Upstream Investments requires a fundamental shift in the way we approach health and human services, if the public reception the Upstream Investment Initiative is any indication, it is an idea whose time has come.

Of course, the Upstream Investments Initiative, which is still in its "start-up" phase, faces obstacles.

Although the Upstream Investments Initiative was launched by the Board of Supervisors, the Upstream Investments ad hoc committee and work group members have come from a wide range of County departments and local organizations. This has helped to mitigate what is the largest and most obvious obstacle: eradicating poverty is simply too large a goal for any one entity to tackle alone. And in fact, the Sonoma County cost benefit analysis research shows that while upstream programs recoup their investments *to the community* (by as much as \$55.84 per dollar spent), if any single organization shoulders all of the financial burden of most upstream programs, they will not recoup their entire investment. To accomplish this goal, the

County, CA

"It is easier to build strong children than fix broken men." —Frederick Douglass

burden is shared; the commitment is shared; and the benefits are shared.

Another obstacle is the commitment necessary to see the project through. Investing Upstream is a marathon, not a sprint. The local paper ran an editorial that said "We encourage the county to stay the course and make the most of what limited dollars it has." But in this case, the "course" could be decades. The cost benefits of many Upstream programs are not realized for ten or more years—and during that time, the need for expensive downstream services continues. The Upstream Investments committee, and the community, is passionate about the importance of Upstream Investments. Upcoming grant opportunities that may help reduce the County's funding of the project within the next few years. And by tracking the progress on the indicators of success annually they expect to be able to see "the needle" move, which may help keep the resolve over the years. But to keep this commitment strong until the babies born today reach a happy, healthy productive adulthood will take both patience and effort.

As with most new ideas, educating the public and the policymakers was necessary. The Upstream Investments Initiative is a policy initiative, not a program, so it wasn't as easy as saying "we'll serve these clients in this way". The Initiative is a road-map to a county where all organizations, whenever possible, look at their strategic plans, funding, and programs through an Upstream lens. But first, everyone must understand what "upstream" is. Simply put, Upstream Investments is the early investment in children, families, and individuals to save taxpayer money. The goal is to cure the cause, rather than treat the symptoms, or serious social problems. Early childhood interventions, such as the Nurse-Family Partnership or Perry Preschool, are often offered as clear examples of Upstream Investments. But any intervention, if its focus is "upstream" of when the problem becomes full-blown and expensive, can be an Upstream Investment. For example, In Home Support Services offered to keep a frail senior in their home is "upstream" of expensive out-of-home care. An outreach campaign, which included public forums; presentations to policy makers, charitable boards, and civic groups; and media relations, launched in March to educate the community about Upstream Investments.



A cornerstone to the Upstream Investments Initiative is the emphasis on evidence- or outcomes-based programs. Sonoma County doesn't have the money, and their clients don't have the time, to waste on programs that don't work. But not all of the smaller CBOs have the capacity to evaluate their programs or to design outcomes based programs. Upstream Investments hopes to be able to provide technical assistance to CBOs, to help match CBOs with the assistance they need, or to create some shared capacity within the county, but they don't currently have the funding to provide those services. They are reaching out to local funders to educate them on the need to build additional funding into grants to do analysis and evaluation.



Starting an upstream initiative like this, in a recessionary time of reduced funding, initially caused some anxiety that needed downstream funding would be immediately diverted to upstream programs. But the ad hoc committee, which includes members from the criminal justice system and other "downstream" service organizations, made no immediate mandate to fund only Upstream Investment programs. All organizations are encouraged to consider the programs on the Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs first when implementing or funding programs, and language about outcome-based or Upstream programs will be included in RFPs when appropriate. Some Upstream committee members feel that the current economic situation may even—eventually—help further the Initiative's goals. When tax dollars are scarce, more attention is paid to the cost effectiveness of upstream investments. And as the economy improves, and funding becomes available again, this community wide commitment should help channel funds into the most effective, and least expensive, solutions available: Upstream Investments.

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CHOICES Provides Health Coverage in Alachua County, FL

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ends in December 2011. The County Commission has recently approved CHOICES to continue operations through 2013 when it is estimated that the fund balance will be expended.



There are several lessons to be drawn from the Alachua County experience.

First, managing a health benefit plan is a complicated endeavor that requires caution in designing eligibility and benefits. Overly optimistic assumptions can move funding into a deficit situation quickly. It is easier to loosen eligibility and increase benefits than it is to cut back.

Second, it became very important to understand that revenue is not the equivalent to premium income. Premium income is related to the number of people covered. The sales tax surcharge has no relation to membership so the slow early membership growth caused substantial accumulation of the fund balance. And with the accumulation of a fund balance, there is no need to automatically expand benefits to use all the monies collected.

And finally, the systems created must adequately assess eligibility and administer benefits. The CHOICES Program performs all eligibility and enrollment with its own staff. The program has contractual relationships with providers, claims processors, actuaries, and other services providers. This maintains control of membership within the County system and gives the program access to professional health plan services from other vendors.

As the program continues, we will watch closely growth in membership and utilization trends to ensure no deficit is created that would require using General Fund monies. We will also be thinking and responding as appropriate to the role of the CHOICES program when the Federal Affordable Care Act is implemented.

FOR FURTHER INFO

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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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