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Research on Economic Impact of Family Services in the Western Pennsylvania Region

As one of the leading social services providers in the region, few would argue with the ability of Family Services of Western Pennsylvania to fulfill our mission to *“foster the capacities and skills in families and individuals to direct their own lives, promote recovery and resiliency, and create a productive caring community.”* Since 1885 Family Services and our predecessor agencies have been providing services to our region’s most vulnerable citizens, first for children who were abandoned, orphaned, or unable to be cared for by their natural parents, and today as a broad-based human services agency providing thirty-eight different programs and services to children, adults and families living in our nine county region.

In addition to providing needed human services, Family Services also contributes to the overall health of the Pennsylvania economy. We serve as a consumer of products supporting other employers and vendors, and we supply a vibrant, taxpaying workforce to Pennsylvania. This fact takes on heightened significance as public funding for social services has declined and competition for funding has increased among non-profits. With non-profit organizations facing increasing financial pressure, maximizing economic returns is increasingly important to state legislators. And with foundation, corporate, and individual giving also diminishing in light of the economic recession it becomes imperative that Family Services understand and

promote the full magnitude of our services – both in terms of assisting Pennsylvania residents in becoming productive members of the community *and* our recognized contribution to Pennsylvania’s economy.



Over a six week period, beginning in October of 2009, Family Services utilized the services of a Fellow in Public Affairs from the Coro Center for Civic Leadership to study the impact of Family Services on our region’s economy. An economic impact study identifies the economic contribution an organization makes to the community in which it operates through job generation, wages, and local and regional spending.

With operations spanning nine counties—Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland—and with more than 420 employees, Family Services is a significant economic force within the

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Graduate Fellowship Announced

Family Services of Western Pennsylvania, celebrating its 125th year of providing social services to citizens of the Greater Pittsburgh region, announces the establishment of a competitive nine month fellowship for a graduate student who is enrolled

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From the President's Desk

Reflections On Agency and University Research Initiative

Donald H. Goughler, President & CEO



Between 2004 and 2009 Family Services of Western Pennsylvania and The University of Pittsburgh partnered in a National Institutes of Mental Health funded demonstration to model an agency-university collaboration for conducting applied research. Besides evaluating the developmental process and conduct of the model itself, the project intended to conduct pilot studies that would increase understanding of barriers to care, and create a training program to adapt and disseminate evidence based interventions to community staff. The project balanced the interests and goals of both the agency and the university and was, by intention, connected with the daily processes of the agency. Although Family Services had experience in supporting university research in the past, this support was conducted mainly by hosting projects that were managed externally by university researchers. This time the agency moved away from that passive model to an active balanced partnership which, in the end, would yield a body of evidence produced through a disciplined exploration of the important questions the agency faced in active service practice. This model also assured the university of a dynamic environment for its research investigation.

The partners intentionally wove this collaboration into the existing structure of Family Services in order to insure its survival beyond the term of the project. To this end, they agreed upon an imbedded model of collaboration in which agency leadership and university faculty were joint participants in governing, operating and coordinating the project and university staff had a substantial presence at agency sites. The key to making this model succeed was promoting shared authority by both partners in realms where one or the other party might usually have exclusive authority. This model created joint decision making structures to plan and execute the research and insured research relevance to the agency, its clients, and the university.

To ensure its effectiveness, Family Services built the imbedded model into the functional design of the

agency by establishing and staffing a Research Division within its operating structure. The agency's Research Division was the operational link to the university based research team. Additionally, to extend the collaborative decision making throughout both the university and agency systems, the partners established four balanced planning and operating committees, three jointly staffed by agency and university personnel and assigned specific realms of decision making, and the fourth, a Scientific Advisory Committee, which included external experts from both within and outside the region, including funders, academics, and program experts who gave broader perspective to the project.

The partners successfully addressed four major challenges to successful collaboration:

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FAMILY MATTERS

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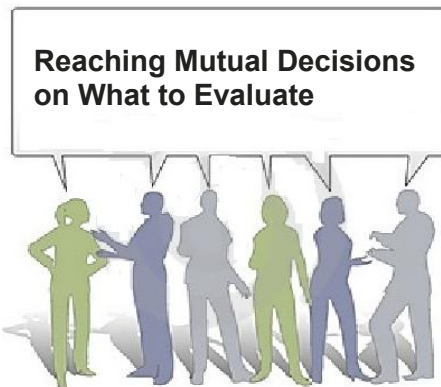
- (1) bridging different worlds of interest;
- (2) reaching mutual decisions on what to evaluate;
- (3) creating shared interests; and
- (4) negotiating mutually convenient interaction.

Bridging Different Worlds of Interest

Modern mental health service delivery, with its fee for service reimbursement design, demands efficiency and challenges service providers to produce short term measurable outcomes. This leaves clinicians with little time for thoughtful analysis of the service questions that arise during the daily pressure to be productive and provide cost efficient service. On the other hand, the very nature of research requires thoughtful planning and analysis. If too pressured by short term deadlines, the quality of research can suffer. Conducting applied research in a mental health setting almost inevitably brings collaborators into a culture clash about time and priorities.

To this end, the project benefited from a fairly simple strategy of including research staff on the agency's management and clinical councils. Their participation in the monthly meetings of these groups apprised them of agency strategy, initiatives and operational issues beyond the mental health program, and provided them with a chance to learn about administrative priorities and operations of the agency's overall program structure. As a result, all agency management staff, not just mental health program

managers, had regular contact and opportunity for communications with university research staff. The university research team also participated in quarterly agency-wide staff meetings, and meetings at various agency service sites. Consequently, agency employees saw the research agenda in practice, and recognized that research could help them with their priorities; while research staff gained understanding of program economics and the need to adjust theory to the variations of the field.



The project was designed to explore methods to improve treatment access for low income and minority populations. Final decisions on research topics usually occurred in two settings, the project leadership committee and the Scientific Advisory Committee. The leadership committee solicited and received input from program staff and used this to select topical focus. Two research interventions, in particular, came through this source. The first was to investigate a problem of individuals not attending their initial scheduled appointments and the second was related to the preparation of case managers. In both cases participatory research, including both practitioners and evaluators,

identified new approaches, which the agency implemented in its programs.

Another research intervention was prompted by the Scientific Advisory Committee, which noted that the agency was not attracting African Americans to the mental health service program in proportion to their census in target communities. Subsequently the research team designed and implemented a community based study of the issue which was conducted in the identified communities.

Creating Shared Interests

Even though the project designers shared an interest in research, agency staff generally did not have that interest at the beginning; so an educational strategy to build commitment among board and staff was implemented. Engaging the interest of the staff was a long term process, using agency-wide meetings including university staff as well as cluster meetings from various programs. These meetings actually began before the project was funded, when research was a concept being explored as a means to program improvement. This introduction prior to full agency commitment to the project gave staff time to understand its value for them.

This consciousness raising effort also focused on the board of trustees and they eventually adopted research as a primary objective of the agency's strategic plan and developed, refined and adopted a research policy and procedures that clarified the importance of research as an agency strategy.

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Negotiating Mutually Convenient Interaction

Characteristically, agency and university work takes place in different types of locations and levels of movement flexibility. Collaborative interaction between agency and university staff requires that both give up their comfortable seclusions and accept certain inconveniences, such as sharing their customarily separate work locales and adjusting to scheduling restrictions related to a service environment. It was important to recognize that direct practice staff in a modern community mental health agency are primarily required to be at program sites. They must produce enough units each day to finance the agency. Therefore when it was necessary to engage program staff in research, the research partners came to the program sites. This allowed research staff to experience maximum contact at the program level without overly disrupting program functions. It also was important for program staff to recognize that they needed to leave the program sites periodically and participate at a university location, where they could reflectively discuss observations at a distance from daily program travails.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

This collaboration changed the perceptions and understanding of service issues for both partners by providing the agency with resources to investigate service-related problems and providing researchers with clarity regarding the complexities of clinical issues in service settings. The project provided Family Services with a greater capacity for fact based

decision making; for instance, enabling the agency to develop a new case manager mentoring protocol and encouraging the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work to use this protocol as a foundation for a new case management certification program. Client engagement practices helped to resolve a serious no-show problem that impacted both service and



finances. The research experience created an agency outcome evaluation protocol which produces annual reports for thirty-eight agency programs.

The project produced replicable lessons for other agencies and universities who seek a successful research partnership. The partners learned the importance of deliberativeness in selecting university and agency collaborators to insure that candidate university research partners are open to becoming educated about the realities of practice and willing to adapt their research model and methods to the community rather than rigidly holding to a specific research design or scientific method.

For their part, candidate agencies must be willing to accept the inconveniences generated by research investigations. Good

research uncovers flaws in comfortable agency routines. It requires that staff accept change and management must be committed to and lead change, promoting it as positive and progressive. Additionally, board sanctions for the collaboration, clarified through the agency's strategic and operations plans, informed staff that the project was important. Finally, it was necessary to move patiently, even slowly, in implementing this project and to develop relationships before the research structure was created. Agencies considering such an initiative should build relationships with the university before committing to a major research collaborative effort. This slow pace allowed each to build trust and comfort.

The collaborative research experience changed both researchers' and service providers' views about service issues and challenges. Each gained some of the others wisdom and both gained an appreciation for the high potential of their joint capacity to solve problems.

[This article was excerpted from Goughler, DH and Anderson, CM (2009). Structural design for a university-agency research collaboration: Bridging an historical distance. *Families in Society*, 90/4, 419-424]■

To learn more about
Family Services of
Western Pennsylvania,
visit us on the web at
www.fswp.org

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region. In fiscal year 2008-2009, Family Services generated nearly \$22.6 million in revenue, with much of that put back into the local economy through wages, benefits, and the purchases of goods and services. This direct spending—employee wages and goods and services purchased—generates a “ripple effect” as dollars are recycled through the economy, for example, as employees spend their wages on food, clothing, housing, etc. Over the course of time, spending is taken out of the local economy through taxes, household savings, and purchases outside of the region.

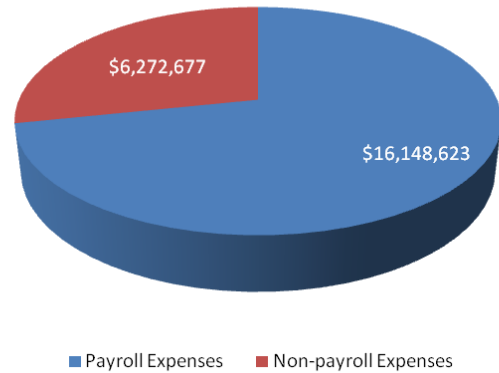
Indirect spending is measured using a multiplier. Analysis of economic impact must account for the inter-industry relationships within regions as these relationships determine how regional economies respond to project and program changes. Thus, regional input-output (I-O) multipliers, which account for inter-industry relationships within regions, are needed for economic impact analysis.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), within the U. S. Department of Commerce, has developed a method for estimating regional I-O multipliers called RIMS II (Regional Industrial Multiplier System). RIMS II is an economic input-output model used to estimate the economic impact generated from a specific event or organization. RIMS II is based on an I-O table which shows the distribution of inputs purchased and outputs sold for each industry and is developed from two data sources: the BEA’s national I-O table and the BEA’s regional economic accounts, which are used to adjust the national I-O table to show the industrial structure, trading patterns of a region, and wage, salary, and personal income data.

The impacts of the operation of Family Services were measured as of June 30, 2009. Historical expense items, including payroll, were sorted by zip code to determine the amount of expenditures that stayed in the nine county region. One-hundred per cent of wages and benefits were disbursed to employees or clients residing in the nine county region. In regards to non-payroll related expenses, approximately 98.43% of expenses have historically been made in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties. Expense items were sorted into one of 60 industry aggregations which were organized by the BEA. In fiscal year, 2008-2009, relevant direct disbursements totaled \$22,521,300.21. Of this, \$16,148,623.18 was payroll related which takes into account wage, salaries, and employee benefits. The remainder, \$6,272,677.03 in non-payroll expenses, was sorted into industry categories. Total expenditures were adjusted to reflect the

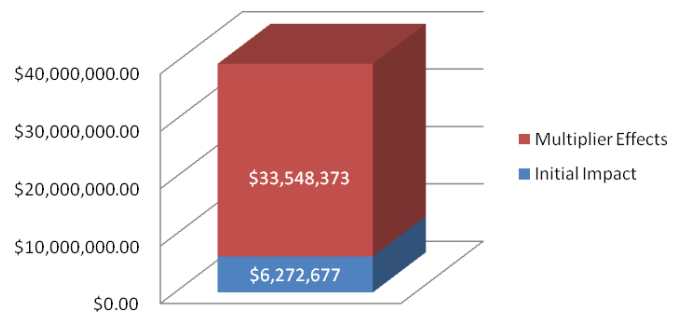
percentage that were assumed expended in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties. Final

Direct Expenditures FY 08-09



demand multipliers were applied after expenditures were assembled into the suitable industry categories. Regional demand output in the nine counties is estimated to have grown by \$33,548,373.76. With the addition of the direct impact, Family Services was responsible for \$39,821,050.79 in economic output in Southwest Pennsylvania. In addition, it is estimated that 274 jobs were created in the region. These jobs are in addition to direct agency positions and reflects jobs created by the spending of Family Services.

Total Output



It should be noted that these economic impacts do not take into account the more than 5,800 children, adults, and families who received services in FY 2008-09. The many programs provided by Family Services have not only improved the lives of our consumers, but have also increased consumer independence and employability while decreasing their dependence upon government subsidies and welfare.

With special thanks to Coro Fellow Colin White for his work on this project ■



Graduate Fellowship Announced

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in a Masters or Doctoral level program in one of the universities in the agency's service area. The stipend for this fellowship will be \$10,000 and the fellowship will commence in September 2010 with a completion date by May 1, 2011.

The fellowship will require part-time field placement at Family Services of Western Pennsylvania facilities and the agency will contribute significant resources of its own to support the fellow. This will include the assignment of a senior staff member to serve as a fellowship mentor, assignment of agency staff to provide administrative support, and assistance of the agency Director of Research and Evaluation for developing an evaluation design for the project. Family Services is especially interested in supporting fellowship projects that the agency can continue beyond the term of the fellowship; therefore, the agency's Director of Development will also engage with the fellow to identify potential long term funding and solicit outside financial support, if appropriate. The agency will incorporate the fellow's project into its fiscal year 2011 operations plan, so that it receives endorsement of the Board of Trustees as one of the annual initiatives of the agency.

While a university partnership is not required for this fellowship, Family Services will consider proposals that link to university field credit and is willing to collaborate with universities where a joint credited venture is suggested.

INTENDED FOCUS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

The fellowship should focus on a project that will make a significant

contribution to the building of citizen and community capacity consistent with the agency's mission and strategic plan.

The agency's 2009-2012 Strategic Plan has four objectives as noted below.

Objective 1:
Intensify the measured impact of service interventions.

Objective 2:
Nurture supportive resources in communities.

Objective 3:
Elevate staff capacity to conduct the agency mission.

Objective 4:
Activate progressive logistical supports for service delivery.

HOW TO APPLY

Narrative Proposal Stage

One fellowship will be granted for the period starting in September 2010. If the agency review panel does not identify a fundable application, a fellowship will not be awarded.

Interested applicants should submit a preliminary narrative proposal of no more than five single spaced pages in length clearly describing the project they intend to conduct and how it will support and nourish the agency's strategic objectives. Include project objectives, action steps and time lines for a nine month period of operation. Describe the applicant's relevant experience that qualifies him or her to succeed in the proposed endeavor and identify three individuals who will be familiar with the proposal and can provide references that verify these capabilities.

Applicants who move to the

second stage of review will be asked to secure reference letters. Indicate whether the proposed project has been coordinated with a university program of study or whether it is being proposed as an independent project. Applicants must submit a brief resume' or vita with the narrative application. Other attachments or appendices necessary to clarify the project, may be submitted with, and in addition to, the five page narrative.

Applicants should submit proposals electronically to fswp@fswp.org, Attn: Family Services Fellowship, by the deadline date of 5:00 PM, February 19, 2010.

A panel assembled by the agency will review initial submissions and, from them, will select several applications that will be forwarded for second stage questionnaire and a third stage interview.

These third stage interviews, with senior agency staff and members of an expert panel convened by Family Services, will be scheduled between mid March and mid April. Finalists in this phase will also participate in negotiation of various aspects of operating their project within the agency structure; and feasibility of implementing proposed projects within Family Services will be an important consideration in final selection of the fellow. It is expected that the successful applicant will be identified and announced by May 2010 and that individual will be invited to join in a contract with the agency at that time ■

Raising the Service Bar Through Outcomes Measurement

A decade ago, when Family Services staff gathered to evaluate their respective programs, the process was rudimentary and information obtained was perfunctory at best. Reports were brief and data was hand counted, often the result of homemade questionnaires. We could tell how many people were in our programs, whether it was an increase or decrease from the year before, what attendance was and how many client sessions or groups were offered. We were good at measuring numbers as outputs. Unfortunately, that wasn't the only information we needed.

What we weren't measuring to any great extent, and what is critical in today's competitive funding environment, were *outcomes*, i.e., whether or not we had the right mix of services to meet the needs of those who came to us for help, what impact our programs had on the lives of those we served, whether or not we met our mission to assist those who received services to live more productive and fulfilling lives, and whether or not our programs were meeting our fiduciary responsibilities to our funders to the best of our abilities.

Today, through a formalized approach as part of a wider quality assurance program, staff collect and analyze data to measure the effectiveness of their programs and present that data at an annual gathering of all agency programs. Supervisors receive training in areas that will assist them and their staff in producing quality, pertinent outcomes. Logic Models are developed for each program that detail:

- ⇒ Immediate Outcomes (changes in knowledge)
- ⇒ Intermediate Outcomes (changes in behavior)

- ⇒ Long-term Outcomes (changes in condition or status)
- ⇒ Process Outcomes (nuts and bolts issues)

Plans to improve services and outcomes measurements are developed, with those outcomes



integrated into staff work plans and evaluations. Individual programmatic outcomes reports are then synthesized into one document and made available to funders.

HOW HAVE WE PROGRESSED?

This agency-wide, systematic approach to program evaluation has resulted in:

- ⇒ thirty-eight clinical and non-clinical programs doing outcomes assessments.
- ⇒ tailored assessments for each program
- ⇒ development of a discussion section within each programmatic outcomes report
- ⇒ development of an impact statement, i.e., key result from each program's data.

The agency's Department of

Research and Quality Improvement, instituted more than five years ago, assists program staff in their outcomes evaluations. Led by a doctorate level director and staffed by a Master's Level Research Specialist, a Research Assistant, and a Quality Improvement Manager, Research and Quality Improvement helps staff identify key outcomes and processes that can be improved for each program, and assesses alternative strategies for change.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE?

The challenges we face today aren't the same as those we faced a decade ago, nor will they be the same as ones we face in the future. Therefore, we will continue to work with programs to identify and remediate problem areas quicker; we will improve the clinical impact of outcomes by providing real-time scores to clinicians; we will continue to assess agency-wide effectiveness; and we will continue to raise the bar on expectations for individual evaluations, to better serve individuals and families who seek our services and the entities that assist us in funding those services■

Ethics Point

Family Services is committed to providing our staff and the people we serve with an anonymous and confidential method of reporting issues and concerns they may have.

Ask a question, file a report, or follow-up on something you already submitted through *Ethics Point*, available on our website at www.fswp.org (once there, scroll to bottom of page for link.)

Your feedback is important to us!



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*Restoring Hope,
Supporting Dreams.*



Upcoming Events

**Family Services of
Western
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Choice Number:**

66



• **Running for Laptops, May 2, 2010**

Running for Laptops runners who participate in the full or half marathon or relay at the Pittsburgh Marathon can raise money to purchase laptop computers for youth who are aging out of the social service safety net and who wish to pursue their educational dreams. Part of the agency's *Educational Assistance Initiative*. To sign up online, visit our website at www.fswp.org and click on the Running for Laptops logo. For additional details on how you can support Running for Laptops, contact Alyssa Cholodofsky at 412-820-2050 ext. 428, or send an email to runningforlaptops@fswp.org.

• **Annual Family Services Charity Golf Classic, June 4, 2010**

At Churchill Valley Country Club. Foursome package includes: Greens fee, use of locker room and driving range, cookout lunch, on-course beverages, dinner and program, \$50 lottery ticket for each golfer (\$5,000 prize to winner.) To register yourself or your foursome, or to join us as a sponsor, contact Dennis Kowalski at 412-820-2050 ext. 409. Or visit us online at www.fswp.org and click on the "Get Involved" tab and then Events.

• **Fifteenth Annual ParentWISE Ice Cream Blast, July 17, 2010**

At the Kirk S. Nevin Arena at Lynch Field in Greenburg. An afternoon of fun, games, food, raffles and ice cream, ice cream, ice cream - vote for your favorite! - for the whole family. Support the vital programs of ParentWISE, a leader in parent/child education in Westmoreland County for more than 30 years. For details including information on sponsorship packages, contact ParentWISE at 724-837-5410.