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ABSTRACT

This paper examines issues identified in a qualitative study in nine diverse local service systems as program administrators of early intervention programs for young children with disabilities sought to obtain United Way funding and other sources of philanthropy. Data are based on issues raised in nine focus groups conducted with community leaders. The communities represented low, medium, and high population/resource density settings. The two primary issues which emerged from the focus groups are analyzed at some depth. The first was that United Way funding is extremely limited (i.e., non-existent, decreasing, or unable to match program/community growth). The second was that the limited availability of United Way funding in some communities contributes to competition among agencies and programs. Implications are drawn for community-based non-governmental funding in the following situations: when the local economy declines; when economic development by community leaders has unintended consequences; when leadership of primary employers is absent from community fundraising; when competition heightens; when program administrators adapt fundraising to meet United Way guidelines; and when local service systems adapt to meet United Way criteria for service delivery. Suggested strategies and recommendations to program administrators of early intervention programs are offered. (Contains 11 references.) (DB)

Early Childhood Research Institute: Service Utilization

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Raising Issues

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UNITED WAY FUNDING: CONSEQUENCES FOR LOCAL SERVICE SYSTEMS

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Early Intervention is a system, and this system is a business. Each Early Intervention system encompasses numerous services, programs, and agencies and involves a variety of endeavors requiring extensive funding, utilizing multiple sources from the federal, state, and community levels. Consequently, in order to maximize resources and to operate to potential, Early Intervention systems must secure funding from both public and private sources. Over the years, the United Way has been an integral resource from which local service systems have drawn some of this much needed funding. However, issues emerging from Focus Groups with community leaders in three different states and nine communities with varying sociodemographics, service configurations, and available resources raise important issues with regard to United Way funding, and indicate the need for local service systems to improve their understanding of the United Way in order to make better use of this important resource.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Historically, philanthropic organizations and initiatives have played an important roie in funding services for children with disabilities. As the institutionalization of persons with disabilities decreased over the years, a variety of private programs arose designed for school-aged children with specific types of disabilities (e.g., United Cerebral Palsy, Easter Seals, the Association for Retarded Citizens, etc.). These services often placed children with like disabilities together and raised money largely from within their communities to support the programs they provided. Eventually, small amounts of funding for these intervention programs were provided by state and federal agencies.

Then in 1976, P.L. 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act) designated schools as responsible for the education of school-aged children with disabilities; serving these children became a *public* responsibility designed to ensure their civil rights. As the public schools took on the responsibility for school-aged children with disabilities, existing private programs increasingly began to serve younger children with disabilities. Consequently, obtaining a variety of non-governmental funds for these local services for the youngest children with disabilities was necessary. In particular, United Way contributions became invaluable.

In the 1970s and 1980s, some states enacted legislation that entitled young children with special needs to services provided by the school system. In other states, there was no entitlement to services, yet programs were made available as funding allowed. Many of these programs were funded and implemented through the Department of Developmental Disabilities and the Developmental Disabilities Council. In some states, the Mental Health agency or Health Department provided these services. In addition to the increases in public funding for services, local programs continued to seek and use a variety of non-governmental charitable funds. Even as recently as 1993, Clifford, Bernier, and Harbin identified approximately two-thirds of responding states (N=30) as still utilizing non-governmental funds, sources of money which remain important today to programs for young children with special needs.

Current political climate has resulted in a *decrease* in *federal* responsibility and a decrease in the federal funds provided to some programs. Certainly service providers, administrators, policymakers, and families already have begun to feel the effects of cuts in federal funding for local service systems (Schorr & Schorr, 1988; Aron, Loprest, and Steuerle, 1996). In addition, most programs in our study were serving more children – often with the same amount or reduced funds. The current political climate likely will require local service systems to secure *additional* funding from current or new funding sources, or to face measurable restructuring and downsizing. Local programs might need to rely more heavily on a variety of non-governmental funds, such as the United Way and other philanthropic organizations.

The United Way describes itself as a "system" designed "to help people in need" (United Way of America, 1996). According to the organization's literature, the United Way "isn't just a fund-raising organization," but works instead "in close partnership with private businesses, governments and non-profits to pinpoint and address critical community issues" and to "build and maintain human service support structures that create healthier and stronger communities" (United Way of America, 1996). In short, the United Way does not want to be viewed only as a checkbook. Through their "partnership" with local programs, the organization wants to play a role in shaping those programs, as a requirement for the receipt of funds.

Over 1300 local United Ways across the country generate funds for (and thus enter into "partnerships" with) a variety of human service agencies and programs developed for various purposes. These purposes include "promoting health and preventing disease," "caring for and strengthening families," "investing in youth," "providing food, clothing and housing," "providing quality day care," "ensuring public safety," "building stronger communities," "providing employment assistance," "supporting education" and "other" initiatives designed to meet community needs (United Way of America, 1996). When combined, the first four of these purposes typically receive two-thirds of all United Way contributions, over $2 billion of the organization's $3.1 billion total in 1994 (United Way of America, 1996).

Many of the services supported by United Way are crucial to young children with disabilities and their families. Because the United Way historically has established itself in communities as an important support for these services, local programs for young children likely will vie increasingly for United Way funds as funding from other sources decreases or remains static. As a result, the organization likely will also assume new planning and evaluation roles in communities as its resources increasingly are coveted.

The United Way's administrators, literature, and funding processes each emphasize accountability and cost-effectiveness in the selection of programs and agencies to receive United Way funds (United Way of America, 1996). Despite the options of United Way donors to designate their allocations, United Way administrators' still have control with regard to which programs they will allocate a large portion of their contributions and how much these programs will be allocated (United Way community-level administrators, personal communications, June-July, 1996). Administrators also have control over the process by which these allocations are determined.

This paper will address the issues raised in nine diverse local service systems as program administrators sought to obtain United Way funding, as well as other sources of philanthropy. Though the themes and issues identified in this qualitative study have a number of fiscal and programmatic implications, the United Way operates differently from locality to locality and from state to state, and what is at issue in one place might not be in another. Furthermore, this paper attempts only to illuminate some problems with the use of United Way funding by local service systems; clearly, there are many positive outcomes from utilizing United Way support and many places where obtaining United Way is less problematic.

The following sections explain the **Method** of the Early Childhood Research Institute on Service Utilization and for this study in particular, the **Emerging Issues** regarding heightened demand for United Way and other philanthropy in many communities, the **Implications** of these findings, and **Recommendations and Strategies** for future courses of action.

METHOD

The Early Childhood Research Institute on Service Utilization (ECRI:SU) is a multi-pronged series of research studies designed to identify and understand the factors that significantly influence service availability, provision, and utilization for young children with special needs and for the families of these children. A team of researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and from Rhode Island

College have designed and conducted studies that: utilize a systems-based, multi-dimensional conceptual framework for examining services provided to and used by families; identify and examine the multiplicity of factors that are believed to affect services provided to and used by families; examine service use within infant-toddler and preschool programs; and describe access to and use of a variety of health care and community-based resources and supports for families.

ECRI:SU's conceptual research design identifies the *community context* as an independent variable which possibly influences the provision and use of services. Three diverse states and nine disparate communities with varying sociodemographics, service configurations, and available resources serve as the principal sites for this Institute, and provided an excellent opportunity to examine the scope and nature of service delivery systems in a variety of contexts. The three states selected included a large Northeastern agricultural and industrial "rustbelt" state (Pennsylvania), a growing South Atlantic state with a history of textiles and tobacco (North Carolina), and a scenic Western state in the Rockies (Colorado). Each state's study sites include high, medium, and low population and resource density communities, and range in size from a large urban environment with a population of 2,403,676 to a remote rural community with a population of 2,838.

The selected low population/resource density communities include: a remote rural, economically adaptive post-mining mountain town; an economically depressed and isolated community with an "Appalachian feel"; and a foothills county with a mountain culture, consisting of historically self-contained townships. The selected medium population/resource density communities also are distinct: a prison-based economically poor town with a history of problem-solving; a community whose culture is a mix of Mid-Western and Appalachian values, and whose favorite son is a classic movie actor; and a wealthy community with a very high per capita income and a very low average wage. The high population/resource density communities include: a Western, achievement-oriented city struggling with issues of diversity and growth; a large metropolitan city with 88 separate ethnic neighborhoods; and a "genteel" and economically thriving small city with a history of strong corporate involvement in community.

This paper primarily is based upon the issues raised in the nine Focus Groups conducted with Community Leaders. Focus groups as a research strategy have multiple utilities. Market researchers identify voter attitudes (Krueger, 1988) via focus groups; social scientists have found numerous uses for this research strategy as well (Bertrand, Brown & Ward, 1992; Fullagar, Croster, Gallagher, & Loda, 1993). In particular, the interactive dynamic of Focus Groups facilitates the identification of a number of topics and concerns and prompts members to augment each others' responses (Able-Boone, Goodwin, Sandall, Stevens & Frederick, 1992, and others).

For the Community Leaders Focus Groups, Early Intervention and Preschool Program administrators in each community nominated leaders from local businesses, civic organizations, government (e.g., mayor), media, advocacy groups, churches, and public agencies (e.g., health, education, etc.). A single facilitator conducted Focus Groups with Community Leaders across the nine communities, focusing upon gaining a clearer understanding of the "nature" or personality of the community, including its strengths and challenges, as well as the contextual variables which impact services for young children with disabilities and their families. Broad semi-structured Focus Group questions were designed to generate information regarding the *economy, population, geography, political climate,* values and *culture, history, leadership,* and available *resources* in each community. Focus Groups (about two hours in length) were recorded, transcribed, and independently coded for data retrieval purposes according to these nine different variables by two of three different raters. ("United Way" comments typically were categorized as *services, resources,* or both, depending upon the nature of the item.) Proportionally few of the several hundred coded items were in dispute, and raters achieved 100% consensus through discussion. Qualitative word matrices then were prepared in order to identify patterns for each of the variables across communities. Out of these analyses, the role of United Way emerged as an important theme.

In addition to data emerging via the focus groups of Community Leaders, sociodemographic data and follow-up personal interviews by phone with United Way officials and Early Intervention program administrators from several communities serve to supplement this paper.

EMERGING ISSUES

The data from the Community Leaders Focus Groups indicated two primary emerging issues with regard to United Way funding in some of the communities in our study:

United Way funding is extremely limited (i.e. non-existent, decreasing, or unable to match program/ community growth); and,

Limited availability of United Way funding in some communities contributes to competition between agencies and programs.

Although not present in each of the ECRI:SU communities, both of these issues are nonetheless noteworthy because ECRI:SU's communities are similar to many others, and while perhaps of lesser import in some communities, these issues could well have an impact in many others.

Both of the above issues are discussed below.

Limited Availability

In seven of nine communities in our study, community leaders reported many concerns regarding the limited availability of United Way funds. The reasons for limited availability of these funds differ across communities.

Often due to economic contexts, United Way funds have been declining or static and unable to match program growth. The three communities in the large agricultural and industrial "rustbelt" state in the Northeast (Pennsylvania) have experienced sharp economic decline and have attempted to revive their local economies by adapting from mining and steel industries to health care and government, peppered with low-wage employment opportunities (e.g., Walmart). The result has been that the three local economies in this state, while sufficient to sustain each community at least minimally, nonetheless *as a set* currently represent the weakest economies of the three states in our study. Examination of a cross-section of four demographic variables (per capita income, median family income, persons below poverty, and children below poverty) reveals that the metropolitan high population/resource density community in Pennsylvania has weaker economic indicators than its counterparts in our other two study states (Table 1). In addition, Pennsylvania's medium and low population/resource density communities rank seventh, eighth or ninth on each of these four indicators of economic strength when ordered with the rest of the nine communities in our study.

Nationally, the United Way generates 74% of its revenue from corporations, small businesses, and their employees (United Way of America, 1996). This indicates a reliance by the organization primarily on two different parts of local industry: *individual employee donations* and *corporate/company donations*. When a suffering local economy results in limited amounts of disposable income available to the work force, United Way donations at the *individual employee level* will in turn suffer. The words of a local United Way board member in Pennsylvania summarize the situation there:

> "...there is a feeling here that [United Way] should just open up our pockets and [community members] should put the money in. And it doesn't happen that way anymore." (Community Leaders Focus Group Transcript, Pennsylvania, medium population/ resource density community, 1995, p.18)

Economic indicators of strength are not the only contributing factor to the availability of United Way funding, however. North Carolina, the mid-sized South Atlantic state, contains a prosperous medium population/resource density community whose economic indicators far surpass its counterparts in Pennsylvania and Colorado. Yet the amount of United Way revenue generated in this North Carolina community, according to community leaders, is far less than in other communities, despite its fertile resources. The reason for this lack of participation with the United Way is aptly summed by a community leader and president of a local branch of a large bank:

TABLE 1

ECONOMIC ORDERINGS OF ECRI:SU COMMUNITIES

Per Capita Income ($)			
Rank	State	Population/Resource Density	Per Capita Income
1	B	HIGH	18,117
2	C	HIGH	17,359
3	B	MID	16,274
4	A	HIGH	15,115
5	B	LOW	13,370
6	C	LOW	11,269
7	A	LOW	10,430
8	A	MID	10,260
9	C	MID	9,971

Median Family Income ($)			
Rank	State	Population/Resource Density	Median Family Income
1	C	HIGH	43,782
2	B	HIGH	41,100
3	B	MID	36,600
4	A	HIGH	35,338
5	B	LOW	31,000
6	C	LOW	28,950
7	A	MID	27,893
8	A	LOW	26,192
9	C	MID	24,350

Persons Below Poverty Level (percentage)			
Rank	State	Population/Resource Density	Percent Below Poverty
1	B	HIGH	10
2	C	HIGH	11
3	B	MID	11
4	B	LOW	11
5	A	HIGH	12
6	C	LOW	12
7	A	LOW	14
8	C	MID	16
9	A	MID	19

Children in Poverty (percentage)			
Rank	State	Population/Resource Density	Percent Children Below Poverty
1	C	HIGH	10
2	B	HIGH	10
3	B	MID	11
4	B	LOW	11
5	C	LOW	16
6	A	HIGH	17
7	A	LOW	19
8	C	MID	20
9	A	MID	21

STATE A - NORTHEASTERN INDUSTRIAL (Pennsylvania)
STATE B - SOUTH ATLANTIC (North Carolina)
STATE C - SCENIC WESTERN (Colorado)

*****all data from 1990 Federal Census**

> "I think from a business stand point, I want to see our company give more to United Way, give more to the town and community, but our corporate office is a couple of hours away...we don't hold the pocketbook here. We can't supply the money." (Community Leaders Focus Group Transcript, North Carolina, medium population/resource density community, 1995, p.15)

Obviously the absence of participation by corporate owners who hold the purse strings seriously hinders local United Way fundraising appeals for *corporate/company donations*.

The lack of leadership by local employers to facilitate the involvement of businesses in United Way funding drives is also a problem in Colorado, the scenic Western state, particularly in the state's medium and low population/resource density communities. While the medium population/ resource density community in Colorado is the weakest economically of the nine communities in our study, United Way fundraising in this community is further vexed by the lack of participation by this community's federal and state-based prison industry. While community planners have ensured a measure of economic stability by means of having attracted this type of industry, they also have created a vacuum of philanthropic leadership by recruiting this non-participatory primary employer to the community. (This community of approximately 12,000 households employs over 2,400 people in its prisons, from which United Way recently generated an annual total of only $15.)

Similarly, in the low population/resource density community in Colorado, where 60% of the work force is employed some distance outside the community, the absence of financial participation by the primary employers in the community also greatly hinders the amount of money generated by means of local philanthropy. As in the medium population/ resource density community in Colorado, *corporate/company level leadership* is non-existent. This, coupled with a small population (6,007), is possibly why there exists no local chapter of the United Way in this community.

By contrast, the high population/resource density community in North Carolina, which historically evidences a very high rate of *corporate/company level leadership* in community initiatives, *and* which also possesses stronger economic indicators than the rest of the communities in our study, continually shows annual increases in United Way funding. United Way funding has increased annually since 1992 in this community from $6,836, 482 to $11,288,423 in 1996 (United Way of Community Y). Clearly, when economic indicators are high *and* when the primary employers of a community are involved heavily in philanthropy, the United Way can meet its funding goals more easily.

Competition Between Programs

As Early Intervention and preschool programs face reduced or static federal moneys, the importance of other sources of funding obviously heightens. The result can be increased competition between and among agencies and programs for increasingly valuable United Way funds, as exhibited in Pennsylvania, the study state historically relying the most heavily upon non-governmental funding of those in our study. Given the competition among programs for limited United Way funds, there are potential implications for the many other states whose communities also rely upon United Way and other non-governmental funding. (As mentioned previously, in 1993 Clifford, Bernier, and Harbin identified two-thirds of responding states (N=30) as still utilizing non-governmental funds.)

The United Way perhaps *inadvertently* provokes competition between agencies and programs. The organization's evaluative philosophy (United Way of Community *X*, 1996) at least in part might bear responsibility for various agencies adopting independent stances when vying for funding. The problem of competition appears worst in the high population/resource density communities, especially in the largest in our study, the metropolitan community with a population well over two million. This community's United Way's mechanism for evaluating services for purposes of funding, its Program Evaluation Instrument (Table 2), emphasizes evaluation at the individual program level rather than at the *system* level. Despite this instrument's attention to service "linkages," items within the Instrument nonetheless compare the effectiveness of programs between and *within* agencies when determining allocations (questions 3C and D.) The Program Evaluation Instrument also emphasizes non-duplicative services and direct, clear client outcomes (questions 1E and 4A), further enticing programs to delineate themselves independently. While the local United Way could be more overtly evaluative in this community, the allocation of scarce resources always carries with it some process of evaluating "worthiness" (Gallagher et al, 1994).

In some respects, the evaluation of services at the program level and the tenor of accountability found in United Way philosophy further compounds the various problems programs face already to secure categorical funding. The purpose of IDEA was to increase coordination of services and resources, an especially difficult task when agencies feel they are competing for fiscal resources. In a number of states, program administrators together have gone to their state legislature to support one another's funding requests, often making these requests in the form of package requests for their entire Early Intervention *system* (Harbin et al, 1993). In these cases program administrators have expended great effort to coordinate requests for state governmental funds.

Local program administrators, dependent upon decisions made at higher governmental levels because they are at the end of the fiscal chain (federal-to-state-to-local), are faced with the task of creating a coordinated local service *system* with the various categorical fiscal resources. When non-governmental sources further fragment the funding by looking at *programs* instead of *systems*, the task becomes even more challenging.

According to some community leaders in Pennsylvania, the sense of competition produced by the United Way's evaluative philosophy, as well as by increasing fiscal

Table 2
UNITED WAY OF COMMUNITY *X*
PROGRAM EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

1. Program description
   A. What are the programs goals and objectives for 1996-1997?
   B. If significantly different, detail the changes from 1994-95 and 1995-96, and give the reason(s) for these changes.
   C. To what extent have the 1994-95 and 1995-96 objectives been achieved?
   D. Are there many people in the program's service area who need or could use the services of this program?
   E. How many unduplicated people does this program serve per year? (Focus primarily on numbers served directly; if a program also serves people indirectly, those figures should be shown separately.)
   To what extent are the people actually served part of the target population that the program is intended to serve?
   F. Define the program's unit of service (should not be the number of people served).
   How many units of service are provided per year?
   G. What are the total costs, unit of service costs, and per person costs of the program?
   H. Is the program reviewed by outside evaluators?

2. The needs of the service recipients and communities that this program serves.
   A. Are the individuals or communities served by this program at high risk or would they be at high risk were it not for this program?
   B. Are the program services delivered in a manner that is sensitive to and reflective of diverse cultures and the special needs of the target population?

3. Effectiveness
   A. Are the program's goals and objectives clearly described, measurable against standards/benchmarks, and based on particular outcomes?
   B. Has it been demonstrated that, because of this program, on one more of the following has occurred:
      a) fewer people are at risk;
      b) the level of risk of service participants is significantly reduced;
      c) the functioning, capacities, or skills of the people it serves have been strengthened;
      d) risk of the service participants has been prevented?

(Answer as many as apply, and identify which parts you are answering.)
   C. Is the program cost effective compared with similar programs or with alternatives?
   D. Do other services at the host agency and/or other agencies deliver more effective service because of linkages with this program?

4. Continuous Improvement
   A. Does the agency use effective methods to evaluate both participant/client outcomes and the quality of the program's service delivery?
   B. Has the evaluative input (client feedback, prior United way recommendations, and other measures) been used to validate, enhance or alter the program?

5. United Way support
   A. Is the host agency adequately accessing all appropriate funding sources on behalf of the program's service recipients?
   [Examples listed]
   B. Are United Way dollars used primarily to enhance program effectiveness?

6. Extra considerations for programs seeking 1st time funding or substantial allocation increases.
   A. Is this request appropriate for United Way of _______ County? (If not appropriate, score 0 for whole section.)
   B. What is the minimum level of new or increased funding the program needs to make the expansion viable?
   C. What is the reason for the large requested allocation?
   [Reasons listed] (United Way of _____ County, 1996)

competition for other funds causes battles for public support between agencies and results in "turf wars." One Community Leader reveals a simple expectation of some administrators:

> "... it's a risk if you start to work with someone else, because they may be able to do it better, and it could affect your funding, like you don't need as many people or whatever." (Community Leaders Focus Groups Transcript, Pennsylvania, medium population/resource density community, p.41)

Another's explanation concurs:

> "...there are just so many dollars and everybody's competing for them, whether we want to admit it or not. There's a fear that through a coordination of efforts and a pooling of funds, 'I may get less now than I did in the past.'" (Community Leaders Focus Group Transcript, Pennsylvania, low population/resource density community, p.56)

Clearly, the perceived necessity to compete for United Way money and other sources of funding is not conducive to coordination among these same competitors.

IMPLICATIONS

Certainly policymakers and program administrators do not need to be reminded of the practical and logistical effects of reduced funding. However, administrators and policymakers might not at first glance be aware of some of the potential consequences of their *reliance* upon United Way funding and the increased *need* for funding, both of which result from the lessened availability of public and private fiscal resources. This *reliance* and *need* have several implications for local service systems and for the further implementation of IDEA, and indicate the necessity now more than ever for Early Intervention systems to develop innovative and responsive fiscal plans.

When Local Economy Declines

As mentioned before, the availability of community-based non-governmental funding for programs and agencies is heavily dependent upon the availability of local disposable income, which is a direct consequence of local economy. Funding for local service systems which rely on the United Way and other forms of local philanthropy is to a large extent at the mercy of local economic contexts; thus, those local service systems which rely heavily upon United Way and other local philanthropy and which exist in declining economies are seriously handicapped in their efforts to secure funds.

Recall earlier discussion about Pennsylvania's economic indicators; *as a set*, the three communities in Pennsylvania are the weakest of any states' communities in our study. Yet Pennsylvania's local service systems rely upon private foundations, including United Way, for funding. In the high, medium, and low population/resource density communities in the state, United Way funding has decreased or has been unable to match program needs. In these communities, United Way has made commitments only to meet the growth of a few select programs with increases in funding; programs for children with special needs and their families which are not included on this select list of agencies and programs can receive funds only as the strength of annual fundraising drives allows. In sum, the weak local economies in Pennsylvania means that service systems in these communities will suffer financially until local economic contexts improve or until service systems secure funding from sources whose own income is not dependent upon local private donations.

When Economic Development By Community Leaders Has Unintended Consequences

Often times when making economic decisions it appears that community leaders, politicians, and public officials do not consider the impact of these decisions upon many aspects of the community, including how economy bears upon the amount and quality of private philanthropy available. Community leaders can engage in economic development that exacerbates economic decline or offers in desperation only short-sighted economic solutions. Leaders often are concerned with economic stability and the availability of new jobs; as a result they may recruit businesses which can provide short-term relief (e.g., Walmart), but also bring unforeseen ramifications.

Because many of the businesses recruited during times of economic decline offer only minimum wages, new stresses in turn are placed upon the service system. More people need services when low socioeconomic (SES) populations increase, and the *type* of industry recruited can compound the stress on local service systems by bringing its own culture of problems as well (e.g., increased domestic abuse associated with prison-based employees). As a result, the service system must increase its range and/or scope of available services; thus the need and demand for funds is further heightened. In addition, by stabilizing local economy at low income levels, community leaders ensure that there will be little disposable income available to private foundations like United Way, and, in turn, less available funding for local service systems.

Leaders in the study communities where economy has soured have failed to offer guidance or plans to their local service systems when unintended consequences from economic development initiatives strain service delivery. This suggests that Early Intervention program administrators who remain removed from larger community economic decisions risk later facing funding difficulties and other stresses upon the local service system.

When Leadership of Primary Employers is Absent from Community Fundraising

Though indicators of economic strength can suggest the feasibility of relying upon local non-governmental sources of funds, philanthropic organizations like the United Way do not necessarily generate more revenue in communities which economically are stronger. As mentioned before, when leadership of the primary employers of a community is uninvolved in United Way fundraising efforts, this seriously hinders United Way revenues. There are three ways in which primary employers can demonstrate absenteeism from such community initiatives: major industry is located outside the community; corporate leaders do not reside in the community; and corporate leaders reside in the community but are not invested in the community.

When economically healthy communities (e.g., the wealthy medium population/resource density community in North Carolina) fail to obtain the participation of the leadership of primary employers in fundraising initiatives, these initiatives are not able to meet their fiscal potential. Furthermore, when economically weak communities face leadership by primary employers which are based outside the community, they are hindered even more. This suggests that Early Intervention program administrators need to be aware of more than the mere economic health of a community when determining appropriate sources of funding. As mentioned previously, of the nine communities in our study, only in the economically healthy metropolitan community in North Carolina where corporate participation in the community is *also* very high do United Way 's contributions show substantial gains that approximate the growth and fundraising potential of the community. In short, only those program administrators in communities where business leaders, actually participate in philanthropic fundraising (regardless of where they reside) can experience any degree of fiscal security.

When Competition Heightens

Perhaps the most obvious consequence of the increased demand for funding, and the heightened competition resulting from this demand, is the potential lessened intra- and interagency coordination. According to the community leaders quoted previously from Pennsylvania, there is cause for concern regarding coordination between agencies and programs already in competition for the same limited private funding *(especially when they already are in competition for public funding)*. If programs become further self-contained and boundary-conscious in the hopes of better positioning themselves to receive funds, then many local service systems will be subject to new disunity when service systems ought to be coordinating activities and funding requests now more than ever. Certainly, IDEA's mandated interagency agreements and service coordination can not function to their intent when cooperation is perceived to be detrimental to a program's own financial interests.

When Program Administrators Adapt Fundraising to Meet United Way Guidelines

Because programs and agencies often need funds (and can be in heightened competition for these funds), they do not wish to do anything to adversely impact upon their relationships with the United Way. As a result, there are some indications that the United Way can exert its influence to dictate how agencies conduct their own programs and fundraising efforts. One family in the medium population/resource density community in Pennsylvania reported that the Early Intervention program's perception of United Way's restrictions hinders informal fundraising efforts. The mother of a young child with special needs relates her conversation with a service provider about raising gas money to allow some children with special needs to take a field trip to the zoo:

> "I said, can't we have a fund-raiser or something? Well, only certain people would want to do it. Cause I'd sell sheets, coupons, or raffle coupons. Something like that. 'Well, we don't want you to because of United Way.' You're not allowed to step on their toes, and I mean this would just be for the parents of the Center to try to get money if you want to go do something like that for gas money for people to even rent a van or something... but you can't do anything like that because United Way doesn't let you. That money should be going to them and then they can decide what they want to give you." (Case Study Family Interview Transcript, family from medium population/resource density community, Pennsylvania, 1994, p.26)

While this mother's perception of the United Way's impact on fundraising, as imparted by the service provider, was considered exaggerated by two local program administrators interviewed by telephone, the United Way's impact on fundraising nonetheless also was confirmed by these administrators. According to the administrators, when agencies or programs receiving United Way funding in this community wish to conduct their own fundraising efforts, they must send a written request to the United Way for approval. The administrators stated that these requests *are* approved in nearly all instances; however, it is reasonable to consider if this is because local program administrators are adept at proposing fund-raisers which they know are attuned to United Way desires. In addition, this approval process might also subtly dissuade administrators from small and informal fund-raisers due to the sheer volume of paperwork which they already face.

Although the influence of the United Way upon the means and number of fundraising opportunities available to programs might be subject to debate, the time periods in which the programs may attempt to conduct their own fundraising is not. According to the administrators interviewed, no United Way agency in this community may conduct its own fund-raisers during the United Ways' own fundraising drives.

When Local Service Systems Adapt to Meet United Way Criteria for Service Delivery

Does the United Way's criteria for selecting agencies and programs for funding also result in the adaptation of service delivery models by administrators eager for funding? Examination of United Way criteria for determining funding to particular programs and agencies in one community in Pennsylvania suggests ways in which agencies and programs might consciously or unconsciously attempt to alter their designs in order to secure funds. Although certain aspects of the United Way Program Evaluation Instrument from this community (Table 2) seem designed to illicit best practice (e.g., promotion of sensitivity to cultural diversity and of multi-source funding), further examination of the Instrument reveals several potential questions and concerns about agencies and programs trying to adapt to meet United Way criteria.

- Will programs and agencies *develop easily achievable goals and objectives* in order to demonstrate "successes" from year to year, and in doing so sacrifice broader, more productive and meaningful mission statements?

- Will programs and agencies *develop services for larger target populations* at the expense of higher quality, more extensive services for smaller target populations?

- Will programs and agencies develop "units of service" which can be reflected in impressive numerical terms, but which otherwise are less productive for their clientele (e.g., sacrifice individualization, fragment services, sacrifice *meaningful contact hours* for a higher number of *less meaningful contact hours*)?

- Will programs and agencies develop administratively expedient and/or cost effective modes of intervention (e.g., "therapies" conducted by aides inadequately supervised) and thus *sacrifice quality*?

- Will programs and agencies whose services' effectiveness are hard to determine concretely *alter their missions* in order to provide services which can be measured more easily?

- Will programs and agencies *design evaluative means which are less useful* to determine client outcomes, but which better demonstrate success to the United Way?

- Will a focus on client outcomes result in a *focus upon the child as client* rather than upon family and larger ecological contexts?

- Will *diverse arrays of services be sacrificed* by some agencies in order to develop missions more "appropriate" to receive United Way funding?

- Will service systems *become more rigid* and inflexible by evolving to strictly non-overlapping, non-duplicative designs?

- If agencies and programs further delineate themselves for purposes of receiving funding, will placements in *inclusive settings* and use of *integrated therapies* become increasingly difficult?

- In summary: will agencies and programs adapt to meet a United Way philosophy of service delivery if, and when, this philosophy is not congruent with best practice?

Clearly, potential dangers exist for service systems which attempt to adapt to the criteria of their funding sources; if answered affirmatively, a narrow and/or fragmented *system* is likely, which can impact negatively upon services. Though the evaluative situation in one community in Pennsylvania is not as extreme as in other communities, evaluative processes of United Way and other funding sources nonetheless potentially can exert subtle pressures upon program administrators to adapt, and at the very least can present annoyances and paperwork which are additional hurdles for system and program administrators.

STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, current political and economic contexts present many challenges to programs' efforts to secure public money and private non-governmental funding, such as United Way donations; however, there are strategies and recommendations which might help local service *systems* to survive in this climate. These strategies and recommendations assume that Early Intervention is a system, consisting of multiple components which must operate in concert in order to maximize potential and resources, and that this system is a business, requiring extensive funding from public and private sources. As both a system and a business, Early Intervention must develop innovative and responsive fiscal plans which educate, coordinate, market, embrace, appreciate, and engage a full range of community "players," and which diagnose and understand local context as well.

1. Program administrators must educate their local United Way staff and other foundations about *systems*-oriented service delivery models, and must bring in representatives from United Way and other foundations to the LICC so non-governmental agencies can better understand the necessity and importance of systems-oriented models.

2. Program administrators need to form alliances with local business leaders to engage them in United Way initiatives and other non-governmental fundraising efforts.

3. Program administrators need to form relationships with (and be "adopted" by) local businesses independently of United Way and other non-governmental fundraising agencies in order to secure funds or donations directly.

4. Program administrators need to increase public awareness about the importance of programs for children with special needs and their families in order to secure more pre-designated United Way funds from individual contributors, to receive funds directly from the community at large, and to position themselves politically as likely recipients of funding from other non-governmental sources.

5. In communities in economic peril, program administrators must search for foundations, civic organizations, and other possible funding sources whose money does not depend primarily upon individual donations (as do United Way's).

6. In economically healthy communities, program administrators also need to search outside traditional sources for new organizations or foundations to adopt their programs in order to develop a broad base of support and to minimize the importance and influence of funding from any one non-governmental source.

7. Program administrators must develop good relationships with local political structures (e.g., The County Commissioners) in order to secure local public funds from their own communities.

8. In some communities, it might be possible for program administrators to seek additional state funds.

9. Program administrators need to understand the subtle and overt influences which their funding sources exert on the design of direct services, and develop strategies for minimizing these influences.

10. Administrators from the local service system should provide input and play active roles in the planning processes for their community's economic development

11. Community leaders must involve absentee corporate leadership in community initiatives and fundraising efforts, and promote other forms of philanthropy.

CONCLUSION

While the current political climate for programs for young children with disabilities and their families makes the provision of services increasingly difficult, it also presents an opportunity for local service systems to coalesce and to engender broader support, and in the process perhaps to become healthier financially. In some places, necessity already has forced some program administrators to look to increased cooperation, as explained by this community leader:

> "But I think for a long time we looked at segmented services, and now we're realizing that we can't meet the needs, the growing needs, in a segmented way. And we don't have the kind of money to go around, so it's forcing all of us to get together, come together, to identify mutual needs, and how we can best meet them." (Community Leaders Focus Group Transcript, Pennsylvania, medium population/ resource density community, 1995, p.40)

In addition to this practical merging of minds and resources, there is much programs can do together. By understanding the forces at play and the full contexts within which local service systems operate, programs are more likely to increase their ability to adapt, survive, and even improve service delivery, despite current political climate.

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