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The Magazine of the American Public Human Services Association

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By Tracy Wareing Evans

APHSA's National Summit Showcases Interactive Policy and Practice Discussions

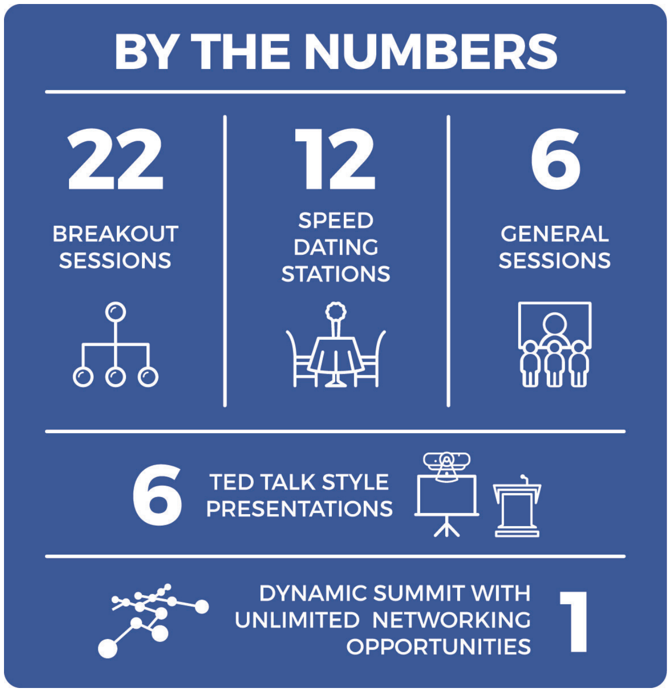
This issue of *Policy & Practice* is dedicated to showcasing the many efforts underway across the nation to improve the well-being of all Americans and enhance the impact and effectiveness of our health and human service system. In this pivotal presidential election year, we are focused on elevating these proven practices and promising innovations to build a well-framed story of our collective work and, ultimately, to influence policy changes at the national level and encourage broader adoption of what works.

To support this objective, this year we have transformed our annual Policy Forum into a National Health and Human Services Summit, designed to provide a venue for interactive policy and practice discussions shaped by the Human Services Value Curve and *Pathways* frameworks.

From May 22–25, we are pleased to welcome longstanding members, strategic partners, and newcomers to this National Summit at the Key Bridge Marriott in Arlington, VA. The Summit offers a variety of sessions designed to highlight the newest and most important information on practice trends, legislative and regulatory solutions, as well as the role that each of us plays in advancing health and human service system transformation.

Among the Summit sessions are inspiring and impactful TED-style talks from experienced national human service leaders who will reflect on key policy issues shaping our work; speed dating sessions that provide first-hand experience on the newest and most innovative technologies, programs, and research; workshops covering a broad range of topics and issues central to our collective work; and general sessions that highlight the Summit's theme—**Inspire, Innovate, Impact**—and help us better understand the current environmental context in which we are operating and what it is likely to mean for the future of health and human services.

Highlights of the Summit include remarks from Dr. Beth Cohen, from the University of California Davis Center for Human Services, who will explore what we know and continue to learn about how the brain functions. Her compelling session, "Human Services Leadership and Neuroscience," will be followed by a hands-on session designed to help you manage stress and maximize engagement in your work. Other general sessions will include remarks on the current political climate and presidential elections from Michael D. Gottlieb, executive director and



general counsel of the National Journal Group's Policy Brand Roundtable and chair of the National Policymakers' Council; and a panel discussion with national leaders led by our partners at *Governing* magazine on how the changing fiscal and political landscape is affecting the health and human service system now and into the future.

Workshops offered throughout the conference will focus on issues important to state and local CEOs and deputies, agency administrators, and program and operations specialists. Speakers from the public and private sectors with deep experience in health and human services will participate and offer their insights. The workshops focus on four major categories: (1) employment and economic well-being, (2) collaboration across health and human services, (3) child and family well-being, and (4) innovations in practice, program delivery, and operations. These sessions will provide insights on fresh approaches to problem solving and the ways that the Human Services Value Curve and APHSA's *Pathways* can help each of us achieve our goals. Specific

See Director's Memo on page 38

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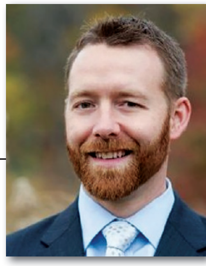


By Mike McCaman

Taking the Road to 60

Improving Work Participation in Franklin County, Ohio

Six years ago, Chelsea Klosterman left her job to become a stay-at-home mom. Although the new mother had been employed in the banking sector, she wanted to commit to raising and caring for her newborn son full time, while the boy's father would be responsible for financial support. It was a very different time for the young family.

It was a very different time for the Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services (FCDJFS) as well. Franklin County—Ohio's second most populous county and home to the state's capital and largest city, Columbus—was still recovering from the Great Recession with an unemployment rate more than 8.5 percent for much of the year.

As the local agency responsible for administering the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, known as Ohio Works First (OWF), in addition to an array of other public assistance programs, FCDJFS was seeing and feeling the impact of the economic downturn first hand. Franklin County's TANF work participation rate (WPR) for All-Family households was less than 19 percent, while the rate for Two-Parent households—where both adults have to fulfill work requirements—was even lower. Federal guidelines require states to maintain an average All-Family WPR of at least 50 percent and a Two-Parent rate of 90 percent, and Ohio was facing more than $100 million in potential sanctions for failing to meet the mandates.

These conditions were exacerbated by rising caseloads, with no possibility for Caseload Reduction Credits or state maintenance-of-effort dollars, and an outdated, compartmentalized business model for determining eligibility and administering the program. Too many participants were falling through gaps in the program processes, whether by missing scheduled appointments, by not attending work activity assignments, or by failing to submit paper timesheets in time for state reporting.

FCDJFS leadership recognized that it would need to make wholesale changes if it was to get the program back on track, avoid sanctions, and preserve essential TANF funding for local services. The plan included overhauling the agency's operational model for determining participant eligibility and assigning work activities; engaging with the local business community; collaborating with community partners to manage the Work Experience Program (WEP); and improving technology by streamlining and automating participant tracking processes.

Under the existing model, case managers conducted TANF eligibility determinations at each of the agency's five regional Opportunity Centers.

See Road to 60 on page 36

By Ken Miller

Foxholes or Firing Squads

Rethinking Government Accountability

Management-by-Fear is the current fad. Across the country, in conference rooms of every size, governors are looking at cabinet members' performance measures and demanding to know why the curve isn't bending. There are city managers berating department heads because the trend line is going in the wrong direction. There are federal appointees making up excuses for why the green light turned yellow on their dashboard. Again, nobody calls it Management-by-Fear. It's called accountability, managing for results, dashboards, scorecards, and STAT, to name a few. Different names, same assumption: The way we get better results is to hold people accountable for measurable goals. Unfortunately, not only do these accountability systems rarely work (affixing blame instead of fixing systems), they also produce devastating side effects (gaming the measurement system and increasing fear like we have seen in D.C. and Atlanta standardized test score scandals).

I used to believe very strongly in accountability systems. As a government executive and a consultant, I created and implemented every one of the buzzwords from the previous paragraph. And none of them made a bit of difference. Not because we didn't do them right. Rather, it's because we have gotten the notion of accountability all wrong.

My view on accountability was greatly changed by the stories of soldiers from World War II. My grandfather had fought in the war, but, like so many of his generation, he had chosen not to speak of it. I had no idea what he went through until I saw the incredible work of Stephen Ambrose, Steven Spielberg, and Tom Hanks in the HBO mini-series "Band of Brothers." This graphic, eye-popping series followed Easy Company from the storming of Normandy Beach through the liberation and the eventual end of the European conflict. Each episode of the 10-part series showed a key battle through the eyes of one of the true-life characters. You saw what they saw and felt what they felt through some amazing acting and directorial magic. What was most memorable, however, were the last five minutes of each story, when the show interviewed the actual soldier depicted. Seeing the gentleness in their faces and the wisdom in their eyes, the bottled-up pain and their lifelong quest for a peaceful place to live out their days, brought me to tears. I appreciated my grandfather as I never had before.

If you've seen the series or know about the events, you know that these men displayed acts of unthinkable courage. They ran head-long into a hail of bullets. They dived on grenades and ran across enemy lines with little regard for their own life. How? How did the military breed that kind of dedication? How do they continue to do that? Why does a soldier give his life? Surely it's because he is accountable to his sergeant and doesn't want to let his sergeant down. And the sergeant is accountable to his major, and the major to his colonel. And all the way up the chain, everybody is accountable to someone above them.

Right?

Of course not. What the military knows, and what the soldiers in "Band of Brothers" revealed, was exactly the opposite. The front-line troops didn't feel accountable to their commanding officer. Heck, they didn't even like their commanding officer, and could care even less about his commanding officer. They were accountable to each other. They would rather take a bullet than see their friend take one. They risked their lives to save the man next to them, knowing full well that man would do the same. True accountability is shoulder-to-shoulder. It's horizontal. Yet we keep trying to make it vertical. True accountability looks like love; we keep making it feel like fear.

Rather than creating a band of brothers (and sisters), rather than cultivating teamwork, togetherness and—dare I say it?—love, we continue to divide, separate, and force competition. We incentivize the chain of command but do little to cultivate the foxhole. We keep trying to "re-form" government. Thinking that another accountability form or scorecard will create excellence. That type of accountability only breeds compliance—doing just enough to avoid punishment. We can't comply our way to excellence. Excellence is a pursuit of the heart.

Good leaders don't have all the answers. Rather, they frame puzzles and challenge their people to solve them. The best way to do this is to form a team of people that works in a system to come together with people that are affected by the system to create a better system. Much like real foxholes, these team projects are harrowing and intense at the time, but create bonds that last a lifetime.

So how do we create shoulder-to-shoulder accountability? Create more foxholes. Continually cultivate ways for people to work together for a common good. Create organizational puzzles to solve and use teams to solve them. Good leaders don't have all the answers. Rather, they frame puzzles and challenge their people to solve them. The best way to do this is to form a team of people that works in a system to come together with people that are affected by the system to create a better system. Much like real foxholes, these team projects are harrowing and intense at the time, but create bonds that last a lifetime.

These foxhole moments not only create shoulder-to-shoulder accountability as the team members struggle, fight, gel, and transcend. These moments also create the other powerful accountability: over-the-counter accountability. That is, accountability to the people we serve. Again, a child-abuse caseworker may loathe her supervisor and may not particularly enjoy her co-workers, but just try to get between her and what is best for the kids she is trying to protect. No top-down accountability system can produce even a fraction of the motivation, passion, and creativity that comes from accountability to your team and your customers.

Vertical accountability perpetuates the parent-child relationships that so permeate our agency cultures. Management author Peter Scholtes laments that most of our organizational cultures, rather than being populated by adult-to-adult relationships, instead are dominated by parent-child relationships. When we see others as children, we treat them accordingly. We try to direct them and control them. We punish them and praise them. If they please us, they get a reward. If they displease us, they get a talking-to. With this mentality, all organizational progress takes the same energy as getting a three-year-old to put his shoes on.

Look at your own life. Who are you really accountable to? Who would you never want to let down, not in a million years? Are they above you or beside you? Is the relationship built on love or fear? What can you do to help foster those types of relationships in the workplace? What is your agency's Normandy Beach or Battle of Bastogne? How are you building a Band of Brothers (and Sisters)? Does your accountability system look like foxholes or firing squads?

This article was adapted and excerpted from Ken Miller's book, *Extreme Government Makeover: Increasing Our Capacity to Do More Good.* It is available from *http://www.governing.com*.

***Ken Miller** is the founder of the Change and Innovation Agency.*

TRANSITIONING TO WORK

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

BY RUS SYKES

For working-age individuals and their families, having a job and staying in the workforce are critical to achieving self-sufficiency and economic well-being. Transitioning from federal or state cash assistance to gainful employment and independence is no easy task. Many recipients of public assistance, when they move into the workforce, have low-wage employment and, therefore, rely on transitional work supports as they climb the economic ladder and establish a career pathway.

Low-income working families can receive a significant annual wage supplement through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which is available to eligible filers of federal tax returns and state tax returns in the 26 states and the District of Columbia that have their own EITC program. The EITC is the most important of such wage supplements, followed closely by the cash transfer benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Both programs phase benefits down very slowly as income from employment increases, thus avoiding the cliff effect inherent in other benefit programs, such as child care. A chart showing the wage supplemental impact of the EITC, other tax credits, and SNAP benefits that can be replicated in all other states is included here using New York State as the example. The New York chart demonstrates that, when combined with other cash-like tax credits and benefits, the EITC can boost the annual income of a single parent working full time in a $9-an-hour job to the equivalent of $16.81 an hour.

The EITC is designed to ensure that full-time workers do not have to live in poverty—particularly workers who are supporting families. This article explores the history and impact of the EITC, shows how it can work in concert with minimum wage laws as a poverty-fighting measure, and identifies ways of improving the credit.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The federal EITC was enacted in 1975 to offset the burden of payroll taxes and provide a work incentive for low- and moderate-income families. The EITC is refundable—meaning that when the tax credit exceeds the amount of taxes owed, the difference becomes a tax refund. As a result, it effectively creates a form of negative income tax.

For tax year 2014, the federal EITC provided about 28 million households with $65 billion in tax credits.[1] As most

TABLE 1: THE EITC—WHO GETS HOW MUCH?

Federal Credit, 2016 Guidelines

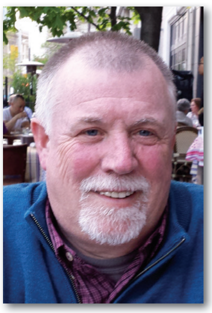
# Qualifying Children	Filing Status	Maximum Credit Levels ($) Income Range	Credit	Credit Phase-out Income Ranges ($)
0	Single	6,610–8,270	506	8,720–14,880
	Married	6,610–13,820	506	13,821–20,430
1	Single	9,920–18,190	3,373	18,191–39,296
	Married	9,920–23,740	3,373	23,741–44,846
2	Single	13,930–18,190	5,572	18,191–44,648
	Married	13,930–23,740	5,572	23,741–50,198
3 or more	Single	13,930–18,190	6,269	18,191–47,955
	Married	13,930–23,740	6,269	23,741–53,505

Source: Internal Revenue Service

low-income working families owe little or no income taxes, about 87 percent of EITC benefits come in the form of a tax refund.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) estimates show that 79 percent of eligible tax filer households receive the credit, and that the vast majority of these households claim all available federal EITC credits. The "take-up rate" for the EITC is relatively high because, unlike other benefit programs, it is obtained simply by filing a tax return.[2]

By design, the EITC provides the greatest help for households with children, especially those with three or more children.[3] In order to minimize any marriage penalty, eligibility ceilings are slightly higher for married families with children than for single-parent heads of households. Low-income single individuals and childless couples are eligible for a smaller, but still significant wage supplement through the EITC. Many proposals to expand the EITC for childless working households are also being presented to Congress.



Rus Sykes is the director of the Center for Employment and Economic Well-Being at APHSA.

EITC benefits gradually phase out as income increases. Maximum EITC benefits are effectively targeted, with the highest benefits going to those households with the lowest income and the most children. Households then remain eligible for the maximum benefit along a plateau of income. After the plateau, the EITC begins to phase out gradually, until eligibility ends, for different households. This approach maximizes benefits for those most in need and avoids creating a sudden drop off in benefits or a "cliff effect."[4] The current EITC eligibility, maximum benefit levels, and phase-out ranges are outlined in Table 1, above.

The federal EITC has been expanded with bipartisan support five times, including major expansions in 1986 under President Ronald Reagan, in 1990 under President George H.W. Bush, and in 1993 under President Bill Clinton. Each time, eligibility levels and maximum credit amounts were increased significantly, thereby increasing the wage supplement effect.

The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001—the first phase of the tax cuts initiated by President George W. Bush—raised maximum earnings levels under which married taxpayers filing jointly could qualify for the credit. In 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law additional temporary changes, establishing a higher EITC amount for families with three or more children and to further reduce the marriage penalty. The 2015 Omnibus Appropriation Bill made these provisions permanent.

The EITC, along with the refundable child tax credit, unemployment insurance, and food stamps have significant anti-poverty effects. In 2013, the federal EITC lifted 9.4 million, including about five million children, above the poverty line. Another 22 million people became less poor due to the EITC, including 8.1 million children.[5] However, most official measures of poverty do not account for the effects of the EITC, thereby tending to inflate the number classified as poor.

Excluding other tax credits and benefits in Figure 1, the federal and state EITC alone boost the annual income of the hypothetical family from $18,720 to $25,887, which is 128 percent of the federal poverty guideline for a family of three as of 2016.[6]

EITC AND THE MINIMUM WAGE

One of the main points of policymakers on both sides of the aisle is that the EITC and a state minimum wage should work in tandem to increase family income while reducing poverty and income inequality. Federal and state lawmakers must look for the right balance between the two to target those most in need, so neither the private nor the public sector becomes overburdened in the shared desire to make work pay while guarding against potential job loss.

There is little question that the EITC is more effectively targeted than a minimum wage to accomplish the goal of boosting incomes for low- and lower-middle-income workers, and only those workers. By contrast, a $15-an-hour minimum wage would deliver higher incomes to millions of households that are not poor, in fact "about two-thirds of current minimum wage earners have incomes above 200 percent of poverty and only one-fifth are poor."[7]

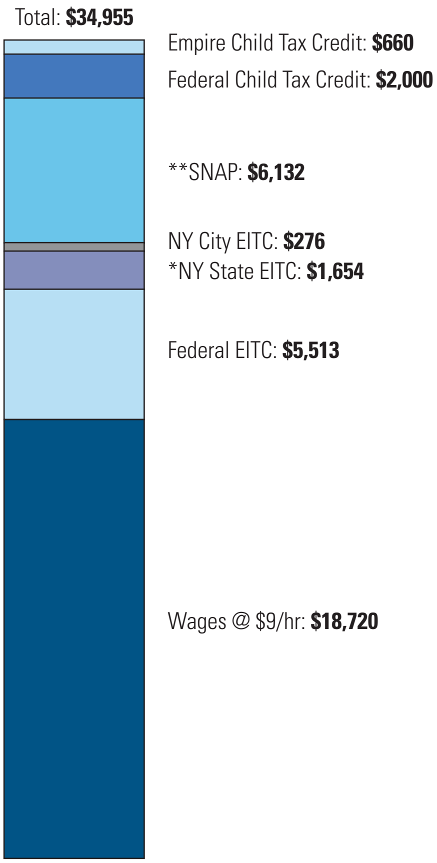
ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

While the EITC provides a generous wage supplement to working families with children, it provides only a meager benefit to working individuals and couples not raising qualifying children—"too small even to fully offset federal taxes for workers at the poverty line."[8] As of 2015, eligibility for the federal EITC for single workers not raising children was capped at $13,660 annually and for married couples not raising children, at $17,000. The credit is only available to those between the ages of 25 and 64 and therefore does not help younger workers. The maximum federal credit available for these workers is $464.

The EITC is an example of a program that accomplishes its purpose, insofar as it creates an incentive for non-working adults to seek employment by boosting the financial returns from getting and keeping a job. Some groups have called for further expansion or enhancement of the credit on a nationwide level, including mitigation of the EITC marriage penalty by expanding income phase-out rates for married couples with young children. There is also bipartisan support for significantly increasing the EITC for childless couples while lowering the eligibility level, including nearly identical proposals from President Obama[9] and House Speaker Paul Ryan.[10]

While the EITC can ensure that full-time low-wage workers do not live in poverty, and also boosts the incomes of part-time workers, it is designed, above all, to give cash assistance recipients an added financial incentive to seek employment—which is the best way to leave poverty behind for good. The EITC, along with other tax credits and SNAP benefits, thus become the nation's most important tools in helping individuals and families transition to work.

FIGURE 1: TOTAL CASH INCOME FOR NYC FULL-TIME, MINIMUM-WAGE WORKER, SINGLE WITH TWO CHILDREN



* Does not include small, variable household credit offset.

** Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps.

Calculation assumes a New York City household of three with monthly expenses of $600 for child care and $1,000 for rent, and $798 standard monthly utility allowance.

Source: Author's calculations based on 2015 program guidelines

THE EITC IS AN EXAMPLE OF A PROGRAM THAT ACCOMPLISHES ITS PURPOSE, INSOFAR AS IT CREATES AN INCENTIVE FOR NON-WORKING ADULTS TO SEEK EMPLOYMENT BY BOOSTING THE FINANCIAL RETURNS FROM GETTING AND KEEPING A JOB.

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ANY
ONE
CAN
WORK

Rethinking Employment for Individuals with Disabilities

By Jade Gingerich

Employment First is a national framework for systems change being implemented at the state level. This framework is centered on the premise that all people, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in community integrated employment regardless of their need for accommodation. Through this approach, state agencies are supported as they work across systems to align policies, practices, service delivery, and reimbursement structures that support community-integrated employment as the first option for all working-age adults. As many states embarked on this realignment, it became increasingly clear that Employment First would have broader policy implications than was initially understood.

Employment First is a critical policy shift for all agencies serving youth and working-age adults, particularly those in poverty. Paid work should be an expectation of the system, regardless of barriers. To achieve this end, all stakeholder agencies must be dedicated to creating a culture of work alongside families, schools, and frontline staff. Too often, agencies focus on moving individuals with disabilities off their caseloads onto public benefits. This is viewed as helping, since it guarantees receipt of a monthly income; however, that steady income equates to a lifetime of poverty and serves to reinforce long-held and outdated views that individuals with disabilities are not able to work. Not only can individuals with disabilities work, there are a number of work incentives designed to encourage them to be employed and to increase their earnings through work.

All human service and workforce development agencies must be fully equipped to support individuals with disabilities and reinforce employment as a desired and attainable outcome. In some states, the waiting list for disability specific services, such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services, results in individuals with disabilities not being eligible for specialized services. This is often especially true for those with the least significant disabilities, Moreover, many individuals, particularly those with non-obvious disabilities, are not likely to identify as having a disability or be eligible on the basis of disability in the adult service world, in spite of having an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in school. Many youths receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) lose their benefits at age 18 per the Social Security Administration's (SSA) redetermination process. As a result, many of these youth, after exiting school, are likely to find their way to non-disability specific services, including local social service offices and America's Job Centers.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is intended to improve coordination of employment services, workforce development, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation activities and for those states who choose to, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF). The act also significantly increases the emphasis on individuals with disabilities, particularly out-of-school youth, many of whom are likely to have non-obvious disabilities. WIOA also highlights the increasingly complex nature of individual barriers to employment, by listing 13 distinct groups, each of which most certainly includes individuals with disabilities. The list includes, but is not limited to, ex-offenders, the long-term unemployed, homeless individuals, older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, and youth who are in or have aged out of foster care. In addition, youth with disabilities are to receive pre-employment readiness services while in school. Schools are required to track youth with IEPs one year post-high school under Indicator 14, to capture the number who are enrolled in higher education, engaged in competitive employment (meaning integrated work at or above minimum wage), enrolled in some other post-secondary education or training, or engaged in some other employment.

Research indicates the greatest predictor of post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities is paid work while in school.[1,2,3] It is important to note the increasing emphasis on integrated, competitive employment as the desired, and even required, outcome for youth with disabilities versus segregated, subminimum wage work. Agencies should ensure all training programs they support are leading to competitive, integrated employment and not sheltered workshops. For a variety of reasons, family members often prove to be the greatest barrier to work for youth with disabilities. Why Not Work?, a video developed by the Maryland Department of Disabilities, features parents sharing their fears as well as how their sons and daughters ultimately achieved employment success. This video can be used as a tool when working with families and can be viewed at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8E30vmuaWc.*

While the changes under WIOA are significant, the act does not offer new funding. As a result, the emphasis in meeting the intent of WIOA must be on collaboration, coordination, and innovation. Innovation may not mean creating something new. It could mean borrowing best practices from one group of individuals with barriers to employment and refining and developing it to fit others. Among the practices worth borrowing from the disability community are:

- Customized employment, a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both, is based on an individualized match between the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. Alaska, through its Families First initiative, adapted customized employment to serve long-term TANF recipients with complex needs using a family-focused approach that engages the whole family.
- Work Incentives Counseling provides individuals receiving SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance information to make informed decisions about the impact of work on their benefits. There are some misconceptions about the impact of work on disability benefits. However, when equipped with the right information, individuals can take advantage of work incentives that allow them to increase their earnings through employment. SSA funds Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects in each state. Your state's WIPA can be located by going to *http://www.chooseworkttw.net* and typing in your zip code.
- Universal Design in Learning (UDL) is an approach to curriculum design that helps customize curriculum to serve all learners, regardless of ability, disability, age, gender, or cultural and linguistic background. All workforce programs should be developed using the principles of UDL, to facilitate learning and success for all participants, regardless of barriers.
- Job accommodations, often low cost or no cost, can mean the difference between long-term employment success and unemployment. To learn more about job accommodations that could prove helpful for individuals with barriers to employment, visit *http://askjan.org/.*
- Employer outreach and engagement are critical when seeking employment for individuals with multiple barriers to employment. Employers who hire individuals with disabilities are often open to employing individuals with other barriers to employment. To hear one employer who has a diverse workforce of individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with significant disabilities, go to *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZDoaAGw7ds&feature=youtu.be*

"Employment is still the most effective way for all individuals, regardless of disability, to escape poverty and pursue social inclusion."

—MARYLAND DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS REPORT 2008–2011

Interagency coordination and collaboration that focuses on cross pollination of strategies that work for hard-to-engage populations across the various groups with barriers to employment are critical, not only to successful implementation of WIOA, but also to maximizing use of limited resources. Staff across all agencies needs to believe that work can be an outcome for everyone they serve and leadership needs to ensure that policies, practices, and measures reinforce that ideal. In particular, the capacity of the front-line staff should be developed to ensure that they also reinforce the message that anyone can work.

Jade Gingerich is the director of Employment Policy/PROMISE at the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Maryland Department of Disabilities:
http://www.mdod.maryland.gov

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office on Disability Employment Policy:
http://www.dol.gov/odep/about/

The National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities:
http://www.leadcenter.org/

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Adding Up to Success

How the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reinvented its child support calculator

by Erin Frisch and Jamie Walker

"We had a unique one today with one non-custodial parent and two different support amounts for two different periods, and it worked like magic." This Michigan child support worker is describing the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' child support calculator, which was redesigned in a clear, transparent, and human way.

The co-design process was not "build it and they will come" development in which technology solutions are built in isolation. Instead of creating something *for* caseworkers, the department created it *with* them, using iterative development methods. And that made all the difference.

By exploring the calculator's place within the larger customer service process, the department, working with its partners, surfaced underlying challenges and then designed solutions directly with those who use the calculator—and the parents they assist—in mind. This helped take the stress away for caseworkers, make parents feel fairly treated, and establish the right amount of support for the children involved.

LOOKING BEYOND THE MATH

Establishing an appropriate child support obligation for a family can be complex. It involves personal financial information, and sometimes, raw emotions. Child support calculators play a vital role in the process. Caseworkers use them to determine the necessary level of support based on robust state formulas. The calculator is a linchpin of the program—child support orders would not happen without them, and it is used more than 5,000 times per month.

Well aware of the importance of this tool, the department had tried before to enhance it without satisfactory results. This time, leadership recognized that to get different results, they had to work differently. So instead of focusing solely on getting the complex math right, the department extended its emphasis. Without a doubt, the math mattered. But so did the more than 1,500 caseworkers' experiences using the calculator with parents. That's why the department moved away from status-quo redesign processes to an innovative co-design process that emphasized both functionality and service experiences.

With this dual focus, the goal was to create an accurate, easy-to-use tool that "lifted the veil" on how and why child support calculations were made. After all, transparency is essential to building confidence and consensus among parents, caseworkers, attorneys, and judges that child support payments are exactly what they should be. Leadership also hoped that a simple and clear calculator would help diminish people's reluctance in using child support services when they really could benefit from the program.

MAKING A HUMAN CALCULATION

This unique co-design process started with the caseworkers themselves. The project team conducted a series of interviews to understand frontline experiences and perceptions about the calculator. They explored several fundamental questions:

- What was working with the calculator—and what was not?
- What frustrations did caseworkers have?
- If caseworkers could make changes, what would those changes be?

These interviews revealed that, in this process, a top priority for caseworkers was their concern for parents. They believed that parents experienced the calculator as a "black box." Custodial and non-custodial parents provided extensive financial information, from income to expenses, which caseworkers entered into the calculator. But the calculator failed to provide enough information about how the resulting child support recommendation was derived. This left parents feeling confused and unhappy about support amounts.

For many parents, the issue was not the accuracy of the results. It was having assurances that the resulting obligation was fair. But caseworkers could not necessarily provide such assurances. The calculator was not optimized for consistency and transparency. It was not flexible enough to accommodate "what if" scenarios. Most important, caseworkers did not have the tools to moderate informative conversations with parents. The results often felt arbitrary to all parties, and service experiences were not satisfying.

MULTIPLYING THE IMPACT

Working from this insight, the project team approached this initiative as something much more than a usability refresh. They approached it as a service design challenge.

This meant addressing the calculator in context. Not as a technology transformation for technology's sake, but as a tool within a broader service experience. This experience needed to be a clear, consistent, collaborative—and human—interaction. Caseworkers had to be armed to be transparent with parents about how child support decisions were made. Parents needed to have all of their questions answered.

Instead of using a rigid, sequential design process, the project team opted for an iterative design process. This meant that solutions were repeatedly tested as they were being built. The team shared progress with a group of up to 20 stakeholders every two weeks. They gathered and incorporated feedback into the next stage of development.

FROM BLACK BOX TO OPEN BOOK

Six months after caseworkers started using it, the new co-designed calculator is helping them offer the positive customer experiences that they hoped to deliver. Today's calculator is a tool, not a barrier. It helps build understanding, guide parents, and assure that child support obligations are fair. The result is more transparency, consistency, and faster results. The calculator is delivering important benefits:

Creating a head start that saves time
The new calculator pulls data directly from the case management system so workers have a "head start" based on information that has already been provided or supplied through automated systems. The tool also allows customization of specific comments that are routinely added to child support order recommendations, saving time and reducing effort when creating calculations.

Getting to the right answers—fast
Auto-calculation makes it possible for caseworkers to quickly inform parents about the support that they would get during any timeframe. Unlike before, the answer is just a click away.

Erin Frisch is the director of the Office of Child Support at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

Jamie Walker is a managing director at Accenture.

Enabling more effective court time
The new calculator now creates a more exhaustive report specifically tailored to courtroom requirements. The project team designed the final report with caseworkers to help ensure they have all the information they need to present to the judge.

Delivering outcomes that matter
In the first 10 weeks that the calculator was available, there was a near 9 percent increase in the number of calculations performed compared to the same time period the year before. Caseworkers can now accomplish the same results with a single calculation, where previously each calculation required at least two iterations.

Helping parents serve themselves
As part of its commitment to transparency, the department plans to develop an online version of the calculator that parents can use themselves.

COUNTING ON LESSONS LEARNED

The department's experience with co-designing the child support calculator offers insightful lessons for other human service agencies that are considering using a similar approach:

Start with the business case
Co-design and iterative development is not the right fit for every situation. Agencies need to think first about the business problem that they want to solve. Different methodologies are best applied to different situations. For example, regulation-driven initiatives are unlikely to be a strong fit, while user-centered needs like this are more aligned. The ideal for any agency should be to develop a set of options rather than to rely too much on the same standard approaches every time. It's about having the right tool in the tool belt to solve the right business problem.

Balance risk and creativity
Agencies that select an iterative design approach must be comfortable with the risks that come with it. This kind of process can challenge agencies' risk tolerance. Leadership must be comfortable letting something evolve, putting something into production that will, by its very nature, have multiple versions. Some programs are ill-suited for a methodology that is about continuous improvement and evolutionary change. Agencies also have to consider whether they have the time to commit to a process like this. Sometimes, a more definitive, sequential process with formal exit criteria might be a better option.

Make user-centered design a priority
For co-design processes to work well, agencies must keep users and customers as their North Star throughout the development process. This means truly understanding the needs and behaviors of specific audiences, not just making assumptions about them. It also means committing to the latest service design principles to create interactions that are intuitive, relevant, and welcome. For Michigan, this meant finding the sweet spot to accommodate baby boomers and generation X employees and millennial parents who have starkly different expectations and comfort levels with digital tools like the calculator.

Close the loop on feedback
By interviewing caseworkers at the beginning of the process—which was essential to getting real-world insight from the frontline—the department set an expectation about their involvement. Agencies that take a similar approach should develop a process that does not just solicit initial feedback, but that also re-engages people toward the end of the process, perhaps with a first view or an option to test drive the tool.

THE SUM OF THE PARTS

As it was for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child Support, co-design is a newer development approach for many agencies. It provides an excellent way to build transformation that works for the people actually doing the work. It also embodies a test–learn–optimize philosophy that can help agencies get to the end result that works for all stakeholders—while protecting their investment. That adds up to a win for everyone involved.

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Human Resources as a Strategic Partner for Health and Human Services

By Anita Light

Leaders of health and human services know that to achieve the vision and mission of their organization, they must have a strong foundation from which to operate. That strong foundation consists of resources in many areas—research- or evidence-based practices that support children, adults, and families to successfully navigate their lives toward a state of well-being, solid policy and financial resources to support those practices, and modern systems that provide accurate data for effective decision-making.

But who makes all this work on the ground? A stable, competent and well-trained workforce, that's who!

And who works with the health and human service leaders to find the right people to be a part of this workforce? One of the most important members of the executive team—Human Resources Leaders!

Evaluating Human Resources in the Context of Human Services: How We Did It

Based on two national surveys of health and human service CEOs and multiple discussions with leaders from across the country, APHSA's National Collaborative for Integration of Health and Human Services identified the workforce to be an absolutely essential part of any successful effort to move health and human service (H/HS) government entities at all levels toward the desired future state of a highly integrated, outcome-focused, generative organization. The Workforce Committee of the National Collaborative explored the role, function, and effectiveness of the fundamental linchpin to this workforce—human resources (HR)—by creating an analytical framework, and a subsequent survey based on this framework, to understand more fully the extent to which HR serves as an effective strategic partner for leaders in health and human services (H/HS). The full results of this survey can be found on the APHSA website at *http://www.aphsa.org/content/APHSA/en/pathways/NWI.html,* and are highlighted below.

Framework for HR Roles/Functions

Over the past year, the Workforce Committee developed a framework to further define HR as a strategic partner and more clearly convey HR's opportunities and roles within H/HS. This analytical framework highlights four primary functions for which HR is responsible: Execute on the HR Administrative Functions; Develop Talent; Influence Culture; and Influence Direction. The graphic below more fully describes how each function is defined.

Illustration via iStockphoto

FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD

Using the Framework for HR Roles/Functions, a national survey was conducted in the fall of 2015 with results published in February 2016. The survey examined the effectiveness of a variety of components within each of the functions outlined above. Multiple findings affecting H/HS were identified that offer significant implications for integrating HR. Highlights from these findings follow:

1. H/HS leaders must establish partnerships with HR to address all four functions affecting capacity building in the workforce. HR was found to be less effective in influencing the direction of the organization and influencing the culture of the organization than being able to onboard the right people at the right time or to develop talent. But in examining the survey ratings in more depth, only one function Executing on the HR Admin Function—was found to be at the basic level of "effective." The other three were rated "less than effective."

2. A solid Human Resource Information System (HRIS) is typically lacking. HR data are used for a variety of purposes, i.e., to enable staff to access their own HR data (employment history, salary history, benefits, etc.), to provide the executive team with performance data, or to assess current workforce capacity and to forecast needs into the future. Without a solid HRIS, H/HS leaders are constrained to make appropriate decisions on behalf of the organization.

Framework for HR Roles/Functions

Execute the HR Administrative Functions—by creating trust in the administrative operations of HR, engaging leadership in the development of job descriptions that support the overall goals of the organization, and recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new employees; providing benefits and compensation for staff; and conducting analysis of capacity as well as giving employees access to their own data through a Human Resource Information System (HRIS);

Develop Talent—by creating employee development and training opportunities for increased organizational performance as well as opportunities for leadership and promotional experiences;

Influence Culture (the values, beliefs, traditions and norms)—by engaging employees in the development of a culture that encourages innovation, teaming, and results; and

Influence Direction—by participating as a full member of the Executive Team to influence the direction of the organization.

3. Turning to Developing Talent, we found that while this was critical for the retention of the workforce, there was a slightly less than effective rating for this function. Many organizations provide training, staff development opportunities, and effective supervisory coaching to develop their workforce. We found, however, that the ***training provided was not on topics the current workforce needed to remain relevant in their position*** (i.e., project management, technology- focused training), nor was there routine collection of data to determine a return on training investment dollars.

4. HR fell short in being able to translate what they know about the organizational culture into strategies that positively affect how the organization operates. HR has often been seen as a trusted advisor and can therefore influence how the values, principles, and norms of the organization can be carried out and supported throughout all activities. HR has the opportunity to positively affect the culture in multiple ways, such as effective use of communication venues, implementation of climate surveys and gap-closing initiatives, promotion of change management processes, and the use of performance management tools.

5. HR was not at the table to be able to affect the direction of the organization, thus limiting the effectiveness of the work being done. HR has a critical role on the executive team, not only to understand the work of H/HS and to carry out the goals and objectives of the agency, but also to influence the direction of the agency in support of its core values. HR can help move the organization toward a modern, integrated, outcome-focused, and person-centered H/HS agency where a culture of innovative and creative problem solving is the norm—in other words, a generative H/HS organization.

Anita Light is the director of Practice Innovation and Grant Development at APHSA.

A CALL TO ACTION FOR H/HS LEADERS

H/HS leaders face the challenge of building a strong organizational foundation through their workforce for the delivery of benefits and services to the communities in which they operate.

Immediate steps can be taken to establish a strategic partnership with HR for some quick wins.

To be the best at serving communities, H/HS leaders need to position their organizations to be an employer of choice within that community. The best way to do that is to elevate the role HR plays in identifying, recruiting, and onboarding new staff. Empowering HR with information about organizational direction, goals, values, and needed competencies; requiring that this information be embedded and maintained in all recruitment and onboarding policies and procedures; and monitoring the success of these processes ensures a solid foundation.

H/HS leaders are always concerned about sustainability of the success of their organization and that includes the sustainability of the workforce. Once they are onboard, HR can support the ongoing development of staff by providing relevant learning opportunities and training. A quick survey of staff on what training or experiential learning opportunities would be helpful to them in their work, comparing that to what is provided, and then making needed changes can let staff know the leadership is invested in them and their future with the organization.

Perhaps one of the most important steps H/HS leaders can take is to ensure that there is adequate data on the workforce to inform executive decision-making. These data can be found in a robust Human Resources Information System (HRIS) that provides not only information that employees can access about themselves, but information on the overall performance of staff, employee analytics related to recruitment and retention, training ROI, as well as information that can assist in forecasting for the future.

And finally, H/HS leaders must recognize the importance of the partnership they have at their fingertips in their HR department—a ready and willing partner! This, in many cases, is an untapped resource that has the potential to play a significant role in the transformation of the organization. Recognizing this and acting on it by getting HR to the table allows a rich knowledge of the workforce and its need to become a major element in the discussion on capacity building, capacity planning, resource allocation, and development of organizational culture.

HR can be a conduit from the workforce to the leadership team, and vice versa, and can provide huge opportunities to close gaps between current performance and a desired future state that serves children, adults, and communities in positive ways.

For more information, contact Anita Light at alight@aphsa.org.

Reference Note

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JOINING FORCES

A Crosswalk of the Human Services Value Curve with Organizational Culture and Climate

By Anthony Hemmelgarn and Phil Basso

As we evolve in our working partnership with APHSA's Organizational Effectiveness team and the University of Tennessee's Center for Behavioral Health Research (CBHR), formerly the Children's Mental Health Services Research Center, we have discovered great synergy in our respective efforts for supporting agency performance. These include APHSA's efforts to help agencies progress through stages of the Health and Human Services Value Curve, and CBHR's efforts to help agencies improve by addressing their organizations' cultures and climates.

The Value Curve is a lens—a way of looking at what we do from the point of view of our consumers—and its four levels represent ways of engaging consumers and their communities that result in greater impact as organizations move up the Value Curve. At the first level, called the regulative level, the key word is "integrity." Consumers receive a product or service that is timely, accurate, cost effective, and easy to understand. Next, at the collaborative level, the key word is "service." Consumers have an easier time of it when they "walk through a single door" and have access to a more complete array of products and services because programs, and even jurisdictions, are collaborating to make it happen for them.

At the integrative level, the key term is "root causes." Products and services are designed using consumers' input so that we address their true needs and even begin to reach "upstream" to address causal problems rather than "treating the symptoms." At the generative level, the key term is "bigger than the family." Root- cause analysis is done at a "population-wide level," resulting in prevention strategies and other forms of support broader than those an individual or family would receive directly.[1]

Organizational culture and climate is another potent lens that human service organizations can use to look at their performance and improve their outcomes. APHSA's partners at CBHR have been building that case for more than 20 years, demonstrating the substantial impact of organizational culture and climate on the effectiveness of human services.[2] Their work demonstrates that: (1) human service agencies vary widely in their organizational culture and climate profiles, (2) agencies with positive profiles have substantially better outcomes, and (3) agencies can improve their turnover, EBP/EBT implementation, client, and other outcomes through strategies that improve their cultures and climates.

The CBHR uses its Organizational Social Context Measure (OSC-M) to profile agencies across dimensions of culture and climate that have been shown to be important to the successful functioning of human service organizations. Taken together, these dimensions encapsulate key aspects of an agency's "personality" and offer insights that can be used to improve performance metrics.

As an example of the synergy between our two models, the following crosswalk describes proficiency, one of the dimensions of culture, in the context of the Value Curve. In proficient cultures, staff shares expectations that it will be responsive to the unique needs of its clients and have up-to-date knowledge and practice skills.[3] Broadly, we expect proficiency levels to rise as organizations advance to higher levels on the Value Curve.

The Regulative Level and Proficiency

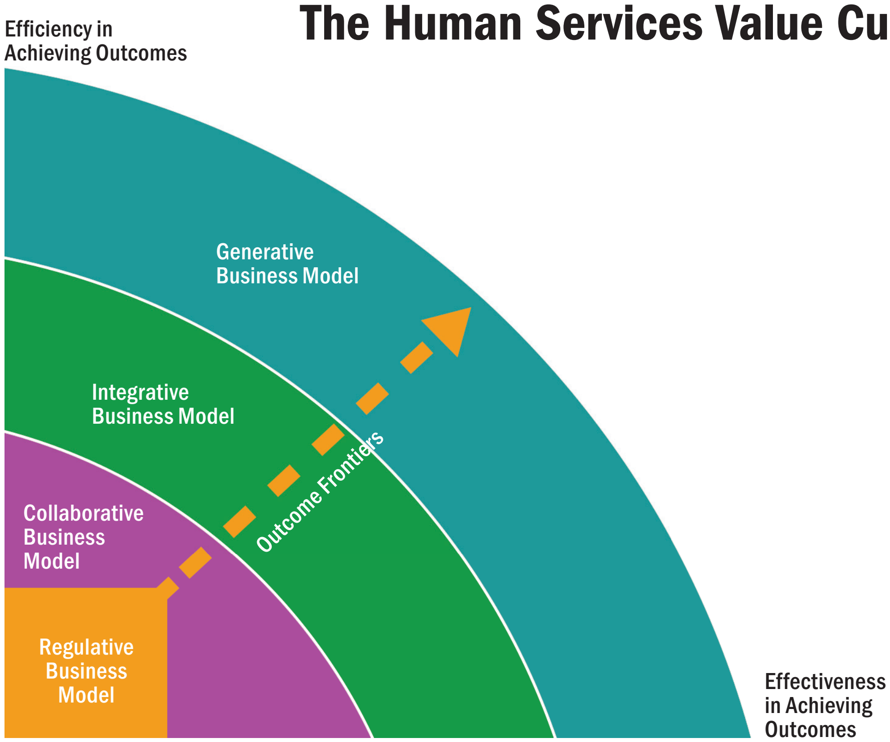
The regulative level for organizations is about building a stable and reliable infrastructure, and while the value proposition is foundational and compliance oriented, much of the cultural focus is internal. This includes laying out standards and processes for how the organization will operate, creating greater certainty, and establishing a framework to achieve efficiency. These are essential organizational capabilities; without them, there is chaos and failure.

Unfortunately, organizations at this level can easily elevate order and "covering the bases" to be ends rather than means. When this happens, proficiency drops dramatically. Phil Basso encounters this often in his fieldwork, and coined the term "bad regulative" for this approach (see his article in April's *Policy and Practice,* "Travels with the Value Curve").

A number of years ago Anthony Hemmelgarn helped conduct 25 focus groups from one end of a state to the other. More than 200 child welfare managers participated. The goal of each session was to answer a single question: "What needs to be measured to determine staff success?" The answers, over and over, were about process: how many clients were contacted, how many seen, paperwork completed on time. In and of themselves, there is nothing wrong with such responses. But not a single manager suggested anything related to clients getting better, and a laser focus on this is essential for high proficiency. This child welfare system was paying little attention to addressing its clients' needs. Proficiency, we can safely assume, was extremely low.

Human service systems often rely on standardized case management practices, such as requirements to visit families so many times per week, in a sincere effort to improve quality of care. But such tactics run counter to proficiency. "One size fits all" policies are, in fact, unresponsive to clients' unique needs. Case managers' time and other valuable resources are routinely wasted. Morale suffers.

The Human Services Value Curve



Regulative Business Model: The focus is on serving constituents who are eligible for particular services while complying with categorical policy and program regulations.

Collaborative Business Model: The focus is on supporting constituents in receiving all services for which they're eligible by working across agency and programmatic borders.

Integrative Business Model: The focus is on addressing the root causes of client needs and problems by coordinating and integrating services at an optimum level.

Generative Business Model: The focus is on generating healthy communities by co-creating solutions for multi-dimensional family and socioeconomic challenges and opportunities.

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It must also be noted that many of the regulatory requirements that agencies confront are externally applied and beyond the control of agency leaders and staff. They must meet funder requirements. They must comply with legal mandates. While uniformly well intended, such external pressures often result in barriers to increasing proficiency. This is particularly true when compliance is enforced negatively or in a punitive fashion.

Anthony Hemmelgarn is an industrial and organizational psychologist, is a research scientist at the University of Tennessee's Center for Behavioral Health Research.

Phil Basso is the deputy director of the American Public Human Services Association.

The Collaborative Level and Proficiency

At this level, organizations are concerned with connecting across programs and agencies to improve efficiency and effectiveness. More proficient organizations are likely to work toward meaningful client outcomes that cut across internal silos. They are more likely to involve teams and personnel at all levels in improvement-driven activities such as Continuous Quality Improvement. There is more emphasis on the efficacy of front-line staff as well as support for the front-line staff to learn from their errors, mistakes, and problems.

At the most important end of human service organizations—the front line—staff must feel safe and confident in its ability to achieve outcomes centered on client well-being. As skills develop internally, safety increases for trying new approaches, and efficacy in helping clients builds; attention to effectiveness for clients increases along with proficiency. Front-line staff must also be able to work closely together within its own teams, and the teams must have the skills and tools necessary to effectively interact and problem solve with other programs and departments, and with external organizations and stakeholders.

Such work increases the probability that programs and organizations will reach out and work with others in the community. As with individuals, a sense of efficacy increases confidence and openness to relating to others. Effective teams with a clear sense of purpose, organizational support, and a sense of their competence to improve their clients' well-being provide platforms for broadening the network of relationships required to reach higher levels of the Value Curve.

However, collaboration has its own traps. Similar to the regulative level, an overemphasis on process can undo proficiency. For example, spending considerable time and effort negotiating collaborations across programs and organizations can consume resources better directed toward clients. Collaboration can also become its own end rather than a means, leading to excessive focus on collaboration-driven sharing (e.g., paperwork) and miss the boat on solving real barriers to client care.

An additional concern is that the research on collaboration as a way to improve client outcomes is mixed. Moreover, collaboration can be seen by communities as a panacea to address a lack of resources. Basically, let's have this poor program work with that poor program, and we won't need to increase funding for this service. This happens frequently in communities, and is a harmful side of collaboration.

In Basso's fieldwork he has, at times, discovered that agency leaders view themselves as operating at the Integrative level, but then cannot demonstrate related methods for family-centered engagement, comprehensive risk assessment, root-cause analysis tools and metrics, or related caseworker skill-building, suggesting the move to a collaborative mode was targeted to streamlining business processes only. Proficiency through the Value Curve's Collaborative stage still requires sufficient resources to get the desired value and set the stage for further progress.

The Integrative Level and Proficiency

The distinguishing characteristic of this level is pulling clients into the problem-solving process. In organizations that achieve this level, proficiency is likely to be high. Integrating clients into the process means letting go of power and transferring it to the clients. Teams and programs with the confidence, skill, and support necessary to do this will have high proficiency levels.

The integrative level also requires rethinking casework practice and the use of technology and data. The historical failure rate for such endeavors in child welfare is alarmingly high. Why? Because these types of changes are almost always applied from the top down, assuming that it will be beneficial for front-line case managers and their clients. Little thought is given to the perceived impact on the front line.

It is fair to say that high proficiency will be a prerequisite across all participating organizations to reach the generative level. And, both the expectation of proficiency and proficiency itself will be prerequisite for funders and other stakeholders.

The OSC Measure and ARC (availability, responsiveness, and continuity) change strategy are built on the socio-technical model of change. This model argues that technological change is as much a social process as a technological one. In sum, inattention to social issues and concerns (organizational culture and climate) dooms technological change. This is a primary cause of the numerous technological failures in child welfare. Organizations at the integrative level will necessarily have positive cultures and climates, including proficiency. This foundation is essential for organizations to address the sweeping challenges required to achieve this level.

APHSA's Organizational Effectiveness (OE) practice model and toolkit focuses on guiding a process whereby the organization's own staff generates solutions by first defining a desired state, assessing current strengths and gaps, determining the root causes for gaps, and then setting in motion solutions that are well-supported in implementation and ongoing monitoring, forming a learning cycle. This approach—similar to an integrative casework approach—is designed to build proficiency while establishing a sound structure and process for improvement and goal attainment.

The Generative Level and Proficiency

This level moves to a broad, community-based conceptualization of service delivery and addressing risk factors at a population level, through co-creating new capacity in the community as a whole, and through joint advocacy efforts that affect general beliefs and norms that may enable or impede progress. To achieve this Value Curve stage, multiple organizations will need to come together. They will have to share a great deal. They will have to trust each other. They will have to share a common vision. Funders, particularly federal and state governments, will have to re-conceptualize what they want to fund.

Frankly, it is hard to envision this in most communities. At the same time, when it comes to the culture of community leaders, partners, and consumers of health and human services, this stage is most appealing as the desired state of things. Head issues off at the pass by working on them upstream. Pay me now instead of paying me later. Build a community that evens the playing field for people and helps them reach their full potential. It is fair to say that high proficiency will be a prerequisite across all participating organizations to reach the generative level. And, both the expectation of proficiency and proficiency itself will be prerequisite for funders and other stakeholders.

What is certain in human services is that the problems being addressed are numerous, highly complex, and difficult to solve. This article demonstrates that our respective models add value to the other, and we believe this can benefit the organizations we work with. From our perspective, combining these two lenses leads to a better focus and clearer solutions than either lens alone.

Reference Notes

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By Daniel Pollack

Parental Mental Health as a Factor in Deciding Custody

The Role of Human Service Agencies

Photograph illustration by Chris Campbell

A relevant factor for a court to consider when deciding custody is the mental health of each parent. According to Mental Health America, "a higher proportion of parents with serious mental illness lose custody of their children than parents without mental illness. There are many reasons why parents with a mental illness risk losing custody, including the stresses their families undergo, the impact on their ability to parent, economic hardship, and the attitudes of mental health providers, social workers and the child protective system."[1] How often mental health is a factor in litigated custody disputes is unknown.[2]

A court may order a mental health evaluation whether or not treatment from a mental health specialist is already ongoing. A determination of mental illness or instability does not obligate the court to award custody to the other parent.[3] Nor is the parent with a mental illness barred from parenting. Some states disallow courts from viewing a mental or physical illness or disability as the sole factor in a custody decision, but they can hear evidence regarding these conditions. Colorado's statute is typical:

"C.R.S. § 14-10-124. (2013). Best interests of child.

… (1.5) Allocation of parental responsibilities. The court shall determine the allocation of parental responsibilities, including parenting time and decision-making responsibilities, in accordance with the best interests of the child giving paramount consideration to the child's safety and the physical, mental, and emotional conditions and needs of the child as follows:

(a) Determination of parenting time. The court, upon the motion of either party or upon its own motion, may make provisions for parenting time that the court finds are in the child's best interests unless the court finds, after a hearing, that parenting time by the party would endanger the child's physical health or significantly impair the child's emotional development. In addition to a finding that parenting time would endanger the child's physical health or significantly impair the child's emotional development, in any order imposing or continuing a parenting time restriction the court shall enumerate the specific factual findings supporting the restriction. In determining the best interests of the child for purposes of parenting time, the court shall consider all relevant factors, including: … (V) The mental and physical health of all individuals involved, except that a disability alone shall not be a basis to deny or restrict parenting time; …"

See Mental Health on page 38

By Daniel Pollack

Protect Your Professional License

Photograph via iStockphoto

A personal letter you really don't want to find in your mailbox? Well, of course one from the IRS—but just as daunting is a complaint from your state licensing board containing an accusation of wrongdoing or misconduct.

Due Process

Human service agencies hire many licensed professionals, especially social workers. Naturally, the laws, regulations, and standards regarding each professional licensure are unique and complex. Due to a civil or criminal complaint, investigation or lawsuit, the applicable state licensing authority may seek to take some negative action that jeopardizes that license. Such action cannot happen, however, without due process. For instance, Rhode Island [R.I. Gen. L. § 42-35-14 (b) (2012)] states that, "No revocation, suspension, annulment, or withdrawal of any license is lawful unless, prior to the institution of agency proceedings, the agency sent notice by mail to the licensee of facts or conduct which warrant the intended action, and the licensee was given an opportunity to show compliance with all lawful requirements for the retention of the license. If the agency finds that public health, safety, or welfare imperatively requires emergency action, and incorporates a finding to that effect in its order, summary suspension of license may be ordered pending proceedings for revocation or other action. These proceedings shall be promptly instituted and determined."

Remember, while licensing boards may advocate for the professionals they cover, their primary charge is to protect the public. For this reason, almost all states have a public safety exception that allows a licensing board to suspend a professional license without a hearing if public safety would be in immediate jeopardy.

When to get Legal Advice

Securing a professional license is the culmination of years of education, an enormous investment of money, and many other personal and family sacrifices. That is why trying to resolve a professional licensing issue without an attorney may not be advisable—there's just too much at stake. Involving legal counsel early on is the wiser course. By getting legal advice early, potential problems may be resolved before they lead to a license suspension, restriction, or revocation. And, if an administrative hearing is necessary, your attorney will need time to prepare your case.

See License on page 39

technology speaks

By Marci Roth

Gathering Steam

Information Exchange to Improve National Rollout of the Interstate Placement of Children for Foster Care and Adoption

Less than three years ago, a small group of states joined a pilot project to build and test an electronic system for exchanging child information to investigate and secure safe placement of children across state lines. The six pioneering states involved in the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) pilot successfully tested and proved that such a system significantly reduces the time children spend waiting for states to exchange paperwork and saves states money in copying and mailing. The pilot ended in May 2015.

Recognizing the success and the potential for a nationwide, electronic data exchange, the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (CB) awarded a cooperative agreement to the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC) to roll out NEICE nationwide, beginning in June 2015.

As of April 1, eight states are using NEICE, with another 23 in the queue for onboarding in 2016 and 2017. More than 12,000 cases have been processed through NEICE since August 2014. The AAICPC estimates approximately 70,000 ICPC cases are processed across states each year, though no precise numbers yet exist.

Rep. Todd Young (R-IN), left, and Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL) co-sponsored the Modernizing the Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act, which has bipartisan support. Young explained how important easing the child placement process is to helping children find a loving, stable environment: "They deserve to be placed in the setting that is best for them, regardless of whether that is a home within their state or across a state line. […] For children who've endured such unimaginable circumstances, the sooner we get them placed into a forever home, the better."

Photographs via Flickr Creative Commons

The Origin of NEICE

In May 2013, the Office of Management and Budget, through the Partnership Fund for Program Integrity Innovation, awarded $1.25 million to build a national electronic web-based system to automate the ICPC administrative process. The CB was selected as lead agency to administer funds to APHSA and its affiliate, AAICPC, through a cooperative agreement.

The goal of NEICE is to improve administrative efficiency in the exchange of case files and information, to demonstrate savings in postage cost and storage, and most important, to shorten decision and placement timeframes for children involved in the interstate process. During the pilot, the NEICE project worked with the District of Columbia, Florida, Indiana, Nevada, South Carolina, and Wisconsin and the technical vendor, Tetrus Corporation, to build and test the system.

An evaluation by WRMA found that the NEICE pilot achieved several positive results. The evaluation report noted that "large decreases in time were found…for each of the time periods [during the process] when NEICE was utilized."[1] The evaluation also found that pilot state users believe that other barriers to quality interstate placement access, such as data integrity, time spent on maintaining records, and time spent on dual entry, would be reduced as more and more states implemented NEICE. The evaluation also found significant reductions in costs of copying, mailing, and staff time.

A Simple Technology Solution to Modernize the Interstate Placement of Children

As a technological solution designed to work with multiple state child welfare data systems, NEICE has been developed to maximize flexibility of how states use and connect to the data exchange. The NEICE project staff, working with its technical vendor, Tetrus Corporation, is committed to working "where states are" in terms of the information tools and approaches used to process ICPC cases.

There are two ways that states can access NEICE. First, the NEICE Case Management System is a complete ICPC case management system that includes a secure, encrypted, cloud-based NEICE database where case data are stored and shared. Second, the NEICE Clearinghouse is an electronic highway that connects states to one another through a centralized, standardized interchange. The clearinghouse enables states to create the ICPC case within their state child welfare systems and send the information directly and securely to another state with a push of a button. Beginning this summer, the clearinghouse will ensure the required ICPC data are included in each request, are translated into a standard format using National Information Exchange Model standards, and accurately route the case to the state. It will also confirm the receipt, extract data for national reporting, and keep records of all transactions for auditing purposes. States using the NEICE clearinghouse version will continue to keep ICPC cases stored in the state's child welfare system as their system of record.

> ***"Entering information directly into the NEICE system can save several weeks over the life of a case, just from cutting out mailing time. In one specific situation, we had an emergency relative request that we needed to send to Florida as quickly as possible. The NEICE system allowed us to compile and send the request to Florida the same day we received it from our local office. In addition, Florida was able to send the request to their local office the same day as well. Ultimately, the NEICE system led to a faster response time and a faster placement of the children into a safe home across state lines."***
>
> —ANDRIA HOYING, DEPUTY COMPACT ADMINISTRATOR, STATE OF INDIANA

> ***"While their bill takes many important steps to modernize the antiquated system used throughout our country, the most important thing that it does is help foster children be placed in better homes sooner. This is a noble goal and an excellent bill. I am so grateful for [Reps. Young and Davis'] commitment to helping children and their families."***
>
> —CHAIRMAN KEVIN BRADY (R-TX)

Broad Support

Congress has taken notice of NEICE's success, and a bipartisan, bicameral bill, Modernizing the Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act, was introduced in February. Sponsored by Rep. Todd Young (R-IN) and co-sponsored by Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL), H.R. 4472 was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in March. The bill requires states to implement NEICE by 2021 and provides funding for NEICE implementation in the form of $5 million in grants to help states with development costs. The Senate counterpart, S. 2574, was also introduced in February by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and co-sponsored by Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Al Franken (D-MN), and Gary Peters (D-MI).

Several state and national organizations have endorsed the bill, including the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, APHSA, the American Legislative Exchange Council, Child Advocates (Indianapolis), FosterClub, Child Welfare League of America, the Indiana Department of Child Services, the Children's Home Society of America, and Generations United.

Reference Note

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Marci Roth *is the project director of the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE).*

association news


By Duane Fontenot and Donna Jarvis-Miller

Connect with APHSA at This Year's Conferences

Like a jigsaw puzzle, APHSA members are connected through their work. You are part of the puzzle as we connect our members at our annual conferences. This year's platforms offer a multi-dimensional approach focused on cross-sectoral integration, core concepts, and frameworks that address community-wide challenges, innovative strategies, practical solutions, and emerging trends in health and human services. Through these multiple educational opportunities and trainings, APHSA is bringing together thought leaders in the field and providing invaluable opportunities to build new relationships, share knowledge, gain insights that advance our collective work, and ultimately, energize and inspire.

We have compiled a list of upcoming APHSA conferences and encourage you to take advantage of these many peer learning and educational opportunities.

National Association for Program Information and Performance Measurement

Do you ever wonder what your legacy will be? Join us at the annual Education Conference of the National Association for Program Information and Performance Measurement (NAPIPM) and create a legacy to last. You will learn about what's replacing legacy systems during the age of modernization, changing the quality control legacy through revision of the FNS-310 (SNAP Quality Control Handbook), creating new program improvement legacies, and many more. Take this opportunity to network with federal, state, and local agency staff; and exchange what's working and what steps to take to improve and create a legacy of your own. Stay tuned for more news, and be alert for the call for presentations.

IT Solutions Management for Human Services

The 49th annual IT Solutions Management for Human Services (ISM) Conference will be held September 18–21 in Phoenix, AZ.

Planning for the conference is underway and this year's agenda promises to be a very exciting one. With a theme of *"Cool Solutions in the Valley of the Sun,"* ISM 2016 will provide conference attendees with multiple plenary sessions with nationally recognized speakers providing thought-provoking insight, innovative ideas, and solutions for shared challenges, as well as numerous breakout sessions showcasing state and local government best practices, along with industry experts and federal officials. The conference also provides a unique opportunity to network with local, state, federal, and private-sector IT professionals from across the United States. ISM has something for everyone who is interested in the effective use of technology to proactively support the mission of health and human service programs.

The 24 breakout sessions will be focused on several conference themes—Consumer Engagement, Federal Guidance, Best Practices, Workforce Optimization, Data for Decisions, and Collaboration—and led by health and human service thought leaders. A major part of the ISM educational experience is the exhibit hall, where many private-sector vendors will be displaying their products, solutions, and services.

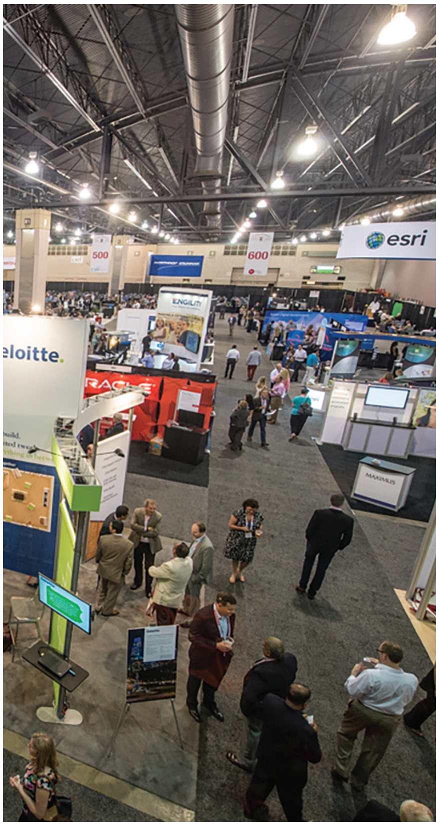
National Staff Development and Training Association

Since 1983, the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) has been advancing the field of human service training, professional development, and more broadly, organizational effectiveness. The 2016 conference, to be held October 14–18 in New Brunswick, NJ, will showcase best practices from across the United Sates and provide a unique opportunity to witness and participate in training simulations at the Department of Children and Families innovative Professional Center.

NSDTA conferences are a wonderful opportunity to expand your current skills and cultivate new ones as you sample the wide array of workshops designed expressly for training and staff development and run by experts and pace setters in the field. It also provides an opportunity to cross-pollinate with others from different states who may be dealing with similar issues and problems. Investing time at NSDTA will help you grow personally, while learning to improve programs through the exchange of ideas, resources, and approaches. First-timers or seasoned alumni will gain new knowledge and skills they can put to immediate use—not merely to improve their agencies and their work, but also to transform them.

American Association of SNAP Directors and the National Association of State TANF Administrators

The American Association of SNAP Directors (AASD) and the National Association of State TANF Administrators (NASTA) will hold a joint conference in Orlando, FL, October 23–26, and are planning a robust agenda of significant interest and use for both groups. The agenda will feature joint plenaries and breakout sessions that focus on cross-cutting issues relevant to both the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary



Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program as well as other human service programs. Conference content will highlight how each program can contribute to solutions and new opportunities—always within the APHSA framework of moving up the Human Services Value Curve and carrying out the *Pathways* vision of improved outcomes. Topics under consideration include the latest in technology and business practices, and the challenges and opportunities for data sharing and access. Employment and economic well-being are at the forefront of human service delivery and a top priority for both TANF and SNAP; the conference will provide several workshops that will foster informative discussions in this area. Other sessions will focus on program-specific issues that are current major concerns for administrators and other stakeholders of each program, but that will still contribute to the broader and more integrated mission of human services.

The conference will offer unique opportunities to hear from federal and state experts, plus a variety of stakeholders from the nonprofit and private sectors. It will also allow ample opportunity to learn about best practices and innovative solutions, and to network with peers from around the nation. More details about the conference, including a call for papers and a preliminary agenda, will be issued soon.

American Association of Health and Human Services Attorneys

The American Association of Health and Human Services Attorneys (AAHHSA), formerly the American Association of Public Welfare Attorneys, will hold its 49th Annual National Training and Continuing Education Conference in Norfolk, VA on November 12–16.

The conference provides an open forum for state and local agency attorneys to discuss the latest legal issues and challenges facing health and human service systems. This is a time for agency administrators and law professionals to engage in valuable discussions and share information. Some of the key benefits include hearing from expert panelists on emerging issues, networking with peers, and receiving continuing education hours. Conference breakouts and plenary sessions will cover issues related to child welfare, Medicaid, and TANF, among other topics.

Your participation and attendance is essential in advancing our work in the field and valuable to the success of our peer learning platforms. Grab your puzzle piece and join us this year at one or more of our educational conferences. Visit our website at *http://aphsa.org* to register and learn more about the content of each conference.

***Duane Fontenot** is the ISM Associate at APHSA.*

***Donna Jarvis-Miller**, CMP, CEM, is the director of Membership and Events at APHSA.*

Presenting APHSA's Collaborative Centers

As APHSA continues the progression along the Human Services Value Curve, we are focusing our efforts on better ways to collaborate and integrate our members' and partners' expertise to support stronger, healthier families and communities, sustain the well-being of our youth, and ensure all Americans have opportunities for gainful employment.

To this end, we are framing our *Pathways* work through "collaborative centers" where leaders across the human service family—including from each of our affiliates and councils—can contribute insights, participate in collective discovery, and generate solutions. Through the center platforms and a more intentional focus on "knowledge management," members and partners organize to:

- Develop and advance influence campaigns for policy change
- Elevate innovations and solutions
- Develop tools and guidance for the field
- Leverage our own proven organizational practice to strengthen the drivers of organizational readiness, continuous improvement, and performance
- Shape and spread key message using framing science, and
- Test and refine emerging applications and promising practices.

The Centers allow us to "upload" insights of members and partners across disciplines and help translate why it matters for all of us. The Centers allow us to target and adapt policy and technical assistance efforts—being smarter about where our energy is expended—based on a robust understanding of the current landscape. The Centers keep the focus on thinking about systems and measuring child and family outcomes and help avoid only thinking about programs in silos and simply tracking outputs.

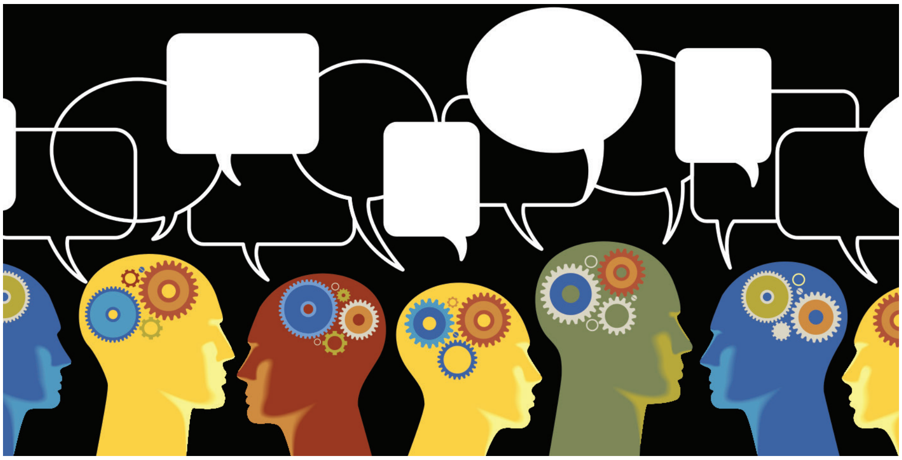


Illustration via Shutterstock

To introduce you more fully to each of our Centers, as well as our efforts for knowledge management, we're highlighting them in a five-part series, beginning with the Center for Employment and Economic Well-Being. Watch for upcoming articles on the National Collaborative for Integration of Health and Human Services, the APHSA Innovation Center, our Knowledge Management approaches, and a (yet to be launched and named) center on Child and Family Well-Being.

Focus on the Center for Employment and Economic Well-Being

Gainful Employment and Independence is one of four key outcome areas APHSA seeks to impact through a transformed human service system. For working-age individuals and their families, having a job and staying in the workforce are critical to achieving greater independence. Gainful employment is one of the surest and most long-lasting means to equip people with the lifetime tools they need for economic success and to avoid poverty. The APHSA Center for Employment and Economic Well-Being (CEEWB) has been established to identify and promote policies, funding structures, and practice models that promote a system of human services, workforce development, economic development, and education and training that effectively supports greater capacity and independence, employment, self-sufficiency, and well-being for low-income individuals and families.

Human service agencies, along with their partners in workforce development, economic development, and education and training, play a critical role in supporting employment and economic well-being for low-income individuals and families. Multiple human service programs address workforce engagement in various ways and degrees; these include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and child-care assistance, among others. All of these programs contribute to work engagement but because of program differences, they frequently operate in isolation from each other or, at best, cannot be coordinated and leveraged to maximum advantage. Multiple programs end up serving the same populations through fragmented and inflexible

See Collaborative Centers on page 40

NAPCWA and APHSA Respond to National Report on Eliminating Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities

In March, the Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities (CECANF) issued its report, *Within Our Reach, A National Strategy to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities*. CECANF was established by the Protect Our Kids Act of 2012 to develop a national strategy and recommendations for reducing child fatalities resulting from abuse and neglect. Beginning in 2014, 12 commissioners, appointed by the President and Congress, began a two-year process of holding public hearings in 11 jurisdictions to learn more about the issue and what was being done to reduce instances of child fatalities.

The report included recommendations for states, the administration, and Congress as part of the proposed national strategy. These include the need for better data to obtain an accurate count of child abuse and neglect fatalities, an administration-led effort to support the sharing of real-time information among key partners such as child protective services and law enforcement, and joint congressional committee hearings on child safety, providing resources to states, and policies that promote innovative practices.

APHSA Executive Director Tracy Wareing Evans remarked, "our members are greatly encouraged to see that the commission's recommendations are rooted in a public health approach to child safety—one that engages multiple partners in finding real solutions and values everyone's role in building and sustaining healthier families and communities." Deputy Executive Director, Community Partnerships, Colorado Department of Human Services, and NAPCWA President Julie Krow said, "the report represents a major step toward developing a national strategy to fulfill our vision of safety, permanency, and well-being for all children. As public child welfare leaders, we are committed to developing our agencies' capacities to insure that all children are safe, nurtured, thrive in permanent families, and develop to their full potential. NAPCWA appreciates the efforts of the Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities in writing such a thoughtful report and including our members in the process."

Additional information can be found at *http://www.aphsa.org/content/NAPCWA/en/home.html.*

NASCCA, ISM, and ACF Host Webinar

APHSA affiliates, the National Association of State Child Care Administrators (NASCCA) and IT Solutions Management for Human Services (ISM), partnered with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Child Care (OCC) to host a webinar on the Child Care National Website and Hotline. The National Website will disseminate publicly available child care consumer education information through links to state-specific sites and information. The National Hotline will serve as an additional access point for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect or violations of health and safety requirements by a child care provider.

Webinar attendees shared strategies they have used to aggregate data across systems and tools created to provide families with information on child care program features, quality, and licensing history.

APHSA continues to work with the OCC on a joint path forward for implementation of the Child Care Development Fund, sharing the office's commitment to promote families' economic self-sufficiency through more affordable child care and to foster healthy child development and school success through quality early learning and afterschool programs. For additional information on the webinar, please visit *http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/national-website-and-hotline-project* and for more information on NASCCA, visit *http://www.aphsa.org/content/NASCCA/en/home.html.*

NAPCWA Meets with National Indian and Native American Child Welfare Leaders

Earlier this spring, Neil Bomberg, APHSA's director of Policy and Government Affairs, and Christina Crayton, APHSA's assistant director of Policy and Government Affairs, met with senior leaders of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) for a strategy session on emerging Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) state, local, and tribal partnerships. NICWA Executive Director Sarah L. Kastelic; David Simmons, director of Government Affairs and Advocacy; and Gil Vigil (Tesuque Pueblo), executive director of the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council, Inc. and current NICWA president, outlined challenges and barriers facing American Indian and Native American (AI/NA) children and families involved with child welfare, efforts to promote stronger partnerships that improve outcomes for Indian children and families, and first-hand experiences managing a network of social service and child welfare agencies.

The discussion also included:

- Tribal efforts to secure direct access to Title IV-E funds to administer their own child welfare programs;
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the ICWA and the new guidelines that provide clarification on proper implementation of the law; and
- Pending ICWA litigation.

APHSA and NAPCWA will continue to work with NICWA on opportunities to connect states and tribes on AI/NA issues and to partner for education and advocacy on regulatory and legislative priorities that promote ICWA implementation.

staff spotlight

Name: Julius Cesar Chaidez

Title: Policy, Program, and Practice Analyst

Time at APHSA: I enthusiastically joined APHSA in late December.

Life Before APHSA: Before joining APHSA, I served as a research analyst at Arthur J. Gallagher; contractual program support specialist at Fundación América Solidaria; fiscal policy analyst at the National Juvenile Justice Network; and medical consulting staff coordinator for the Social Security Administration.

My interest in various levels of governmental structure drove me to participate as an active member in the aldermanic/mayoral elections, presidential primaries, and presidential elections as an election judge in areas primarily serving Mexican and Mexican-American demographic groups on the south side of Chicago.

I have an MPP from the California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly), a BA from National-Louis University, and an AA from Harold Washington College.

Priorities at APHSA: My work at APHSA centers on utilizing my skills in project management, designing data collection and analysis methods, and developing reports to support staff in many endeavors.

What I Can Do for Our Members: I will use my work experience and academic background to help identify and understand the issue(s) at hand, determine the most appropriate policy or program to aid the decision-making process of our members and policymakers, and monitor and evaluate policy to ensure it is effective.

Best Way to Reach Me: The best way to reach me is by email at *jchaidez@aphsa.org*.

When Not Working: Outside of work, I enjoy being active, especially outdoors, serving as the treasurer for the Cal Poly DC Alumni Chapter, and exploring new restaurants in the area. My hobbies include running, cooking, painting, and watching movies, sports, and telenovelas (secret guilty pleasure).

Motto to Live By: “Errando se aprende a herrar.”

English translation: By making mistakes (errar: “to make mistakes”) one learns the blacksmith’s trade (herrar).

Meaning: By trial and error we learn.

ROAD TO 60 continued from page 5

After eligibility was determined, work-required participants would have to attend a separate appointment—on a different date, at a different location, and with a different case manager—for their assessment and work activity assignment.

The new model consolidated these services under one roof, creating an integrated OWF Center, where program participants could complete their eligibility interviews and receive their work activity assignments in one appointment, conducted by a single case manager. The agency also set an ambitious target of achieving 60-percent WPR, an initiative affectionately known as the “Road to 60.”

FCDJFS released a request for proposal for a vendor to manage the WEP and entered into a contract with ResCare Workforce Services and other local community partner agencies, such as Goodwill Columbus, Jewish Family Services, and the National Center for Urban Solutions. This Community Consortium combined ResCare’s technical expertise with the agencies’ existing partner networks and unique knowledge of and front-line experience serving Franklin County residents.

Together, the Community Consortium is responsible for managing and developing new WEP sites; assessing participants and assigning them to a work site; tracking whether participants report to their work assignments; assisting participants’ search for full-time jobs; and making appropriate sanction referrals to FCDJFS. ResCare’s “WORCS” platform allows participants to enter their hours daily through an online portal that is accessible from mobile devices, while site supervisors approve time on a weekly basis, which the agency, in turn, reviews and submits to the state. Built in “check points” help monitor and ensure that participants complete their required hours, providing a real-time communication tool between FCDJFS and the partners (see Figure A).

Since overhauling its TANF program, FCDJFS has seen a steady rise in work participation. By the end of March 2013, WPR had risen above 50 percent, by October 2014, the agency reached the internal 60-percent milestone for All-Family participation and in July 2015, it reached the 90-percent threshold for Two-Parent WPR. As of January of this year, FCDJFS's All-Family WPR was 72.62 percent, marking 14 straight months topping 60-percent participation. Today, Franklin County regularly exceeds statewide averages and ranks first among Ohio's eight metropolitan counties in TANF work participation.

As the central Ohio economy has improved and WPR has increased, the agency has also seen a significant reduction in caseloads—much of it due to participants obtaining unsubsidized employment. Since August 2013, more than 3,500 TANF participants have obtained employment. Last year alone, the program saw more than 1,500 job placements, with an average wage of $9.90 per hour at an average of 32 hours a week.

Although it has achieved and maintained its WPR targets and made a substantial impact through job placements, FCDJFS has constantly sought to improve outcomes for TANF participants. The agency is currently undertaking a new initiative, dubbed "From Rate to Great," that is exploring and implementing new strategies to place participants in jobs and on career tracks that pay a living wage so that ultimately, they are able to move off cash assistance and become economically self-sufficient.

Today, Franklin County's TANF program has become a statewide and national model. FCDJFS frequently provides guidance to other counties and even other states' human service agencies that find themselves facing many of the same work participation issues that had plagued the agency just a few years earlier.

Chelsea Klosterman's life also looks vastly different today than it did six years ago. Since leaving her job to become a full-time mom, she had given birth to a second son, but conditions within the home had worsened, so much so that she and the boys were forced to leave.

Suddenly she found herself responsible for providing for her 6-year-old and 18-month-old on her own, but with a substantial employment gap in her résumé, job prospects were limited.

Figure A

FCDJFS	Community Consortium
• Determines Eligibility • Makes Appropriate Work Assignments; all WEP participants are assigned to ResCare • Enters monthly hours in Client Registry Information System—Enhanced (CRISE) • Applies sanctions as needed	• Develops and manages all WEP sites • Assesses and assigns all WEP participants to each work site, managing participation on a daily, weekly and monthly basis • Makes appropriate sanction referrals to FCDJFS • Responsible for non-core hours through online ResCare Academy • Facilitates the Applicant Job Search assignment

With nowhere left to turn, she came to FCDJFS in April 2015 and began participating in the TANF program. As it happened, she was assigned to work in the agency's mailroom.

"My boss in the mailroom, she normally interviews her 'WEPs' (work experience participants) but I kind of just got thrown on her," Klosterman said. "But she accepted me like I was a member of their family, and I treated this [work assignment] like it was a full-time job."

Within two months, Klosterman was working full time, and today she is an official FCDJFS employee, though she still carries the "client perspective" with her.

"I understand that there are many different things that can bring someone here," she said. "It's not that someone's lazy—they just may be in a really rough spot at that point in their life… There are lots of people out there that want to work or do work full time, but even with their full-time salaries still qualify for public assistance."

That reality is not lost on FCDJFS, either, which is why the agency continues to pursue innovative strategies and community partnerships to improve participant outcomes. And it remains committed to people it serves, not numbers, in its mission to improve opportunities for all Franklin County residents.

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– CHELSEA KLOSTERMAN

***Mike McCaman** is the assistant director of the Franklin County (Ohio) Department of Job and Family Services.*

MENTAL HEALTH continued from page 28

The admissibility of a parent's mental health care record may devolve into a struggle between the court's duty to act in the best interests of the child and a person's right to confidentiality and privacy.

Many parents going through a custody dispute suffer from conditions such as clinical depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, or a personality disorder. From the court's perspective, to adversely affect custody or parenting, the mental condition must cause a parent to be "unfit" to exercise custody. Of course, each custody case is so unique that it is not possible to have a blanket protocol. For this reason, courts turn to professionals such as psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists, attorneys, Guardians ad litem, and school personnel to help them assess the mental fitness of the parents. How can courts benefit by hearing from human service agencies?

The admissibility of a parent's mental health care record may devolve into a struggle between the court's duty to act in the best interests of the child[4] and a person's right to confidentiality and privacy. It is important to consider the impact of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and its impact on state law. Assuming no confidentiality, privacy, or privilege issues dictate otherwise, human service agencies can assist family courts by sharing objective, impartial, and reliable information that has a direct bearing on the "best interests" of a child involved in a custody matter. The human service agency and its staff are not the ally of either parent. Rather, they are likely to have valuable information that will be useful to the court as it decides the issue of custody. Such contemporaneously documented, recent, and historical information may include:

- Whether the child benefits emotionally from active contact with both parents
- How the parents communicate with each other and with their child(ren)
- The extent to which each parent has actively cared for the child
- Whether a particular custody arrangement may be in accord with the child's desires
- Whether a history of domestic abuse exists
- Evidence that a parent with a mental illness is being treated for that illness

According to New Jersey family law attorney Bari Z. Weinberger, impartial and accurate information concerning a parent's mental health and how it affects their ability to parent may be the "make or break" evidence in a custody dispute. "The insight provided by qualified therapists, social workers, custody evaluators, and other mental health workers and human service agencies can determine whether the courts decide to terminate parental rights based on mental incapacity or provide a structured visitation plan to allow the parent and child to remain in contact. When possible, continuity—however limited the parenting time may be—can be in the best interests of children, and ultimately, in the best interests of the child's own mental health."

Reference Notes

1. *http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/parenting*
2. Geva, A.S. (2012). Judicial determination of child custody when a parent is mentally ill: A little bit of law, a little bit of pop psychology, and a little bit of common sense. *U.C. Davis Journal of Juvenile Law & Policy, 16*(1).
3. See the landmark California Supreme Court case, *In re Marriage of Carney,* 598 P.2d 36 (Cal. 1979). The court emphasized that it is impermissible to rely on a diagnosis or disability as prima facie evidence of unfitness to parent.
4. E.g., N.Y. DOM. REL. LAW § 240(1)(a) (McKinney 2010)).

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DIRECTOR'S MEMO continued from page 3

sessions will include how to better align Department of Labor and TANF work programs; utilize behavioral economics within human services; manage knowledge for the best impact; develop two- and multi-generational approaches to service delivery; frame discussions so that the public has a better understanding of health and human services; and utilize data analytics to improve outcomes for children and families.

We look forward to learning from all of you able to participate in the National Summit. Your insights and contributions at the Summit will be captured and developed into a master blueprint for the next Administration and Congress—a blueprint aimed at effectively framing our members' policy positions, particularly those ripe for policy change, and placing our members and strategic partners squarely at the negotiating table to drive solutions. For those of you unable to join us at the National Summit, check out future issues of *Policy & Practice,* as well as our new blog and website, for details on what happens at the Summit and post-convening plans!

Tracy Wareing Evans

LICENSE continued from page 29

Trigger Events

What are some typical events that may trigger an inquiry from a licensing board for which an attorney's advice or representation may be prudent?

- Being convicted of a criminal offense
- Being terminated from a job for cause
- Work performance issues that result in an adverse disciplinary action
- Failing to follow professional standards of care
- Failing to document in a timely or properly fashion
- Breaching or improperly sharing confidential information
- Engaging in boundary violations with clients
- Alcohol and drug abuse issues
- Practicing outside the scope of practice

Contact the Right Attorney

Just as there are many different types of doctors, it is important to contact an attorney whose specialty is professional license defense in your field. Experience and in-depth knowledge count. Many licensing issues are initially heard in an administrative hearing conducted by an administrative law judge. The rules that are applied are commonly articulated by a state's Administrative Practices Act (APA), with the standard of proof usually being less than a "beyond a reasonable doubt" standard used in criminal law cases; often it is "by clear and convincing evidence" or "by a preponderance of the evidence." Because the standard is lower, it is easier for the state or board to prove its case. In addition, the state's usual civil rules of evidence may not necessarily be in force. For instance, Ohio [OAC 4757-11-04 (N) Hearing procedures; Evidence] provides that the "'Ohio rules of evidence' may be taken into consideration by the board or its attorney hearing examiner in determining the admissibility of evidence, but shall not be controlling."

New Jersey attorney Susan Berger advises human service professionals: "With an attorney's help, you can review your records and the underlying facts to determine whether a violation of any statute or regulation occurred, and draft a thoughtful response. The response must be candid and fully address each issue raised by the board, without making any essential admissions that may limit your alternatives, and at the same time, give the best possible characterization of both you and your professional conduct. Many cases are successfully concluded without discipline, if the licensee adequately answers the initial inquiry with a clear understanding of the board's concerns."

A licensing board's investigation may start with a seemingly benign letter. The best way to ensure that things stay benign is to contact a professional license defense attorney without delay.

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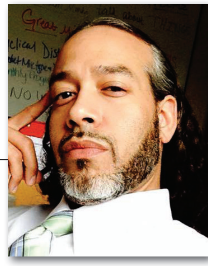
our do'ers profile



In Our Do'ers Profile, we highlight some of the hardworking and talented individuals in public human services. This issue features Elijah Hopper, Administrator of Workforce Development for Baltimore City's Department of Social Services.

Name: Elijah Hopper

Title: Workforce Development Administrator, Baltimore City Department of Social Services

Term of Service: 8 months, 20 days

Rewards of the Job: First and foremost, I am rewarded by joining the workforce development community a Maryland implements the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). I am afforded the opportunity to serve as a link for the clients we serve who want to pursue a career and not just a job by strengthening the Baltimore City Department of Social Services' relationship with our community, public, and private partners. Another reward I am afforded is the opportunity to engage and encourage my staff to think of new and invigorating ideas for the clients we serve.

Accomplishments Most Proud Of: Serving as the administrator for the city of Baltimore that has more than half of the state's Temporary Case Assistance caseload is a huge accomplishment. I am most proud of being able to say that I am doing the work that I am passionate about. Being able to wake up and feel excited about the work I do is an amazing feeling!

Future Challenges for the Delivery of Public Services: As I have mentioned, as the state of Maryland moves to implement the WIOA, it is going to take substantial collaboration between state, public, and private agencies. While this could be seen as a challenge, I look at it as an opportunity. This is the time that "out-of-the-box" thinking is encouraged and a time when collaborative thinking and strategic planning are crucial.

Little Known Facts About Me: Most people are surprised that I am fairly new to this position. I've been told that I bring a fresh perspective, and dare to challenge the status quo. I hope to establish a human-centered, strengths-based approach to workforce development.

Outside Interests: I am a motorcycle enthusiast. If the weather permits, I am riding on 2's!

COLLABORATIVE CENTERS continued from page 34

funding streams that inhibit a state's ability to best meet varying and localized needs. Furthermore, current programs and federal supports aimed at successfully moving human service customers into the workforce are often held back by requirements that focus too much on process compliance and too little on progress toward true self-sufficiency.

These issues are ripe for policy and practice changes now because at the national level: (1) economic mobility and poverty reduction are at the forefront of the economic, political, and policy debate; (2) technology and modernization tools are more readily available to improve and coordinate service delivery, and (3) new learning from brain science, behavioral economics, and other innovations are providing a new body of evidence as to what works best to assist families and individuals. Now is the time to make significant and enduring changes to enhance employment opportunities, career advancement, and broader economic well-being by aligning and coordinating programs that too often operate in silos.

The CEEWB will serve as a clearinghouse and a policy and practice arm for multiple constituencies, most particularly state and local governments, community-based human service organizations, and other allied national organizations. The CEEWB aims to assist constituent organizations to understand complex laws, regulations, policies, and best practices around workforce issues and various work support programs nationwide, and to encourage and implement coordinated and integrated solutions on behalf of the agencies and customers we serve. The CEEWB is focused on practical steps that will better align these programs, build on what we know works to develop workforce skills, grow individual capacity, meet the needs of the modern workplace, reduce barriers to sustainable employment, promote asset building, and advance other initiatives that together will help build and support an environment for healthy families and communities.

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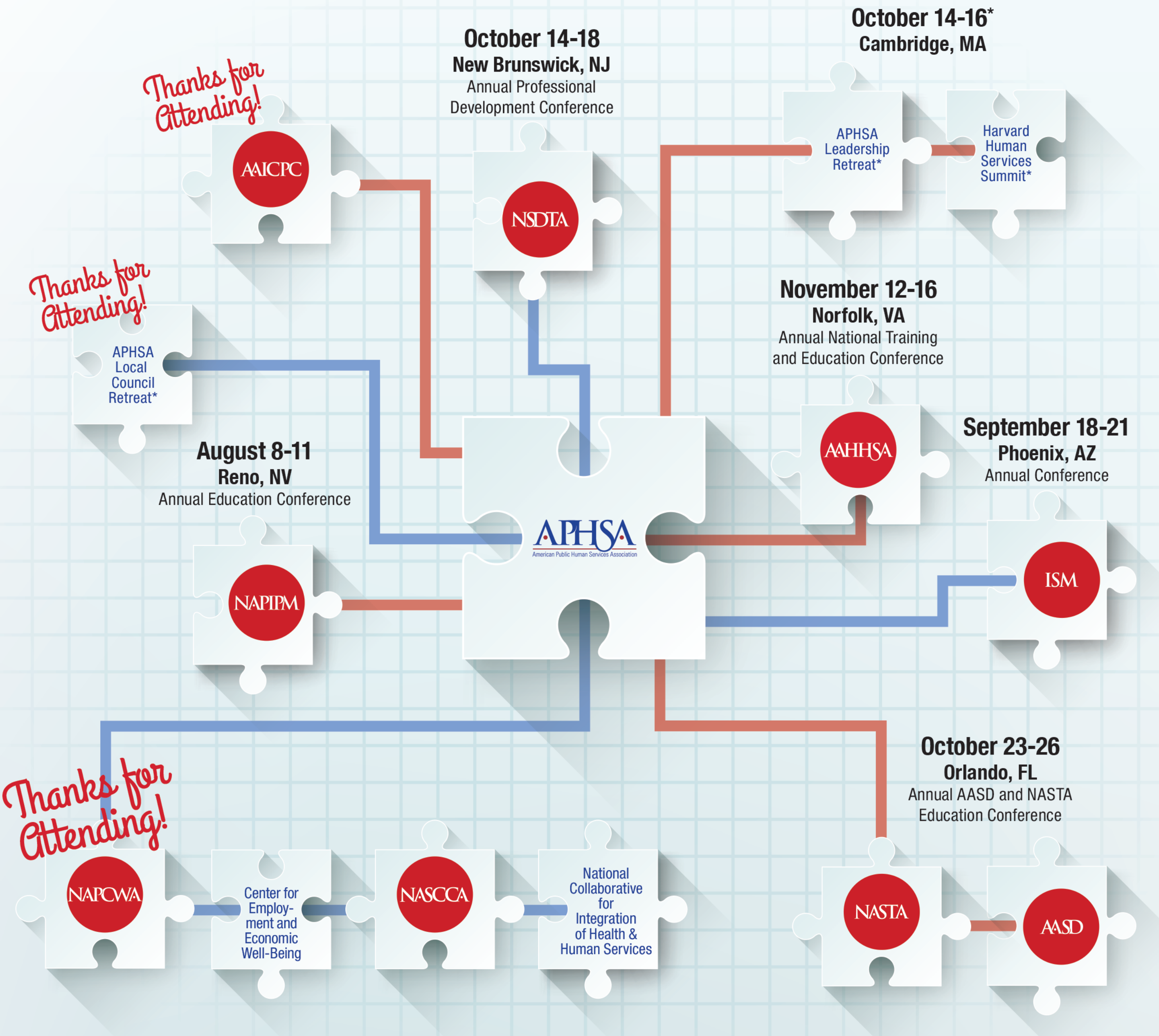

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