CAPTURING OUR STRENGTHS:

Smart Practices in Serving Homeless Women

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INTRODUCTION

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Preface

While working in homeless services, people often told me "I could never do what you do." Practitioners who are reading this report may be able to relate to this experience. I'm not sure what they felt they couldn't do-- it probably meant something different to each person who said it. However, I think this statement also revealed that the speaker didn't understand the great working environment I had at the Downtown Women's Center. This was a place of creativity, support, and can-do attitude. My coworkers and I were encouraged to bring forth our ideas and observations about how to better serve the women with whom we worked.

This is, in fact, how this project came about. Our agency's Executive Director, Lisa Watson, and I were sitting around one day talking about how we wished that there was more information available about agencies serving homeless women. We were aware of the ways we felt our programs were effective, and knew and respected the work of some of our colleagues. But there were few agencies like ours, that specialized in homeless women's needs exclusively. We felt that designing services around women resulted in a much different and more effective array of services than simply adapting programs for men and calling them women's programs. How did other providers feel? What was happening elsewhere in the country? With no additional funding, and using only our existing skills, we decided to investigate best practices in serving homeless woman. Lisa put me in charge of this project. Serendipitously, at about this time, Sue Castegnetto, Director of the Intercollegiate Women's Studies Program at Scripps College in Claremont, CA, contacted us to say that her institution was providing a small amount of money to enable faculty members to partner with community agencies. Did we have any ideas of ways we'd like to collaborate? Collaborating with Sue, and with help from then-graduate intern from U.S.C., Monica Martinez, and an undergraduate intern from Scripps, Stephanie Witmer, our study of smart practices got off the ground.

Five years and graduate degree for me were all it took to finally complete the journey.

Why Read this Report?

If you are a practitioner working with homeless women or in a woman-centered environment, the ideas presented here are not new to you. Practitioners like you have followed your intuition in devising workable strategies for ended women's homelessness, have implemented news ideas, and have gained empirical knowledge of effective programas and practices. In your case, this report can

- recognize practices that other practitioners find effective and important
- encourage you to establish or re-visit some of thes practices herein that are not currently in place at your agency
- help you describe your agency's practices to funders and potential volunteers, and help you articultate the value of your approach
- provide training resources
- affirm the work you are doing
- provide a review of previous studies

If you are an advocate planning to build services or found an agency to serve homeless women in your community, this report can

- give you insights into effective practices as identified by long-time practitioners
- provide sample scenarios and training resources
- help you avoid pitfalls and time spent reinventing the wheel
- be a resource for contacting existing agencies for site visits or collaboration
- provide a review of relevant scholarly literature

Methods

We contacted 75 agencies sserving homeless women across the United States to invite them to participate in a study to gather best practices. Our goal was to gather information from 50 agencies total, and strive to ensure urban, suburban, and rural settings were represented.

We developed an survey instrument to collect both qualitative and quantitave information. A short screening process preceded interviews to ensure that the agency contacted did, in fact, have a specialized program for women. We used this instrument to interview the the Executive Director or a designated staff member at each participanting agency. Interviews generally lasted a hour to an hour-and-a-half, and were mostly conducted via telephone, except in cases where the agency was located nearby or we were able to make a special site visit. We analyzed the data collected to produce a set of key findings and recommendations.

We have designed this report to be a tool for current and/or future homeless women service providers. We see this project as a starting point; we recommend that further research be performed to enhance our findings.

Criticism of Best Practices Research

--FORTHCOMING!---

Survey of Previous Studies

This study came about largely becasuse we felt that studies of homeless women were disparate and hard to obtain. We wanted to create an easily accessible resource for service providers, one that provided concise information all in one place.

Much literature on women's homelessness takes the form of ethnography (Bard 1990, Harris 1991, Russell 1991, Golden 1992, Liebow 1993). Authors of these works employ qualitative methods and anthropological techniques to document homeless women's lives and relationships, and describe the physical conditions of homeless life; these works illuminate the hardships of life on the margins. Bard was homeless before entering a graduate program at UCLA and began interviewing women about their homelessness then, a practice she continued for fifteen years (Bard v). Liebow, Golden, and Russell made use of participant observation. While volunteering in homeless service organizations, Liebow developed rapport with homeless women served and staff members, interviewing and collecting life histories of many of those he met. Russell and Golden likewise met their informants while volunteering at service agencies.

Harris, a psychotherapist, interviewed homeless women, applying her professional training and drawing from fields of religious studies and feminist thought to form her interdisciplinary interpretation of the condition of homelessness. For her, the social sciences and other disciplines and their methods are filters which produce different kinds of recommendations for remedying homeless. Harris notes the abundance of sociological study of homelessness but suggests that any sociological filter by itself would yield flawed or at least limited analysis and solutions. For example, sociologic analysis results in calls for economic realignment and downward redistribution of resources—an unlikely outcome, in her view. Moreover, though sociologists identify objective causes for homelessness, she questions whether viable solutions are possible without a deeper understanding of attitudes toward the poor—without compassion, do services have meaning? [check]. Harris' work makes use of metaphoric analysis to bring forth in her readers an emotional connection to homelessness which, she believed, would result in a more compassionate response to homelessness. Golden, like Harris, uses history, mythology and sociology to explore

women's homelessness, contending that "the treatment of homeless women—as all of homeless people—depends on how society at large sees them." (Golden 12)

Ethnographic works often address perceptions of homeless people (perceptions held by the housed) as "other" (Harris 1991, 6), untouchable, or dangerous by giving voice to homeless women's experience, pointing out their strengths and resourcefulness. While they may describe the contradictions and limitations of the social service system—including some descriptions of interactions between women and staff at particular agencies-- ethnographic works are not generally aimed at intensively reviewing or evaluating the effectiveness of services received. _____ in _____ argues that ethnography can aid in service provision improvement in four ways: , , , and . Talmadge Wright (1992) and Kim Hopper (2003) discuss the limitations of ethnography [expand].

Volumes of poetry and writings by homeless or formerly homeless people, often compiled by staff members of service agencies also serve to educate and remind the public of the humanity of the writers.

Autobiography

Autobiographies are a counterpoint to ethnographies; however, as with ethnographies and all personal accounts, extrapolation in order to form a universal perspective is problematic. Disparate examples of this form are provided by Eighner and Gray-Garcia. Eighner gained a marginal livelihood by publishing stories before and during his two years of homelessness, and comments "I still think my experiences were atypical, but I have come to disbelieve in typical homelessness." "I do not pretend to speak for the homeless. I think no one could speak for all the various people who have in common the condition of being homeless." (Eighner 1993, ix) Gray-Garcia's account is one of intergenerational poverty. The formerly homeless Gray-Garcia, a writer, community activist, and founder of POOR Magazine, focuses on the structural causes of homelessness, examining the systems and processes that criminalize poor people and seemingly perpetuate their poverty.

The Rise of Women's Homelessness ("New Homelessness")

Lee et al note that studies by social scientists on homelessness is concentrated in three periods: the Depression, post-World War II and beginning in the 1980's. (Lee, Link, and Toro 1991, 649) The first studies were related to how Depression relief programs were faring. The second wave of inquiries focused on the nation's skid rows, and many of these studies were funded by urban renewal agencies (Lee et al 1991, 649). The third study period coincides with what some researchers call the "new homelessness", a time when the homelessness was surging and the population studied previously—older white men with alcohol problems—was diversifying.

Prior to the "new homelessness" of the 1980's, scholars and observers agree that homelessness in the U.S. was once largely the province of men, and primarily older, white men with alcohol problems (Wallace in Bard, 17). That the residential hotels had been built for itinerate workers (usually male) became affordable housing for homeless men, as did cubical hotels (less politely called "flophouses")-- both types of housing were associated with skid rows—is indisputable. That homeless populations were predominately men prior to the 1970s is also documented [citations]. However, the conclusion that homeless men were mostly white and mostly alcoholic is somewhat questionable, due to the same methodological difficulties in conducting homeless censuses that Stoner (1983) and others would later cite [cites]. Perhaps these were the men whose lives were documented. Given that urban renewal agencies focused their studies on skid rows (where their slum clearance campaigns would take place) is an indication that if people were homeless elsewhere, they were not being studied. Were there discriminatory practices in place that keep men of color away from skid rows and from the housing sites where white men were interviewed? Was alcoholism covering mental illness? The early literature on skid rows does not seem to address these and other questions [citations needed].

These questions aside, it is generally acknowledged that as the homeless population was previously largely male, and, as it began to grow, it became more diverse. The services that had been available to the very poor, the indigent, the "early homeless" were tailored to suit men's needs.

Heterogeneity of Population &

Specialized Services

Lee et al point out studies of homeless people are subject to research "trends," or that particular groups of people within the homeless population receive uneven coverage (Lee et al, 1991 670). Particular groups may be studied intensively for a few years, then given relatively little attention. This observation (and documentation) gives insight into the preponderance of notes within the literature in which researchers lament that other subgroups within the homeless population are more fully studied than others.

Articles on homeless families indicate that there is "much literature" on the lives of homeless single people (Bassuk and Geller 2006). Studies of homeless women point to the much larger array of literature available on homeless men (Bard, Russell). Articles seek to illuminate the reader to the fact that being homeless does not necessarily indicate drug addiction or alcoholism. Articles highlight the variety of education levels, job experience, life histories and kinds of physical and mental health challenges of homeless people.

The heterogeneity of the homeless population is now described in numerous sources. Yet, through it all, the literatures the various subpopulations is neither so ample nor current as to provide easy pickings for an interested reader. The theme of "invisibility" pervades descriptions of people who are homeless, the problems of people who are homeless, and indeed, the phenomenon of homelessness itself. Perhaps because homelessness is not well-addressed as a social concern (thirty years of writing about the "new homeless" has failed to diminish the prevalence of the "new homelessness"), and perhaps because services are stretched and overtaxed, with people continually falling through the cracks, do researchers and professional practitioners alike feel that the homeless population they work with is not as well-described as other populations in similar straights.

It is important to acknowledge that different people have different needs, because the services available to this population are so limited to begin with. Designing services around a simple set of assumptions leave a lot of people out of service umbrella. One of the challenges service providers face is best tailoring their services to the particular needs of the person seeking assistance.

Section 1 | CORE VALUES

1 : Compassion
2 : Mission-Driven Approach
3 : Welcoming Environment

CORE VALUES: An Introduction

This section focuses on **core values**-- practices linked to the agency's philosophy and approach to finding solutions to womens' homelessness. Core Values "prescribe the attitude and character" of an organization (Wenstop and Myrmel, 2006). They provide direction for reaching the agency's vision and set the tone that is experienced by those inside and outside the organization.

Core values are are integral to effective operations. They help guide staff decisions, training practices, and standards of service provision. When core values are well-articulated, the staff, board, volunteers can readily act in accordance with them, sharpening the agency's focus Lengthy philosophical discussons often accompany an agency's beginnings as founding members hash out what services will be provided, how they will be provided, to whom, and why. In other cases, services evolve from intuitive responses and actions people take to address the situation of homelessness before those actors even consider establishing an "organization." Founders who document their intentions and reasons for structuring the agency in a particular way leave their agencies a useful gift, however, such documentation is rarely available.

At any point, an agency can define its core values. Changes are natural to an agency's development. Agencies adapt their services to fit current needs, new staff members come aboard, founders become less involved in the day-to-day operations. Since everyone has different viewpoints and interpretations of daily life, articulation of the core values helps the agency retain connection with its purpose. Just as new rooms can be added to a home with a strong foundation, so can new programs be added to an agency with strong core values. A solid foundation will withstand the weight of change.

Agencies with whom we spoke clearly experessed their core values. Compassion was one of those cited most often. Adopting a mission-driven approach to agency management and creating a welcoming environment were also highly valued. **The following pages describe these values.**

1: Compassion

Empathy and compassion are not necessarily fixtures of the homeless service environment. Some observers attribute this dearth of human caring to the fears that non-homeless people hold (whether grounded in real possibility or not) of eventually becoming homeless themselves (Harris 1991, Golden 1992, Passaro 1996). These authors argue that the perceived need to create psychological distance from homeless people—and therefore, from the possibility of becoming homeless-- prevents ordinary (housed) individuals and service providers from acting with compassion toward homeless people.

Speaking of his poor treatment in city shelters, one of Passaro's informants pointed out that those providing homeless services to him came from his own neighborhood. Passaro comments "city workers [in city funded shelters] and the shelter clients belonged to the same employment pool. The workers' position was perhaps too precarious to afford empathy; they spent much of their energy distancing themselves from clients instead of forming potentially identity-threatening relationships with them." (Passaro 1996, 8) According to Golden, "The sense of separation created by such a distinction ['us' vs. 'them'] is what enables institutions that warehouse and abuse women to exist in the first place. Recognizing the culturally determined component in our reaction to homeless women is one step toward created, instead, a sense of community between 'us' and 'them.' On such a feeling effective advocacy and true services, both depend." (12) Harris relates conversations with her presumably financially stable friends as the impetus for having begun her own inquiry into homeless women's lives.

Compassion: A Definition

Compassion is a recognition of the suffering of another, and is usually accompanied by a desire to alleviate that suffering. Compassion involves respect for the one who is suffering, and recognition of her dignity.

Compassion is simple and its effects profound. It is perhaps the most important concept an agency can embrace. As a core value, compassion informs and imbues the agency's outward character and service approach. Compassion is manifested in the agency's organizing principles and program services. Though discussed here as a core value, compassion is also a practice.

Why is it a Best Practice?

In writing this report, we found that compassion was a foundational value effective agencies exhibited and, paradoxically, was the hardest to describe in finite terms. In the context of this report, we identify it as a core value, though it is also an organizing principle, because it shapes programs and a service approach. It could even be said that compassion is a service, because it is addressing a lack in people's lives. The core value of compassion is manifested in programming created and applied with the whole person (and people's individual differences) in mind. Practices like flexibility (p.____) demonstrate compassion by acknowledging a person's uniqueness.

The core value of compassion coincides with a belief that dignity resides in every individual. People may (and do) bring difficult behaviors, traits, and personalities; compassion helps those associated with the agency (staff, volunteers, other clients) to accept this as part of the human condition, which may allow agency members to interact with particularly "difficult" people with more patience. Connection with compassion creates an understanding that set-backs, or a cycle of multiple set-backs, is not necessarily ground for denying a person services. Compassion is a belief that people are doing the best that they are able to in each moment, while at the same time understanding that this belief does not excuse bad behavior.

Compassion allows flexibility, the willingness to try again, patience, forgiveness, non-judgment, ability to see beauty or humor in difficult situations and other practices that facilitate good service. It coincides with the belief that every person deserves a decent place to live and to be treated humanely. Compassion includes "acceptance" as a central tenant. Agencies that hold compassion as a core value accept that they may not be able

Q: What do you see as the most valuable assets to your agency?

A: "**Compassion** and commitment, no shame or judgement."

-- **Compass Cascade Women's Center** ***Seattle, WA***

Q: What do you think makes your agency most effective?

A: "Our caring about the women as individuals and people."

-- **Heartline, Inc.** ***Detroit, MI***

Comments on Compassion

"People – staff, volunteers, and board... are really committed to the guests. What brings/keeps them is a sense of social justice, the sense that there is something wrong if women sleep on the streets. **It is true compassion.** They may not be able to end homelessness on a large scale, but they are able to be very human and do something individual for each woman."

-- **Women's Lunch Place** ***Boston, MA***

to aid or provide services to every individual, but that every individual is deserving of compassionate treatment. Understanding this allows the agency to find ways to work through difficult or frustrating situations.

Compassion is not a lack of boundaries and does not create an "anything goes" environment where any behavior is "ok." Compassion does not mean chaos or lack of structure. Healthy boundaries and limits exist within compassionate relationships.

Qualities of Compassion

Acceptance— Compassion is marked by acceptance of others. Compassion does not require conformity and recognizes the dignity in all people who enter the agency.

Allows for multiple chances—Compassionate agencies understand that people may need more than one or even two chances to succeed. By being there when services are needed, or permitting a client who has been barred to returned after an agreed upon amount of time, an opportunity for new beginnings is given. Note: Some agencies do not ban participants under any circumstances; however, agencies that do are not necessarily less compassionate.

Allows for any belief system-- The agency does enforce religious practice nor does it prioritize one religion over another.

Recommendations for Implementation

Model compassion

Some people have an intuitive understanding of compassion, for others, it may require more work. "Showing by doing" is a good approach for creating the desired atmosphere. Treat every one at agency—not only clients-- with compassion. Make corrections kindly so that others may learn to do the same.

Emphasize activities that cultivate compassion

Honoring diversity, encouraging cooperation, overcoming competition for scarce resources are ways that people can gain

familiarity with compassion and begin to practice it themselves.

Establish formal means of helping employees recharge
Working in demoralizing circumstances is liable to deplete com passion. Even if your agency has a good working environment, trying to solve homelessness has a depleting dimension to it. Callousness and burnout are markers of a staff that has lost hope. Some agencies maintain schedule of retreats or team-building ac tivities away from the agency. Whatever the method your agency devises to help employees maintain their compassion, be consis tent in providing these opportunities.

Practical Application 1.1

Reflecting on Helpful Experiences

Facilitator's Guide for Staff Retreat or Volunteer Training Activity

1. FACILITATOR ASKS GROUP: "Think of a time when someone was kind to you out or helped you out of the blue—at a time you were not expecting it, or maybe even when you didn't know you needed help."

"What was involved in that experience?"

Additional Guiding Questions
What happened?
What kind of help did you need or did you get?
What was pleasant (or surprising) about the interaction?
What did you appreciate about it?
Did this experience teach you something?

Allow meeting participants to get started. After you few moments, if you notice someone is struggling or is obviously stuck here are some ideas to prompt thinking:

Examples: "This could be a time when you…"
… encountered a particularly nice clerk at the post office
… had an interesting conversation with someone in an elevator
… had a particularly "neighborly" interaction
… got help from someone on a customer service line
… got help resolving a convoluted billing issue from your bank or a utility

2. After everyone has had a chance to write or reflect, ask for a few volunteers willing to share.

3. Ask the person who shared and the others in the group to comment. Choose any pertinent guiding questions from the list below:

Was anything surprising about this interaction?
What were your feelings following this interaction?
Did you feel a sense of relief after this interaction? Why?
Why has this experience stayed with you?
What does this experience have to teach us?
Do you ever remember this experience when you are helping someone else?

4. Ask people to discuss the effects of kindness.

FACILITATOR: "The activity didn't say you had to ask for help. There are times when we are 'helped' by interactions themselves..."

For the situations we discussed that were more about sharing kindness than "helping" or getting results:
What were the helpful, memorable, or pleasant aspects of that situation? What "helps" about kindness?
Is it harder to be kind than it is to be rude? (Answers will vary—all can be useful)
Does kindness help more than the person "receiving" it?

5. Ask people to discuss the idea of asking for help.

FACILITATOR: "Though this activity doesn't specify that you needed to ask for help in the situation you thought of, let's discuss the idea of asking for help."

FACILITATOR: "Who in the group finds it hard to ask for help? Why?"
Those who find it easy might say something like: "In my family, it wasn't OK to ask for help or tell people your business." "I learned early on you have to do things for yourself." "I had a bad experience with…" "I felt embarrassed or ashamed when…"

FACILITATOR: "Who in the group finds it easy to ask for help? Why?"
Those who find it easy might say something like: "I've found it gets my problems solved quicker than if I hadn't." "I've learned not to take it personally if someone can't help me—no harm in asking." "It's easier when I'm asking someone who I know supports me." "It's easier when the 'problem' is minor or not such a big deal to me."

FACILITATOR: Use the responses to draw out common themes about when it is easy to ask for help.

"What can we take from this discussion?"
"How can we incorporate these lessons into our work? Our approach to work? Our lives?"

Some themes worth exploring
Kindness can be healing
Kindness is often given without expectation
Even if the answer one needs (the help ones needs) isn't available, the experience of kindness has value
Asking for help can be difficult, hence difficult attitudes or behaviors may accompany it
Here, we strive to make asking for help easier. Some of the ways we've discussed today are _____, _____, _____.
Some people rely on others to solve their problems; how can we help those who have underdeveloped problemsolving skills or learned helplessness?
Being kind to oneself makes it easier to be kind to others

Practical Application 1.2

Cultivating Compassion

A Facilitator's Guide for a Staff Retreat or Volunteer Training Activity

1. FACILITATOR ASK GROUP MEMBERS: "Make a list of situations in which it is 'easy' to access feelings of compassion toward another person(s)." This list does not have to be limited to service-provision ("work") situations, though it can include service-provision. [Alternate wording to help anyone struggling: Make a list of people that are easy to help.]

Lists might include some of the following

When I am helping a loved one
When I am helping someone I like
When I can relate to the person in question
When I understand the person in question, even if we are very different
When the person I am relating to is nice
When the person I am relating to can say what s/he needs
When I don't know the person (i.e. a total stranger, or someone on TV)
When I know the person needs help
When the person's situation is not their "fault"
When I know the person is hardworking
When I don't feel obligated
When I know I have something to offer

2. Ask for a few volunteers to share all or part of their lists, while a facilitator jots down what participants have shared on a piece of butcher paper or something similar.

3. Ask the people who shared and the others in the group to comment. Who has something different? In general, does the group feel that these elements help make accessing compassion easier?

4. Ask the group to make a list of situations in which it is hard for them to access their feelings of compassion toward another person(s). Again, this could include but isn't limited to service-provision situations.

5. Ask for a few volunteers to share all or part of their lists. Again, jot a list on butcher paper so everyone can see it.

6. Ask the people who shared and the others in the group to comment. Who has something different? In general, does the group feel that these elements help make accessing compassion harder?

Practical Application 1.2 (continued)

7. What suggestions do group members have for overcoming the feeling of difficulty?

8. FACILITATOR: "Now, moving on [if this topic hasn't yet been covered in the group discussion]. Are you compassionate with yourself? Ask group to reflect on this for a moment, then share their thoughts."

Guiding Questions
When are you/are you not compassionate with yourself?
Do you notice any similarities between when you are not compassionate with yourself and when you are not compassionate with others?
Can bringing awareness to any self-judgment you may have help you be more compassionate with yourself and others?

9. Ask group for suggestions in helping ourselves experience less self-judgment and more self-compassion.

Ideas could include
Surrounding self with those who care about us
Reducing time we spend with those who judge us, give us negative messages
Evaluating whether others' judgments are important to us
Spending time pursuing activities that we enjoy
Paying attention to when peoples' actions impact us positively or negatively
Joining or forming a support group outside of work hours
Initiating or continuing individual therapy
Initiating or continuing a meditative practice

10. FACILITATOR, TO WRAP UP: Ask group members to notice over the next month the times when they feel judged and the times they feel compassionate. Ask group members to choose a suggestion from the preceding discussion to implement over the next month. [If the group will be getting back together, they could report back on the results of these efforts.]

Checklist 1

Big Picture

- [ ] All people are deserving of compassion.
- [ ] Violence, whether physical, emotional, or verbal, is not acceptable.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] We offer the staff, board, and others skill-building workshops focused on connecting with compassion and removing barriers to compassionate service.

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff and board understand how compassion differs from "feeling sorry for," "wanting to rescue or fix," etc.
- [ ] Staff and board members work to overcome personal barriers to compassionate service.
- [ ] We understand that women entering our programs may experience frequent setbacks.

Actions

- [ ] We strive to understand each woman's her circumstances in order to better serve her.
- [ ] We do not limit our services to members of a particular faith.
- [ ] We do not give up on women because they are "difficult."
- [ ] Supervisors treat their staff members with caring and respect.
- [ ] Staff treats participants, volunteers, and coworkers with caring and respect.

2: Mission-Driven Approach

"When the organization has a clear sense of its purpose, direction, and desired future state and when this image is widely shared, individiduals are able to find their own roles both in the organization and in the larger society of which they are a part." (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 90-91) An agency expresses its "clear sense of purpose" in its mission statements. The mission has to do with "creating social value or contributing to the public good" (Minkoff & Powell, 2006, p. 591). A mission is created from within an organization and is aspirational, as opposed to a mandate, which is imposed upon an organization from an outside force (for example, funders or government in the nonprofit sector). (Ibid) A mission statement expresses the agency's reason for being and encapsulate its core values, while stressing "positive behavior and guiding principles". (Swales and Rogers, p. 227 in Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997, p. 243)

Yet implementing a mission and remaining mission-driven seems to be a troublespot for many organizations. Pointing to the abundance of literature concernng the failure of organizations to effectively implement a mission statement, Fairhurst and her colleagues conclude that the problem has two possible causes. The first is simply that the mission statement is undercommunicated and thus lacks daily relevance. The second cause is a bit more complex, because it relies on a definition of leadership that distinguishes leaders from managers. (Fairhurst et al, 1997, p. 245) Leaders are concerned with the big picture, with ideas, and operate in intuitive and empathic ways, paying attention to what situations and conditions mean. Managers, on the other hand, pay more attention to employees' roles and funtions than to the larger organizational reasons for being. If those leading the organization do not or cannot imbue the mission statement with meaning, cannot apply it to various circumstances in order to facilitate others' "sense-making" of the mission statement, it

ultimately becomes regarded as "window dressing," leaving an impression of falsity among those it was meant to inspire. (Ibid, pp. 245-246).

Brown and Yoshioda identify three factors influencing employee attachment to the mission: awareness, agreement, and alignment. (2003, p.8) The organization's stated purpose must be notable to and remembered by its staff members. It must express values with which they agree. Similarly, employees must perceive the relationship between their work duties and fulfillment of the mission. If an employee can't see how her daily work lines up with the organizational purpose or is not confident that what she does is fundatmental to the achievement of the mission, she could be more likely to experience job dissatisfaction and lack commitment. (Ibid)

How does a mission-driven organization appeal to volunteers? According to Peter Drucker, nonprofits must offer today's volunteers a meaningful experience if they expect to keep keep them. A clear mission, he says, is the first and most important factor in achieving this goal, because it helps he volunteer understand what she is contributing. (Drucker, 1989, p. 92)

"The **mission** and vision are integrated throughout the organization."

-- **Nellie's**
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Mission-Driven Approach: A Definition

The agency holds clearly defined goals and values, succinctly stated in a mission statement, that guide decision-making about its current and future work.

A mission-driven approach roots the agency in purpose, establishes a practice of testing proposals for future projects or programs and prevents scattering of resources and energy.

The mission statement acts as sounding board or measuring stick for testing viability of proposed projects or programs.

Why is it a Best Practice?

Energetic non-profits often try to respond to community needs and current events by creating new programs and services. In the best cases, this proves an action-orientated way to keep the agency vital and relevant. In the worst cases, the agency's energy becomes diffuse as it struggles to

How do agencies remain flexible while maintaining a mission-driven approach?

Being mission-driven does not prevent the agency from growing to accommodate new needs.

Rather, it signals that the agency will approach program design and respond to new needs in a way congruent with agency strengths and values. A well-crafted mission statement allows for growth and change over time.

start-up and equip new projects. When agencies take on projects outside of their realm of expertise without proper preparation and reflection on how the mission applies, the organization's long-standing programs may ultimately suffer. Whether or not the agency uses a mission driven approach in planning its programs can be the critical difference between the two outcomes.

Mission-driven agencies engage in a continual practice of referring to their mission for guidance in decision-making, problem-solving, goal-setting and strategic planning. This mode of operation allows priorities to be more readily identified at every decision-making level—board, executive director, and staff. Staff can make better day-to-day decisions and team cohesion is promoted because everyone knows what they are working toward and why. Additionally, because the agency's goals and objectives are clear, staff members feel a sense of fulfillment in seeing how their work contributes to the overall vitality of the organization.

Adopting a mission-driven approach creates a solid foundation for provision of services. The agency commits to sustaining programs that have been vetted by the mission and reflect the agency's expectations for high quality, rather than diffusing energy on projects that do not have direct relevance to the intended population. When current events cause the agency to respond in the form of programs and services, the mission can help narrow the range possibilities and zero-in on the best remedy.

A mission-driven approach provides a cornerstone for financial sustainability. Executive directors who described their agency as mission-driven also spoke of the strong reputations their agencies had earned by operating in this way—such agencies were seen as trustworthy, reliable, efficient, compassionate. The mission informs daily life at the agency, it is not a seldom-referenced statement on a dusty plaque. Community members who believe in "how" (methods, services) and "why" (the cause—women's homeless) the agency does its work and witness appropriate action on the agency's part (responses that emanate from the mission) will support the agency through financial gifts, volunteerism and board service. Agency reputations for high-quality service provision commitments and philosophical consistency extend to the grant-making and philanthropic community. A mission-driven approach assures all supporters that funds will be distributed in a thoughtful, responsible manner. All of these factors are essential for organizational success.

Qualities of an Effective Mission-Driven Approach

Mission has authenticity and "buy in"—The mission arises from a community need. Community representatives and stakeholders likely were involved in crafting the Mission Statement. The agency's community (clients, volunteers, staff, board members, supporters) understand and support the mission. The passion or enthusiasm that community members hold toward the mission reflects the mission's relevance. This common reference point grounds the agency in knowledge of its priorities, serving to focus energy and action on identified goals.

Mission is easily understood—The agency's community members are able to articulate the agency's goals and values to new participants and supporters. It is not mystifying or intangible.

The mission provides continuity in times of change—A clear mission keeps the agency on track though leadership and staffing may change. The mission sets a course or direction for the work being done. New leaders may have different styles, and may approach tasks and challenges in different ways, but the "destination" remains the same under a mission-driven approach.

The mission serves as a measuring stick—Before new programs are implemented, they are evaluated for their congruency with or support of the mission. This allows programs to be tailored to reflect the agency's unique view and also prevents energy and resources from being expended on projects that fall outside the scope of work identified by the mission. Further, the mission is a guide for appropriate ways to respond to emerging needs or community crises.

"The staff is really **mission-driven.** They honestly and truly believe in the work that they do. We are about strengthening women and we work from a place of honesty and integrity. We value health – mental and physical – we know you have to practice what you preach."

--YWCA Pathways for Women
Lynnwook, WA

Recommendations for Implementation

Ensure your agency's mission statement is strong, clear, and effective
Revisit your agency's mission statement periodically. It is still relevant? Does it accurately describe the agency's current

website, volunteer materials and other publicity

Foster familiarity with the importance of a mission-driven approach
Discuss the mission regularly in staff meetings. In addition to relating it to the topics at hand (when applicable), create activities and discussion around the mission. *See Practical Applications 1.*

Make the mission and its relevance known to the women served
Documents that the women receive-- such as orientation materials, and rules and guidelines handouts should also include the mission statement. As with staff meetings, discuss the mission at community meetings.

Practical Application 2.1

work, services, target population?

Make sure new programs are compatible with the mission
Evaluate program ideas against the mission. The clarity of the mission should be clarity to programming. The mission can help streamline the program proposal, and focus the goals of the program. Sometimes a great idea may not fit into the agency's mission (see box).

Ensure Staff and Board understand and can articulate the mission
Include a module on the of the mission of the agency in orientation materials and training of for new staff, board, and volunteers. Include not only and explanation of the mission, but
why it is important and examples of how people different posi
tions within the agency can use the mission in guiding their work.

Include the mission statement in your agency's newsletter,

Supporting a Mission-Driven Approach

Staff Meeting Activities

At some agencies, a mission is expressed on a dusty plaque and nowhere else. A mission-driven approach encourages those involved with the agency to be conscious of the mission and to understand how it shapes the atmposphere, approach, services, and even the reputation of the agency. Exercises such as the ones below can help staff members keep the agency's mission at the forefront. Using one exercise per staff meeting can help the topic remain on the forefront.

1) Icebreaker or Check-in: Staff members give an example of one time this month when they referred to the agency's mission for help in doing their work, had an a-ha moment around their work and the mission, helped another understand the mission, etc.

2) Discussion: As a group, compare your agency's mission with that of another community agency. How does the mission of each influence the types of services offered? Where do the mission statements of each overlap and diverge? How does this inform your work together?

3) Activity: Challenge staff to work together in small groups to brainstorm future programs. As part of the activity, as them to explain how this program supports the agency's mission.

4) Consider this Question: What happens when a great idea for programming does not fit the agency's mission?

A: *This is often an dindication that the proposed program is too large in scope, or it falls outside the realm of your agency's expertise. What parts of the proposed program fit your mission? Can these be further developed? Or, perhaps this is a collaboration opportunity. By partnering with another agency, your agency may be able provide an important community service (fulfilling the aspect of the program in which your agency holds expertise) while protecting the program's -- and your agency's -- sustainability.*

Checklist 2

Big Picture

- [ ] Our mission is a vital element focusing our agency's work, not just words on a plaque.
- [ ] Our mission is used as measuring stick for considering new directions.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] We frequently discuss the mission as it relates to day-to-day situations in staff meetings.
- [ ] We have implemented the Mission-Driven approach exercises described in the Practical Applications pages

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff and board members are aware of and can articulate the agency mission.
- [ ] Participants are aware of the agency mission.
- [ ] Volunteers are aware of the agency mission.

Actions

- [ ] We review agency practices annually for congruence with the mission.
- [ ] We have developed mechanism(s) for evaluating whether funding prospects are mission appropriate, and therefore whether they will be pursued.
- [ ] Rubrics or other measures exist that staff can use to guide their work in relation to the mission.
- [ ] Staff feels the mission is relevant to their work—it has resonance.

3: Welcoming Environment

Settlement houses (early multi-service organizations) made creation of a homelike atmosphere a goal (Trolander, __-). While part of the purpose of this was to inculcate immigrants with middle class American values , something we might consider paternalistic today, the other goal was to make the organization a comfortable place for people to be, gathering place, "a club-house in an industrial district." (Barnett 1898, 26 in http://www.infed.org/association/b-settl.htm) [Need to cite this website in references]

As social work became professionalized, and degreed social workers (Master's of Social Work) replaced earlier generations of settlement house workers (who also had lived in the house), they placed a greater value on the ease of maintenance and supervision of the space, and design features aimed at preventing vandalism (Trolander, 33). The resulting agency spaces were less friendly and comfortable and more clinical, functional, and institutional, a design form that endures in many social service settings. The architectural message emphasizes the professional relationship, as opposed to the personal or neighborly relationship, (Trolander, 33). The changes also seem to reflect a lack of trust that community members would care for the space. The innovative model that was, after all, a house was demolished as many of the original settlement house building were offloaded or demolished in favor of smaller, more modern, and differently designed buildings, a potent metaphor for the corresponding diminution of the right to a "home" in our society/ preceding a corresponding rise in homelessness.

Another welcoming aspect of the early settlement houses would have been the staff/volunteer positions devoted to "friendly visiting". These visits went by the wayside with as the more clinical approach "casework" favored by degreed social workers.

A core value of the settlement house movement was that "all should share in community". (http://www.infed.org/association/b-settl.htm) By place more emphasis on "problems" than on neighborliness, the agencies that evolved from or replaced settlement houses had difficulty achieving the same level of community connection. Instead of becoming a neighborhood gathering place where education, recreation, and community events were available, such organizations, with their clinical orientations created a barrier for entry: stigma.

A building's physical design can create a sense of welcome. Many service-providing agencies occupy buildings that were not specially designed for their purposes. In this case, agencies tend to try to work around what they have. (This section may be particularly helpful for those who have struggled to overcome forbidding facades and cumbersome design.)

Architect Sam Davis' study of housing types and buildings designed specifically for homeless clients is part of a relatively scant literature on that topic. Davis surveys a variety of early housing solutions for the very poor, such as cubicle hotels in the 1930's [check], and considers the inadequate and ad hoc nature of emergency housing as policy makers made early attempts to house the swelling numbers of homeless people in the 1970's by converting armories and other large buildings; he also examines dwellings built by homeless people in encampments. Davis then moves on to a broad sampling of buildings developed within the last decade are including megashelters, single room occupancy hotels (SROs), and permanent supportive housing.

At times, Davis' book reads as a call to action for architects. "The buildings that we construct are a reflection of our values and our culture," he writes. "At its best, architecture not only reflects but also serves society; it has a duty to provide for those with the greatest need and the fewest options." (Davis, x) Davis includes a section on special considerations for the architect—working on limited (public) budgets and designing specialized spaces within the main building—health clinics, smoking lounges, and perhaps most insightfully, areas that accommodate pets. He interviewed project architects and program staff (usually executive directors) about newer buildings, and conveys their words and intentions in his description of the finished product. However, Davis gives little critical attention to design choices and spends little time on post-occupancy evaluation.

Davis' discussion of **agency mission** as a driving force for design is not thoroughly considered aside from describing the design differences of emergency versus transitional or permanent housing. According to Davis, a shelter whose design was modeled after a California mission, transcends regional vernacular style, by recalling the "safe-havens" missions provided travelers. While acknowledging that the building signals that services are grounded in the Christian faith, he does not consider in this metaphor another of the mission's functions: to suppress and control indigenous populations, nor even its primary mission—to missionize or convert to Christianity, not simply provide for a "renewed spirit" (1). Similarly, other examples of modern shelters are described in terms of their cleanliness, safety (fire sprinklers, exits), security (cameras, electronic badges), and outward appearance, rather than their relationship to the agency's service philosophy. He sums up the message the design decisions of two large, expensive Los Angeles shelters send as: "This was created to help you" (31) and "we are here to help, but this is not your home." (33) Davis considers these buildings "welcoming but not residential in character" and institutional by design (33).

Davis does not explore the conflicted sense of welcome such design messages produce. The type of welcome he describes is precisely the kind homeless people are generally afforded: gracious hospitality is a temporary thing, one should not get too comfortable by thinking of this place as home. The embedded message is that person is a client—one for whom services are rendered-- not a valued friend or member of a family. Davis' study does not question whether institutional architecture and service approaches are effective in helping people transition out of homelessness; Davis discusses one shelter development whose architects envisioned "houses" (Davis' quotation marks) within a larger structure--bedrooms clustered around shared spaces—as problematic and not necessarily successful (131-2). The concept of "home", creating it, and/or encouraging such attachment and emotional ownership, figures minimally if at all in Davis' study.

It is interesting, then, that this concept of "home" emerges in a 1986 emergency housing policy proposal by Callahan, Dietrich, and Blasi. Noting that some shelter structures are more effective than others in aiding the transition from homelessness to life within standard housing (374), the authors' make the implicit argument that while emergency housing should be quickly established, it should not disregard the larger goal: permanent stability. For this reason, Callahan et al describe factory-built modular housing as providing a superior living environ-

ment than the barrack-style open dormitories favored in shelter design. The flexibility of such structures—they provide quick options for housing as they are cheap to acquire, can be sited on publically-held land, and can be moved relatively easily—add to their usefulness in providing temporary, emergency shelter.

Callahan and her colleagues discussion of the role of appropriate structures in creating stability for their inhabitants is brief but important: it counters a common and little-questioned aspect of emergency shelter design—that a homelike environment is of little importance because the service is "temporary". Such orientation toward the temporary ignores another reality: lack of other affordable housing considerably lengthens the time spent in "emergency" environments. Though shelters are thought of as a safe stopping-over place, people end up having to spend months (up to two years for transitional shelter) in places designed for a few nights' stay. On a similar note, but taking a longer view toward permanent housing, Davis points out the limitations in modular housing and why it is not particularly well-suited to permanent housing. Structural weaknesses mean modular housing is generally low density and single story, materials are often not sustainable in the long-run, and vacant lands in cities with high housing costs is generally not located near job or service sites (63).

Lowering barriers to entry is also linked to creation of a welcoming environment. For decades, service providers and scholars have indicated the importance of low barriers to the effectiveness of providing homeless services. (Stoner 1983, Callahan, Dietrich and Blaise 1986, others) Both Stoner in her list of recommendations for policy changes and social action and Callahan et al in their proposal to the County of Los Angeles for improving shelter provision call for low barriers to entry.

Low barriers to entry are often considered in relation to the acquisition of shelter or housing. The Housing First philosophy revolves around the principle that housing is the first and most critical step to ending homelessness, and that housing should not be predicated on the successful completion of any particular set of service requirements. Other services may be spring from the housing setting (though they should not be required), but housing is a right, not a privilege to be earned through "good behavior" or the correct completion of a set of criteria. [need Housing First cites]. Similarly, advocates call for on-demand or low barriers to drug treatment (cite).

Less discussed, however, is the role that low barriers to entry in any kind

of service might play in engagement of other needed services [expand].

Variations on a Theme

The **Dorothy Day Apartments,** in **New York City,** NY placed all of their social &supportive services offices on the top floor instead of in the lobby and first floor. This design was a response to feedback during the planning process from prospective residents who expressed the desire to live in a building looked like those at any address in the city, regardless of what supportive services might be provided there.

Welcoming Environment: A Definition

A space that invites all participants and guests to share in a community that is based on the characteristics commonly associated with "home." These traits can be described using words such as loving, hospitality, warm, respectful, dignity, non-judgmental, etc.

Why is it a Best Practice?

A welcoming environment is a best practice because it sets a respectful tone and honors women for who they are—individuals with dignity, deserving of the best services, deserving of a home. It is a physical reflection of compassion. It is also a physical cue to those who are entering for the first time: Women-- you're welcome! You'll gain something different here. Volunteers and supporters—you're welcome! You'll give in a different way here. All—everyone here is deserving of respect.

This practice helps guide other quality individual services because participants, staff, and volunteers conceptualize the environment as home and model their behavior accordingly.

This practice follows a mission-driven approach. Therefore, agency services are driven from a place of "quality services" not "mass services." This concept might be summarized in the motto "We are here for the women, not to be an institution."

A welcoming environment is inviting and encourages participation. The "welcome" is reliable; it is given to both newcomers and long-time friends alike. The feeling of welcome extends to those who have never tried the services before. Staff interacts with those on the street or via outreach to continually invite engagement. The message is "whenever you are ready, you are welcome."

Security elements are not so overwhelming that they discourage use or intimidate those who come for help. Enforced security is not the first impression, though a feeling of comfort and safety may be!

Finally, a welcoming environment is sustainable. It is a well that can be continually replenished – it is a friendly hello, a warm smile, a soft chair, a remembrance that human kindness is sometimes what is most needed. Other elements supporting a welcoming environment are: appropriate staff, guidelines that participants understand and can adhere to, and in-kind donations that supporters give knowing they will be put to good use.

Qualities of a Welcoming Environment

What welcomes you when you arrive home? Delicious scents wafting from the kitchen? Your mail? People who care about you? Being able to help with the making of a meal? Your favorite books, magazines, the daily newspaper? Artwork made by yourself or a loved one? Pictures of friends? A pet? These are among the elements that many agencies interviewed included in their service areas. Some agencies, such as the **Women's Daytime Drop-In Center in Berkeley, CA** are located in a house. Other agencies create home by arranging the physical surroundings as a home would be arranged. Most all of those we talked to spoke of the importance of creating connections, relationships, seeing the beauty in people, honoring women's intelligence, resourcefulness, ingenuity and great ideas, and being there despite the difficulties as a (healthy) family would. All of these contribute to a welcoming environment; some are measurable, some are unmeasurable.

Looks and feels like home-- Consideration and resources are dedicated the surroundings. Special touches keep the place from being sterile or impersonal. *See Checklist.*

Institutional elements are not the first encountered—The agency does not look like a waiting room, a hospital, a clinic, a government office though health/mental health services may be given, government benefits discussed, waiting happening. Our clients may have experience with institutional settings such as hospitals, foster care, government aid, incarceration, etc. We do not want to replicate those experiences, but rather, create an alternative to them. Additionally, many agencies make great effort to reduce the amount of paperwork associated with services, and utilize soft security measures whenever possible, rather than (solely) uniformed guards.

"Dignity in the environment becomes dignity in the person."

-- Good Shepherd Center
Los Angeles, CA

"Family" is the organizing concept-- Agencies that think this way have a commitment to the belief that individuals are deserving of care that is like that a healthy family would provide—the agency accepts the role of being the healthy family in people's lives. This idea goes hand-in-hand with the core value of compassion.

- Healthy families teach boundaries and responsibilities, share resources, and are the setting for social modeling, acceptance, and love. They care for their elderly and differently-abled members. These are the principles that guide services at agencies we interviewed.
- This philosophy indicates that, in certain instances, the role of staff is to act as a primary caretaker. Staff understands this role—both their responsibilities and limitations.
- Staff attempts to resolve issues by using the model of a healthy family as a guide

See Practical Applications 2 page.

Recommendations for Implementation

Direct consideration and resources toward the making of home and family

Do not underestimate the healing power of a comfortable and comforting environment. Office guest chairs and tile floor do not an ideal home make. However, a (non-slippery) rug and slipcovers for modest chairs might. Furnishings may be donated! There is nothing wrong in asking donors for matching items.

Make sustained organizational investments

Investing in staff is fundamental. Staff who feel successful in their work bring a sense of welcome to each person they meet. Appropriate training in de-escalation and crisis-intervention enables staff members to feel confident and competent in diffusing potential emergency situations and in knowing what steps to take when crises flare. Investing in a welcoming environment may require some capital outlay, yet this approach may be more sustainable in the long run given that clients will be more willing to invest in themselves and in the maintenance of the environment that welcomes them each day.

Evaluate the "first impression" of your agency

See it with new eyes. How do you feel when you walk in the door?

Variations on a Theme

Cloth tablecloths, flowers, and restaurant style meals welcome those dining at the **Women's Lunch Place** in **Boston, MA.**

What's the first thing you see/hear/sense? What do visitors say? Add features found in a welcoming home, move traditional "waiting room" away from the door or create a living room environment instead. Minimize the amount of paperwork immediately required.

Opt for soft security features whenever possible
A well-trained staff that is confident in their abilities is they key to maintaining a calm and safe environment Their leadership can minimize crises, set a calm tone, maintain behavioral expectations, create a feeling of safety.

Emphasize activities one does in one's own home
Pitching in with chores—meal-making, dishwashing, clean-up; celebration of birthdays, holidays and special occasions; recreation; opportunities for fun enjoyment of pastimes all create a special place where care is given and growth happens.

Practical Application 3

Striving for a Non-Institutional Environment

A Director's Everyday Guide for Maintaining a Welcoming Agency

Ease Engagement

- **Open invitation:** Encourage and invite women to "try out" the agency as a guest for a day, a week, or until such time she would like to opt in to other services. Outreach emphasizes "we are here for you when you are ready."

- **Less paperwork:** Minimize the burden of paperwork that might be required of a woman at each step. Try not to require paperwork on the first day a woman uses the agency-- make it a "free day." At each successive service point, is it possible that participants only to fill out information relevant to that service? In other words, is it necessary to collect a life history or whole form's worth of identifying, contact, and other information before providing any service? *We recognize minimizing paperwork in this way is difficult for government funded projects.*

- **Universal services:** Maintain certain services that are available to all women, regardless of whether or not they are a regular participant, without requiring them fill out any forms. These might include receiving mail, using the restrooms or showers, or using the telephone.

Cultivate Safety

Women's safety was a priority for all agencies we interviewed. Agencies we talked to were successful in providing a welcoming environment that is also a safe environment, congnizant of the fact that for some women, safety measures associated with law enforcement create the opposite effect.

- **Security through comfort:** Beyond imparting a sense of "comfort," agencies reported that their home-like surroundings created and perpetuated safety and security. Women invest in their home and act accordingly, explaining rules to newcomers, holding each other accountable, keeping eyes on goings-on as neighbors do for each other. In this way, everyone comes together, rather than leaving security up to one individual. Staff members contribute to a safe environment by treating everyone with respect, intervening where appropriate to diffuse tensions among women, enforcing necessary rules while maintaining an overall tone of hospitality and respect.

- **Soft security:** Carefully evaluate the kinds of security methods employed in order to be a value added, not a barrier to service. Training staff in de-escalation and a locked main door to entry from outside (requiring a staff member, participant, or volunteer to monitor it) were two alternatives or soft security measures cited.

Practical Application 3 (continued)

- **Carefully consider how and why to use uniformed security:** Uniformed security guards not always a plus. Their presence because may deter some women from using the agency, especially if they have had negative experiences in the past with law enforcement or guards. On the other hand, it is possible that a uniformed guard signals safety to other women. Some agencies do not use guards. Some utilize them only outside or at night. If your agency decides to engage a uniformed guard, make sure to find out what kinds of training s/he has undergone. Security services do not necessarily train guards to work with homeless people, women who have experienced domestic violence, or people with mental illness.

- **Do not allow security to detract from welcoming experience.** If your agency chooses to install metal detectors, safety glass, an intercom buzz-in system, or a guard, consider how you can extend your welcome. Do not define the entry or environment at agencies that are pros at providing a welcoming environment, even if the agency employs those methods to some extent. Additional training to ensure friendliness and responsiveness may be required, since glass and intercom may hinder communication. Ensuring that participants can see a more welcoming area, like a living room, after passing through the barriers is another idea.

Encourage Beauty

- **Living things:** Live plants require extra care, but perhaps a woman you serve would like to tend to them. Many of the women our agencies serve enjoy pets but one of their own. Does your agency have a pet? Cats were favored pets at the agencies we talked to that had pets. If there are concerns about allergies, what about an aquarium? Flowers are another favorite form of beauty. If they don't already, perhaps volunteers and staff members would be willing to share from their gardens on a regular basis. Remembering the worth of these elements can help on days when it may feel like a hassle.

- **Rotate artwork often.** Do your participants or staff members make artwork regularly? Display it! Changing displays often allows for everyone's work to be represented and enlivens the common areas.

Have Fun

- **Raffles, awards, music:** Raffles and awards can be silly or serious. Either way, they bring something unexpected to an otherwise ho-hum day. Music playing at lunch or at a designated time can lift spirits. Everyday can be a different musical genre to ensure everyone gets to hear what they like.

- **Be silly:** Parties and fun get-togethers are a great way for your participants to get to know your lighter side and vice versa. By being involved in something a little silly, you give permission for others to do the same.

Does this guide decribes practices already in place at your agency? 1. Determine the breadth of your agency's spectrum

Below is a "wish list" of services that an agency the serves homeless women could provide

Checklist 3

Big Picture

- [ ] An environment that feels like a healthy home is important to the wellbeing and success of our participants.
- [ ] We want our participants, volunteers, and staff to be able to invest energy in caring for and maintaining this place as the home that it is.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] We use exercises in the Practical Applications for Welcoming Environment pages.

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff and volunteers make it a point to welcome people and introduce themselves to those they have not met.

Actions

- [ ] We have self-serve items available to participants in the common areas (i.e. coffee, tea, water, cups, newspapers, magazines, and books).
- [ ] We conduct an annual review of the level of paperwork each of our programs and services require of clients. (
- [ ] We encourage staff members to contribute ideas to enhance our welcoming environment.
- [ ] When unfriendly elements of our place our brought to our attention, we review them and make changes where needed.
- [ ] If there is a uniformed or police-like presence, we have made absolutely certain this is necessary.

Entrance

- [ ] Security features do not dominate entrance. If security features are present, they have been mitigated or softened in some way.
- [ ] There is always someone (participant, volunteer, or staff) available to greet newcomers.

Furnishings

- [ ] Furnishings in common areas are befitting a home, it is not office or "waiting room" furniture.
- [ ] Furnishings are clean and in good repair.
- [ ] People entering the agency often describe it with words like "homey". (Test it!)

Checklist 3 (continued)

Maintenance

- [ ] Agency staff members engage in the "fresh eyes" evaluation once a year or more.
- [ ] Signs are present that the women enjoy the common areas and take pride in them (tidying up, showing others where things are kept, and orienting others informally).

Attitudes

- [ ] The word "welcome" is spoken often.
- [ ] People in the environment smile often (and sincerely).

Section 2 | ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

4 : Flexibility
5 : Individualized Services
6 : Full Spectrum Services
7 : Ongoing Access to Programs & Services

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES:

An Introduction

This section focuses on **organizing principles**-- practices relating to how services are conceptualized, planned, and implemented. Organizing principles are one step down from the "big picture" guiding forces and philosophy that are embodied in an agency's core values. If core values are the foundation of an agency, organizing principles are the conceptual framework around which to build services; they prescribe the "how," they shape, the approach.

For an agency to be useful to many people, services must feel right and relevant to individual people. Yet, how does an agency achieve a high level of relevance without creating dozens and dozens of services? It does so by incorporating a structure that allows services (whether existing or new) to bend and flex to meet clients' needs and current situations. Within this structure, each new service is seen as a connection point to the larger array of services. When planning new services, staff will consider how and where it fits, how not to duplicate an existing service but instead extend the service capacity outward to reach more people.

Organizing principles are the elements that enable agencies to be "light on their feet" in meeting new demands. Responsiveness, efficiency, and connectivity are characteristic of good organizing principles. Ultimately, organizing principles inform the way staff members structure their own concepts of service provision: Flexible vs. rigid; yes vs. no; innovative vs. institutional; creative vs. unimaginative; effective vs. unimpressive.

While compiling this report, we noticed that these practices were broader than single program services, and, though they expressed or supported core values, they were not as "big" philosophically as core values. They helped agencies plan how new program would fit into the service array and be put into practice. **We came to understand that these practices were ways of shaping services, adding value to services, making services more effective—they were organizing principles.**

4: Flexibility

Flexibility: A Definition

Flexibility is a method of occasionally adapting the agency's core set of rules and regulations to fit the needs and abilities of a client, when doing so will better serve her current situation.

Flexibility as discussed in this report is similar in philosophy to the legal concept of "reasonable accommodation."

Why is it a Best Practice?

Everyday life—family, work, interpersonal relationships, and other environments—are both flexible and rigid. Our lives are not entirely black and white. A set of rules can be effective and ineffective for different individuals simultaneously. To create a service environment bound by rigidity and inflexibility does not accurately reflect the world in which we live, nor does it promote behaviors and skills that are transferable to non-institutional settings.

Practicing flexibility prevents institutionalization of services. In an atmosphere where the need for flexibility is understood and honored, staff resources can be directed most appropriately for service. Staff are encouraged to get to know each client's individual circumstances, hardships, health, skills, and assets and customize services accordingly.

In service environments, there is often a desire to mete out limited resources by striving toward an "across-the-board" (unbending) approach in an attempt to be "fair." However, that kind of approach can discount individual needs, leaving clients with mental illness, clients with specific

family structures, members of underrepresented groups, and/or clients who are simply non-conformists, without the services they most need. Ultimately, inflexibility may emanate from an agency's desire for control and/or a reflection of a particular ideology or doctrine more than it is a requirement for fairness or quality services. The practice of flexibility encompasses the understanding that "uniformity" does not always equal "fairness." Flexibility justly allows for services to be delivered in different ways for individuals with differing circumstances.

Finally, the flexibility may be understood similarly to the concept of reasonable accommodation established by fair housing law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and legal definitions.

"A modification or adjustment is "reasonable" if it "seems reasonable on its face, i.e., ordinarily or in the run of cases;" this means it is "reasonable" if it appears to be 'feasible' or 'plausible." An accommodation also must be effective in meeting the needs of the individual. In the context of job performance, this means that a reasonable accommodation enables the individual to perform the essential functions of the position. Similarly, a reasonable accommodation enables an applicant with a disability to have an equal opportunity to participate in the application process and to be considered for a job. Finally, a reasonable accommodation allows an employee with a disability an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment that employees without disabilities enjoy.

"We don't want to see the women fall, and sometimes rules can be harmful. Too much discipline will cause the women to fall, that isn't what we are there for."

-- **Hospitality House**
Seattle, WA

Qualities of Effective Use of Flexibility

Flexibility is a more abstract concept than others in this report, and it leads to complex discussions. Some of the hallmarks of flexibility are named below, while quite a bit of additional detail is provided in the *Practical Application* pages.

Is a way that the agency organizes its service approach--Agency staff members understand the role of flexibility in supporting a larger framework of rules, mission, and vision. See Checklist for more.

Rules are acknowledged as having an important and useful place in the agency-- Flexibility is not used because it's "easier" than enforcing a rule but because it is more appropriate. Staff members understand that if flexibility is applied hurly-burly, rules (and therefore the principles they stand for) will not be enforceable.

Alternatives to the rules are offered to individual clients when the situation requires it-- Flexibility is only applied in instances in which a person's needs would be better served through the alteration of a particular rule, "exception" to the rule.

Alternatives to the rules do not jeopardize community safety or security.

Flexibility is applied conscientiously, not absent-mindedly-- The staff member applying flexibility can explain her rationale for doing so (to fellow staff members and, if needed, clients). This helps others understand that everyone's situation is unique and is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. It also helps familiarize less experienced staff members and volunteers to the thought process involved in the application of flexibility.

"The program emphasizes developing relationships with its clients so that clients will come back when they are ready for services. **The program is flexible** – clients may not be ready for all services, but the program's funding allows for this flexible approach."

--Welcome House of Kentucky
Covington, KY

See *Practical Application* pages for examples of application.

Recommendations for Implementation

Determine whether your agency's Mission supports flexibility

Examine agency rules; evaluate rules for effectiveness and improvement
Clear rules and an understanding of the intent of the rules are helpful when a staff member or volunteer works through the process of determining whether flexibility can be applied appropriately.See *Checklist* for ideas on evaluating agency rules.

Train staff and volunteers in effective application of flexibility
Help staff and volunteers understand their roles in upholding this service approach.

- Make sure all agency staff members understand why flexibility is critical and when it may be applied
- Create some guidelines/standards to aid staff in utilizing flexibility
- Apply flexibility with care and consideration
- Aid staff in arriving to the answers to these questions: When is flexibility needed? When is it not?

Practical Application 4.1

Staying In Tune with Flexibility

Discussion of flexibility is complex. It is difficult for some people, especially people who perceive the world in black and white or who think in absolute terms, to understand how and why flexibility is fair. In order to be effective in applying flexibility, it is important to orient staff and volunteers to the "hows" and "whys" of flexibility. Frequent discussion of the rules helps familiarize the staff with the existing rules and brainstorm situations where alternatives might be necessary.

Emphasize Flexibility in Staff Training

- Orient staff to the philosophy underlying the rules (the "why" of the rules)
- Orient staff to effective rule enforcement (the "how" of the rules)
- Decision-making skills building: Discuss how to assess when to apply a rule and when to apply flexibility. Draw from agency history, real experiences, etc.
- Inculcate an understanding that rules are meant to benefit people and to create a safe environment.
- If rules truly do not serve an individual, and group safety will not be jeopardized, perhaps rules can be adapted (flexibility may be applied).

Flexbility and the Role of Staff

- Make rules a frequent, revisited topic in staff meetings.
- See the connection between creating a safe (and welcoming) environment with appropriate rules, and how flexibility contributes to that environment.
- See the connection between flexibility, a mission-driven approach, individualized services, compassion, and enforcement as needed.
- May include role-playing or discussion of scenarios to practice when to use flexibility
- Do staff members accept their own authority?
- Do staff members experience discomfort when enforcing rules?
- When applying flexibility?
- Either way, the source of discomfort may arise from fear of losing a client's trust, or the relationship/ rapport that has been built.
- Staff members need to understand that relationships can withstand appropriate rule enforcement or fallout from application of flexibility, if staff's actions are coming from the right place.

Flexibility and the Role of Volunteers

Volunteers are sometimes charged with rule enforcement. As such, determine how and when volunteers should be authorized to apply flexibility or whether such questions such be referred to staff for decision. Orient volunteers to the rules, the intent of the rules and how the volunteers will be asked to enforce the rules. Like staff members, volunteers may feel uncomfortable either with enforcing rules or with applying flexibility. Apply some of the same training techniques as would be used with staff the help volunteers understand the importance of their use of authority.

Practical Application 4.2

Flexibility in Action

Tips and Examples for Staff and Volunteers

Situations that require flexibility may arise anytime, which means they may come up at inconvenient times or in the midst of another event. The following suggestions may help the problem-solving staff member or volunteer get her bearings as she works through the situation.

It can be useful for the staff member and the woman in question to engage in an interactive dialogue about what shape the flexibility will take for the woman's situation:

- Is there part of the rule that the woman could meet?
- If flexibility is applied to the situation, will the woman be able to operate within the new (agreed-upon) boundaries?

A discussion of the time frame for the alteration may be useful in certain cases:

- Would it be helpful to the woman to acquire the ability to eventually follow the rule?
- If so, it might be useful to work together with the woman to establish that as a goal and decide what steps might help in getting there.

Now let's see how the tips discussed above might be put into action.

Example 1

The agency asks that all who are planning to have lunch there arrive by noon. One woman ("Angela") asks to arrive at 12:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Lunch service has concluded by then, and though people may still be eating, second helpings have been offered. Angela explains that she has a standing commitment until noon on these days (could be a job, when she drops her child off at day care, a regular case management meeting, elsewhere etc.) and can't catch a bus to the center anytime earlier. Angela says that she can definitely be at the agency by the time specified on these days (12:30). Staff members agree it would not serve Angela well to enforce the arrival time rule and deny her lunch because is honoring another commitment, and agrees to save a plate for her on these days.

This is contrasted to the decision the staff make in regard to Katherine. Katherine has been participating in services for several years, but recently has been arriving late for lunch and asking to be served, even though she lives in the vicinity and could have arrived earlier. Other women report that they've seen Katherine on the corner shortly before the lunch hour and have invited her to walk in with them. Staff have spoken to her and reminded her about the lunchtime arrival rules. Staff agree that in this case, it would not serve Katherine to allow her to habitually come late. Many other women in Katherine's situation make the commitment to arrive at lunch on time, and, in fact, Katherine has done so in the past. The staff decides not to lift the arrival rule in this case. (However, staff recognizes that while Katherine's tardiness could be due to a "lack of follow through", it could also be a sign of something deeper. They step up other ways to reach out to Katherine.)

Example 2

A woman who the agency has been trying to engage through outreach ("Estelle") finally comes to try out services. Agency rules stipulate that during lunch, 1) dining will occur in the dining area, 2) women may choose a seat at any available table, 3) the lunch hour is meant for eating and socializing, so telephone calls, access to computers, case management services, showers, television watching, etc. will be suspended during the lunch hour but resume at 1:00 pm, 4) health regulations prohibit meals being served "to go". Estelle becomes agitated after a few minutes of being seated with a group at a table. Her behavior is seen as disruptive by the clients seated around her. Intervention becomes necessary.

Staff members recognize that Estelle's agitation may have a variety of causes (mental illness, lack of familiarity with agency routine, unease around new people). Similarly, the staff recognizes that the agency offers an array of services that could be useful to Estelle, and hopes that meals will be her first step toward more comprehensive services. Instead of asking the Estelle to leave, the staff talks to her to find out what might make her feel more comfortable in this situation. Estelle says "I don't like eating here. I'd like to take my food to go." The health department has specifically prohibited the agency from offering this service, so flexibility cannot be applied to that rule. Is there another way? "What if I eat my lunch in the living room instead?" The staff assesses whether it would be reasonable to be this flexible. By eating in the living room, would anyone's safety be compromised? The staff feels comfortable that as long as a staff member can see where Estelle is at all times, Estelle might be able to be more relaxed eating away from others and, likewise, lunchtime might be more peaceful for other clients. Yes, the staff decide, this is a reasonable application of flexibility. Staff and the woman agree where within the living room the woman may sit (or maybe a staff member or volunteer joins her by eating nearby).

After this accommodation has been reached, Estelle continues to come for meal times. Ideally, staff/volunteers/other clients develop rapport—however slowly—with the her. Eventually, it would be appropriate to revisit the accommodation. Is this practice still needed for Estelle to feel comfortable? Can Estelle try eating with the other women? (If she tries and it doesn't work, she can return to her routine in the living room). Can Estelle commit to working toward eating with the rest of the community on a regular basis?

In the meantime, other women may ask the staff if they, too, can eat in the living room. Staff can explain that the goal is for everyone to enjoy the meal together as a community. Estelle may need this accommodation right now, but hopefully someday she won't.

Consider the following: Norm testing against core values.

- How are agency rules created?
- How are they tested? How are they applied?
- Are the rules strong? Are the rules just? Do the rules withstand the tests of time?
- Do women/staff/volunteers believe in them?
- Is there discomfort among staff/volunteers in applying certain rules? Why?
- Are there any rules that are unclear or seem unnecessary?
- Are rules sometimes created in reaction to a crisis situation? Ambiguous situation? Is this always helpful?
- Are there any existing exceptions or special circumstances for not enforcing a rule?
- Are any rules outdated? Are there any rules that are always overlooked?

Checklist 4

Big Picture

- [ ] We believe that service environment bound by rigidity and inflexibility does not accurately reflect the world in which we live, nor does it the range of promote behaviors and problem-solving skills needed to confront daily life.
- [ ] We strive to prevent an "institutional" style of service provision.
- [ ] Rules are meant to serve people, not the other way around.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] We help orient staff to effective application of flexibility.
- [ ] Staff have opportunities to discuss whether or not the rules are working/effective and whether some need modification or elimination.
- [ ] We review the principle of flexibility and review examples of applying flexibility in staff meetings.

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff understands the intent of the rules.
- [ ] Staff can enforce rules, and enforces rules fairly.
- [ ] Staff identifies situations in which application of flexibility would better serve a woman.
- [ ] Staff does not use flexibility simply because it is "easier" than enforcing a rule.

Actions

- [ ] We strive to ensure that our rules have purpose.
- [ ] We understand that rules cannot address every situation.
- [ ] We offer alternatives to the rules (flexibility) for women who could not be effectively served otherwise.
- [ ] We ensure that application of flexibility does not endanger others.

5: Individualized Services

Individualized Services: A Definition

Services or service plan that can be customized in order to become more relevant, accessible, or successful for each person. This process of adapting, omitting, or modifying services to best fit each person is done so that clients receive the highest quality and most relevant services possible.

Why is it a Best Practice?

Individualized services result from client-centered and flexible approaches to service design. This practice responds to the needs clients themselves express. While it is true that experienced agencies have accrued wisdom about how to help their populations, the agency itself is not the keeper of all information about how to end homelessness or improve the lives of those it services. The agency must be able to see each woman as an individual and listen to each woman in order to determine where gaps in service might occur. In this environment, women are empowered to voice their needs so that an appropriate service plan can be created.

Customizing services in this manner counters the institutionalism that tends to proliferate in homeless services. When serving lots of people, agencies understandably look for ways to "streamline" their processes, however, less effective agencies attempt to do this by looking for a one-size-fits-all approach to service. Too often, this produces a highly rigid and impersonal structure. For example, agencies without individualized services may require all women to attend 12-step meetings or attend particular classes as part of their programs, regardless of whether or not they need them. This wastes the woman's time, making it more likely she will disengage from or be uninterested in participation, thus erecting

a barrier to service and an unwelcoming environment. Agencies that individualize services have the potential to reach a larger spectrum of the population-- not just those people who are able to proceed through a pre-planned service pathway. Services are streamlined because unnecessary or mismatched requirements are eliminated, raising the quality of services for the recipient.

Finally, because the agency actively engages with each woman, it is also able to detect trends and changing needs within the community. This reinforces a mission-driven approach to response and planning. It sharpens an agency's ability to respond quickly and appropriately to new situations, draw together coalitions, seek out partnerships, and understand if designing a new program is merited.

Qualities of Individualized Services

Individualized services result from a practice of asking "how can our services fit her needs?"-- rather than asking, "does she fit into our services?"

Lower barriers to accessing services-- Customizing services is useful for working with "hard to serve" and drop-in clients. These clients might have trouble following a "one size fits all" service routine, so with individualized services, they won't have to. This practice allows for provision of one-time services and therefore does not have to rely on future meetings (though follow-up can be a service component).

Produce more relevant services so a greater number of individuals can achieve success -- Adapting services acknowledges that people start in different places from each other. Similarly, it accomodates the fact that progress is not always linear-- clients may move forward and back or go through cycles multiple times. Staff members often apply flexibility when individualizing services, because they notice when leeway is necessary. This approach is more "forgiving" than services that are not customized, because clients are not made to repeat steps that are not pertinent-- they do have to start from "square one" if "square 3" better suits their needs.

Are relationship-based-- Agency and participants develop history together over time, which hopefully leads to a higher level of trust. Since staff members are likely to know or remember more about clients they can

developed a service plan that best fit sthe needs of the participants.

Make the agency feel "human scale" -- One-to-one engagement opportunities occur as participants and staff members discuss services needed.
The agency focuses on quality services and a personal approach rather than simply counting the number of people served. In this way, even agencies that are large can feel "small" and personable.

Are Empowering-- The client's voice is heard through the process of customization. The client may self-direct to is most needed in the moment by opting in or out of certain services.

Free staff to work with clients who are ready to work now--
Agencies that practice individualization often offer some services (like case management or access to showers) to be offered on a first come, first served basis. As a result, staff and clients spend less time bogged down waiting for others to arrive for appointments. Since each client's service needs are different, this practices allows for staff members to spend the amount of time needed for each process, rather than limiting service-delivery to discrete appointment times.

Do not compromise high expectations or a sense of structure in order to customize services-- Individualization requires expertise and good judgement. Staff members and individual clients work together to formulate needed service customizations. The agency encourages staff to generate ideas about how to adapt services to make them more useful, and values the staff's experience and intuition that inform these ideas.

Recommendations for Implementation

Seek employees that can work well in a non-institutional environment
In agency job descriptions, include a definition of individualized services describe and what skills staff members would need to be able to implement them (sound decision-making, ability to listen to, observe, and discern client needs, ability to "think outside the box" in providing appropriate services)

Train staff to understand need, purpose, and implementation of individualized services
Provide examples of "what is or isn't an individualized service" (*See Practical Applications*). Return to this topic in staff meetings and in service workshops.

Train staff and volunteers in active listening
Listening skills are critical to understanding a woman's particular needs.

Make sure agency environment is welcoming to participants--
Participants who feel they can trust the agency are more likely to initiate services.

Ensure staff have the resources necessary for this type of service--
Supportive coworkers and supervisors are indispensible to this practice. Having time to run service plans by supervisor and other staff members and to discuss possible changes or other interpretations of "what is best" for clients is necessary to make this approach a success.

Gather feedback from staff to regularly
This could either be part of an evaluation process or simply informal discussions to determine if any of the services that have been customized to a particular woman's need could benefit larger array of women. This step is necessary to innovation within the agency.

Gather information; provide multiple options for clients to provide feedback to the agency
Consider how feedback can be collected in order to evaluate the efficacy of this practice. Focus groups, surveys, one-on-one question/answer sessions, etc. could all be options.

Compassion
Mission Driven Approach
Welcoming Environment

Practical Application 5

How Individualized Services Look

Problem Solving Scenarios

What are your ideas for individualizing services according to the scenarios below? The bulleted list provides some of our ideas. You may have others!

Example 1: Helping Achieve Success in Recovery

Ana, a resident in your agency's permanent, supportive housing has recently confided to staff that she is using drugs, and has agreed to enter a residential treatment facility. How can your agency individualize services for Ana?

- Continuation of housing is top priority. Loss of housing could jeopardize Ana's chances for success in treatment or increase chances of relapse upon completion of treatment. The agency should agree to hold her apartment for her until she successfully completes her treatment. (This could mean holding it free of rent).

- If appropriate, your agency's case manager/resident manager should try to forge a working relationship with her counselor at the treatment facility.

- If she is allowed visitors during treatment, arrange for your agency's case manager or resident manager to visit her, perhaps bringing some of her friends.

- When she is released from treatment, provide transportation back to her apartment.

- Develop or help maintain a sobriety plan with her. What does she feel would help her upon return? Will she attend 12-step meetings? Who does she consider her support network? Does she know what her trouble spots will be?

o Some agencies offer to create "contracts" with the person in recovery, so that she can specify what actions she will take should she feel she is going to relapse (i.e. Talk to my case manager/resident manager, call my sponsor, talk to friends, don't go to the place where I used to get drugs). Both the woman in question and staff members may find the contract a useful tool for reminding the woman about her goals.

o Some agencies offer a money management program. Participants who enroll may specify a maximum daily amount that they may "withdraw" an account they keep with the agency. Some participants feel more secure knowing they have limited access to cash, should they be tempted to start using.

Example 2: Helping with Special Medical Needs

Bea, a resident who has been in the hospital will soon be released. She will need recuperative care after her release. Your agency does not provide formal medical services or have an on-site medical staff. How can your agency individualize services for Bea?

- Is there a recuperative care or step-down nursing facility in your area? If so, hopefully your agency has already forged a working partnership with it. If not, now is the time: put mechanisms in place so your residents can stay there when needed.

- If there is no such place, can your agency arrange for a traveling nurse to visit the resident, change her dressings, etc? (If so, are there any other residents' medical needs that could also be attended to by this nurse)
-
- If visiting medical care is not available (or even if it is), is it possible to arrange for short-term in-home care so that the woman returning from the hospital can receive assistance with light housekeeping?
-
- If in-home care is not available, or even if it is, is it possible to coordinate among the other residents or the woman's friends to spend time with her and provide her with some of the daily assistance she may need?
-
- Are any of the other residents willing to help this woman by delivering meals prepared by the day center?
-
- Arrange for a staff member or volunteer to transport this woman to her follow-up medical appointments.

Example 3: Aiding Transition to a New Living Environment

Ida, an elderly woman who has lived in the permanent, supportive housing your agency operates now needs a higher level of care. Staff members have helped her identify an assisted living program. She has expressed how much she will miss the organization. Staff knows she has limited contact with her family and others outside the organization. How can agency individualize services for this long-time resident and extend Ida's community to her new living situation?

- If appropriate, provide her with staff or volunteer support in packing her things. She may need assistance with this job and might also enjoy reminiscing with someone as she packs.

- Coordinate a going-away event (i.e. a tea, a movie night, or small evening reception) in her honor so that she and her neighbors can exchange contact information, make plans for future visits, and/or get closure.

- Find out if there are any "welcoming" activities set to occur at her new home. Does the staff at the new place regularly introduce a new person around? If not, is it possible for one of your agency's staff members to accompany her and help make introductions on her first day?

- Can the agency bring items for a small welcoming reception at the new place, such as iced tea and cookies or muffins?

- Set up a visitation schedule with volunteers and friends (volunteers can make visits on their own and also transport women's friends/neighbors to see her on weekly or other regular basis).

- If a regular visitation schedule is not possible (or even if it is), provide postcards and stamps to her friends so that they may drop her a line.

- Provide her with transportation to your agency so that she can enjoy meals and maintain her social network the agency's day or residential program(s).

- Arrange for her to be able to participate in the agency's "alumni network" of women who have moved from the housing.

- Make it possible for her to continue to enjoy outings with the agency's participants (again, arrange for a volunteer to pick her up).

- Arrange for volunteer or staff person to occasionally make up and deliver care packages to the woman at her new home. Items could enjoy materials for a hobby she likes to do, reading materials, special snacks, and a note signed by her former neighbors.

- Remember the woman at holidays and on her birthday. Invite her to holiday events and/or deliver a small holiday or birthday package so she knows she is remembered.

Example 4: Helping a Woman Who is New Get Started

A new woman, Ophelia, comes to the agency for the first time. How can your agency initiate individualized services?

- Staff welcomes Ophelia, introduces themselves to her.
- Ophelia is oriented to the agency's services and given a tour.
- Case manager or another staff member either engages her in conversation to learn more about her or invites her for an individual appointment.
- In conversation or in her appointment, staff asks Ophelia to share whether or not she's ever engaged in formal services, and to what extent these services helped her. Ophelia then identifies what issues she'd like to work on first. Staff makes note of services that might be of benefit to Ophelia, and works to create a service plan.
- Staff assists Ophelia on working toward her self-identified goals, leaving the door open for other services (by letting her know about them), should the woman choose to pursue them.
- Ophelia may or may not identify other needs; she may or may not be open to other services at this time.

… what if Ophelia appears to have a mental illness that she has not identified?

Practical Application 5 (continued)

- Key to the success of Individualized Services is the understanding the any woman is likely to have particular challenges that require the agency to customize its service approach, find ways to lower barriers, and think creatively about how best to serve the person in question. Agencies we spoke were well aware of the prevalence of mental health issues among the women they served, and most expressed a high commitment to making their services accessible to women who may not be able to get help elsewhere, due to their untreated mental illnesses. (See sections on Core Values and Flexibility).
- Observation is almost always necessary. Even if she does have a mental illness, it may not currently hinder Ophelia's abilities to reach her goals or to care for herself. If this is the case, affirm Ophelia's strengths, assist her with her stated goals, and leave the door open to future services.
- Rapport-building is extremely important. As a woman becomes more comfortable at the place she receives basic services, as she has beneficial interactions with staff, she may be willing to try new things. Rapport-building may take years.
- In what ways does Ophelia appear open to interventions or to adjusting the plan she has created for herself? Would she be willing to attend a meeting with a mental health practitioner if it occurred on-site? If a staff member accompanied her to a meeting off-site?
- Each woman's steps to success will be different.

You may wonder why we placed "Helping a Woman Who Is New Get Started" last in this series. As you may have noted, the other examples included women whose issues where known to the staff. Sometimes helping a new person get started is very straight-forward. Other times, it requires a more nuanced approach, as the discussion of untreated mental illness attempted to reveal. The other examples highlight how rapport and shared history with participants can help create solutions. In each of these cases, the issue in question was "known," which facilitates problem-solving, so long as the agency is willing to reach beyond their walls to arrange for needed services.

Checklist 5

Big Picture

- [ ] We understand that each woman's steps to success are unique and different.
- [ ] We understand that services are meant to serve people, not the other way around.
- [ ] We work to customize our services so that they can more effectively reach women.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] We provide active listening training to staff.
- [ ] Staff are provided adequate meeting time with participants, so customized plans may be developed.

Markers of Skills and Compentancies

- [ ] Staff members are good listeners.
- [ ] Staff members are perceptive at identifying needs that may go unvoiced.

Actions

- [ ] We don't require women to follow a standard or template service plan.
- [ ] If we don't offer a service a woman needs, we strive to fulfill it for her through one time action and/or connect her with (not simply refer her to) an agency providing the service.
- [ ] Staff takes pride in crafting customized service plans.

6: Full Spectrum Care

Full Spectrum Care: A Definition

Full spectrum care is a system of providing services to people at different levels of functioning or need. Structuring services as part of a spectrum with various entry points is a practice that many agencies intuitively follow. As a result, some government (and other) funding guidelines have come to require a similar system of service delivery (often called "continuum of care").

Services in the spectrum (or along the continuum) may be provided by one agency or several agencies in collaboration.

Why is it a Best Practice?

Formerly homeless people benefit from continuing or supportive services in order to prevent repeated episodes of homelessness. Some agencies envision services in a linear way: Point A is where all clients must begin and arrival at Point Z signals the end of servcies. Designing services as a spectrum or continuum rather than a line provides a wider array, a vaster assortment, and a more versatile arrangement of services to offer homeless and formerly homeless women. This structure accommodates a multitude of pathways, whether or not they are "progressive" (i.e. moving systematically through the system on a linear path). In such a model, a client can more easily access the services she needs, because all (or most all) services an agency can think of are available. When agencies work in effective partnership with others to provide spectrum services, agreements between the partners facilitate the clients' abilities to access the services quickly and easily, making a seamless connection between the agencies involved and reducing fragmentation. In fact, when agencies co-locate their services, clients

may not even be aware that services are being provided by different entities.

A full spectrum approach helps agencies determine where along the spectrum services are missing, thus aiding in program planning in development. Agencies can either design their new services to complement those already offered, or to seek out partnerships with agencies have expertise in these services. In this way, the resources available to the client are maximized, agency expertise is effectively applied, and the agency does not diffuse its energies by offering services it knows little about.

Qualities of Full Spectrum Care

Allows individuals to follow own path to success—This approach offers an array of related services. From that array, participants choose the services they need or want.

Creates consistency for the individual-- The spectrum aids in achievement of stability. For example, maintenance of mental health becomes the focus rather than treating mental illness only in acute stages or episodically.

Reinforces the importance of health maintenance-- Structure and services feel supportive rather than punitive, which encourages clients to use them rather than avoid them.

May include many partners/collaborators—Few agencies have the resources and expertise to provide all the services in the spectrum. Well-chosen partnerships (ideally among agencies with congruent—or at least not conflicting-- core values) aid in augmenting services. The importance of the maintenance aspect of health and stability is relayed consistently to the participant.

Promotes co-located services-- Co-location is housing more than one servcie component in one location so that they are easier to access for the population, as well as resourcefully efficient for programs and partners involved.

Collaboration and co-location often figure prominently in Full Spectrum Care.

Recommendations for

Implementation

Use a full spectrum care model for future strategic planning/program design

This allows the agency to think about services in a systematic fashion, determine what is missing, and set plans into action to fill in the gaps. While establishing a spectrum approach at your agency, make sure to analyze all stages and transitions involved in the client's development.

Determine where partnerships are needed

Think about the other agencies in your community whose work you respect. Do they have expertise that your agency does not? Could they provide a service to your clients? It is better to partner than to duplicate. If none of your potential partners offers a service of the quality you expect, see if you can collaborate to improve the service. If not, make sure that the service you establish on your own has value added and truly offers elements no other provider can.

--Insert graphic of spectrum (circle)--

Practical Application 6.1

1. Determine the breadth of your agency's spectrum

Below is a "wish list" of services that an agency the serves homeless women could provide (though it is unlikely that any one organization provides them all).

Check all the services that your agency provides.

Outreach & Engagement
Street outreach to women outside
Case management offered in outdoor settings/away from building
Outdoor events that invite engagement
Speaking engagements at sites throughout the community
Other(s):

Housing
Permanent housing
Emergency shelter
Roommate matching to non-agency housing
Housing & Rental Assistance
- "Good Neighbor" workshops
- Deposit matching
- Apartment finding
- Follow up for residents
- Home maintenance/fix-it workshops
- Eviction Prevention
- Landlord mediation
- Other(s):_____

Healthcare
On-site comprehensive medical clinic, including well-woman/gynecological services
On-site, regularly scheduled consultations with doctor/nurse
Referrals to off-site or partner medical clinic
Recuperative care from hospital (hospital to home transition)
Hospice care
On-site mental health clinic
On-site, regularly scheduled mental health services
Referrals to off-site or partner mental health clinic
Services for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and trauma
Referrals to off-site or partner agency for sexual assault/dv/trauma services
Survivor's Support Groups (sexual assault/childhood sexual assault/dv)

On-site dental services
Referrals to off-site or partner dental services
Other(s):

Wellness & Nutrition Services
Exercise/adapted exercise classes
Self-defense classes
Self Confidence/Self Esteem Support Group*
Living with Chronic Health Conditions Support Group*
Nutrition counseling
Obesity prevention services
Eating Issues Support Group*
Other(s):

Substance Abuse Prevention & Recovery
On-site residential or clinical treatment programs
Policy to hold housing as available for resident who has entered treatment off-site
On-site 12-step or other support groups
Referrals to off-site or partner 12-step or other support groups
Smoking cessation services
Other(s):

Meals & Food Access
Hot meals served_____ x/day
Meals for special dietary needs provided _____x/day
Food pantry
Emergency food care packages for clients in crisis
Common kitchen for residents/clients
Private kitchen for residents
Other(s):

Hygiene and Self Care
Public restrooms for all women in community
Restrooms for clients only
Public showers for all women in the community
Showers for clients only
Toiletries provided
Tampons and supplies provided
Haircare available (cuts, braiding, etc.)
Other

Transportation
Auto donation/matching service [See Lake Haven Shelter]
Shuttle service for clients
Central location on public transportation lines
As needed transportation with staff or volunteers
Bus passes or tokens
Advocacy to enable clients to access reduced fare or free passes
Taxi vouchers
Other(s):

Education
On-site learning environment i.e. learning center, library, computer lab
On-site high school or college credit courses, certificate programs, etc.
Other on-site opportunities such as creative writing (non-certificate programs)
GED preparation classes
Other(s):

Employment
On-site social enterprise, supported employment, or similar
Local hiring agreements with area businesses for agency participants
Employment training program for specific skills/trades
Job readiness services
Job search resources and assistance
Employment Issues Support Group* (i.e. support groups for those starting new jobs)
Employment wardrobe
Other(s):

Family & Relationships
Assistance with any concerns relating to children
Assistance contacting distant family members
Moms' Support Group*
Healthy Relationships Support Group*
Other(s):

Enrichment, Socializing & Community Building
Organized trips to concerts, theater, museums, etc.
Art and Craft-making opportunities
Music-making opportunities
Outings Group*

On-site socials
Other(s):

Follow-up & Aftercare for Clients Moving/Homeless Prevention:
Exit interviews for clients moving on— i.e. what helped you most?
Continuing or step-down case management
Home visits to new place
Open access to day services (meals, education, outings)
"Alumni" Support Group or reunion opportunities for those who have moved
Other(s):

*Topical support groups indicated are suggestions. General support groups can also address these topics.

2. Reflect & Evaluate Your Agency's Current Spectrum of Services

a. How many checks did you mark?
b. Which service area has the most checks? The least? Do these results accurately reflect your mission?
c. Is there any kind of "graduated" quality or linear progression to the services checked that your agency provides? (Note: Services need not be linear to be contained within Full Spectrum Care-- this question is meant to help you identify the reach of your services)

d. If you cannot address all degrees on the spectrum, can your agency reach at least one more "point" on the spectrum? One more point in each topic area? Where does it make the most sense, in terms of your mission and capacity, to locate the new points, or expand services?

e. Take action! Describe your agency's action steps and specify timeline for reaching one or more points on the spectrum.

In box:
Help for determining directions for spectrum expansion. Where do you see your gaps?
1. Do you feel you currently reach those some call the "chronically homeless" or "hardest to serve"?
2. Do you offer services targeted toward breaking particular cycles? For example, to you help people who experience setbacks due to reoccurring issue (mental illness, domestic violence, anger management).
3. Has your agency been wanting to do more to assure the success of those who are leaving to establish permanent homes?
4. Maybe your agency does not have the mission or capacity to serve the children, families, or male partners of your clients? Are there ways to effectively increase your referral network or provide technical assistance to agencies that are better suited to serving those groups?

3. Analyze how clients access and move through your agency's of services
b. Qualifications: Do people have to meet some basic qualification to begin services… or do people make a decision to opt in to services?
c. Entering the Spectrum: How can people who have not yet begun services be reached on the spectrum (outreach, rapport development, basic services like outdoor meals, outdoor case management, bus tokens)
d. Transitioning: How does your spectrum allow people to move between services? Are there time limits for certain services? Do people "gradu¬ate" out of services? If so, is there any follow-up provided?
e. Following up: What happens once clients leave? Does the agency have any way of following up or staying in touch?
f. Are there improvements that could be made? If so, name them.
g. Take action! Describe action steps and specify timeline for implementing improvements names above.

In box
Reminders: Expanding your reach by adding new points to your spectrum does may be accomplished in many ways, and not necessarily represent an additional cost. Examples of low cost/high impact ways to expand spectrum:
- Making connections with partners more direct or formal
- Involving volunteers with new spectrum opportunities that support service expansion (i.e. volunteers aid in street outreach, volunteers put together emergency food care packages, run operations of a new food pantry, volunteers create and run enrichment activity schedule)
- Involving donors with new spectrum opportunties (i.e. donating to deposit matching program, donating to transportation fund)
- Colocating services at a partner organization (reduces overhead, increases visibility)

Sustaining Your Spectrum
1. Client Perspective: Prioritize Ease-of-Use
- Pay attention to your participants' perceptions. Make sure the spectrum is user-friendly and easy to

Practical Application 6.2

[LOCATE MISSING TEXT]
opt into.

- Dedicate resources to clients' simplifying flow through the spectrum.
- Remove barriers/duplications for clients who receive multiple services
- Make sure clients' can communicate their needs, adjust their service plan at any point
- Revisit and refine spectrum as needed

2. Infrastructure

- Dedicate resources to the establishing the infrastructure needed to support the spectrum (communication, referral, documentation, and follow up procedures; appropriate technologies; regular evaluation)

3. Manage Collaboration

- Dedicate resources to the management (administration) of the spectrum.
- Choose collaborators carefully, in accordance with your mission and culture
- Clearly define your responsibilities and your collaborators' responsibilities.
- Institute network meetings since multiple partners may be involved
- Establish and agree upon referral systems
- Develop efficient systems for tracking inputs of contractors, volunteers, etc.
- Provide regular review and oversight

4. Direct Your Future

- Specify the sustainability plan(s) for the services offered.
- Chart grant and contract cycles, as well as partnerships agreements so staff may view them.
- Document contingency plans.

Resources—see draft i.e. CSH materials

Checklist 6

Big Picture

Clients are better-served when…

- ☐ … agencies who work with them work together to provide seamless service.
- ☐ … gaps in service are reduced.
- ☐ … when unnecessary overlap and duplication of services is eliminated.
- ☐ … they do not have to engage in repetitive information-giving (i.e. paperwork).
- ☐ … services are designed with complementary services in mind.

Tools for Building Skills

- ☐ We have developed methods for communicating with/receiving input from partners.
- ☐ We hold regular meetings with partners to ensure service quality.

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- ☐ Our staff builds rapport with that of other agencies (partners and collaborators).

Actions

- ☐ We have a variety of "entry points" for services; we do not require that everyone start in the same place.
- ☐ A large portion of the clients' service needs be met in one location (clothing, meals, case management, health, mental health, recreation, transportation…); we co-locate services to reduce clients' need to travel from site to site.
- ☐ We assess where gaps in our services occur.
- ☐ We develop partnerships to address gaps we would otherwise be unable to fill.
- ☐ We have effective working relationships with partner agencies.
- ☐ We have worked with our partners to reduce the amount of paperwork and red tape.
- ☐ We consider transportation as an important issue when making outside referrals.

7: Ongoing Access

Lowering Barriers to Entry

For decades, service providers and scholars have indicated the importance of low barriers to the effectiveness of providing homeless services. (Stoner 1983, Callahan, Dietrich and Blaise 1986, others) Both Stoner in her list of recommendations for policy changes and social action and Callahan et al in their proposal to the County of Los Angeles for improving shelter provision call for low barriers to entry.

Low barriers to entry are often considered in relation to the acquisition of shelter or housing. The Housing First philosophy revolves around the principle that housing is the first and most critical step to ending homelessness, and that housing should not be predicated on the successful completion of any particular set of service requirements. Other services may be spring from the housing setting (though they should not be required), but housing is a right, not a privilege to be earned through "good behavior" or the correct completion of a set of criteria. [need Housing First cites]. Similarly, advocates call for on-demand or low barriers to drug treatment (cite).

Less discussed, however, is the role that low barriers to entry in any kind of

service might play in engagement of other needed services [expand].

Ongoing Access: A Definition

Women's participation in or receipt of services is not limited to a discreet unit of time (i.e. 6 months, 1 year, 5 years), nor is it necessarily linear.

Rather than imposing time limits and false deadlines, this principle ensures clients may access services when needed—often repeatedly—until stability is achieved.

Drop-in services that are always available to anyone who needs them is an example of ongoing access to programming and services. Elsewhere on the spectrum but still an example of ongoing access is permanent housing, for it does not limit residents to a finite period of residency until they must move on. See Practice Page for more information on "how it looks" and Checklist for help in designing.

Why is it a Best Practice?

Ongoing access to services is client-centered; allows clients to work at the pace that's right for them. The approach to offering services creates safety net that is lacking elsewhere. Knowledge that the agency and its services will be available provides a measure of security to a woman if her new situation is slippery.

There are few "wrong answers" in this approach to structuring services—it promotes options of all kinds. It empowers self identification of needs--people to opt into services when they are needed, they don't have to lock into one particular path. It fits needs and expectations of the client, not the agency.

The agency's goal for services is that they be low-barrier entry or re-entry. Participation may be initiated repeatedly by the individual. Individuals are not barred from services that they have "graduated" from in the past. For example, a woman may enroll in a support group for a particular issue again, or may begin day services again even if she has moved to housing. Re-entry is always welcome, as long as the woman can abide by the community's basic rules. In fact, ongoing services make it possible for women who have had past difficulty in meeting the agency's basic behavioral expectations to return after an agreed-upon time period and try again. Within this framework, success is always possible. There are no artificial deadlines imposed on a woman's personal journey.

> "The shelter is **open-ended.** There is no drop-dead date. This can be good ... if the women [have been] involved in traumatic situations. They can work their way through them at their own pace. The shelter is flexible."
>
> **--St. Vincent's Cardinal Manning Center *Los Angeles, CA***

Qualities of Ongoing Access

The effect is creation of a safety net; like the ideal family—This service or program is there when an individual needs it. If individual ("family member") does not need to fall back on the "family" (agency and its

services), she need not to use them

Participants set their own pace—Some people use this type of services over an extended period of time; others leave the agency and return for services in times of crisis; others use them on an as-needed basis.

Allow the agency to meet different needs in different ways-- Women can access one service i.e. housing, be successful, then need another service i.e. support group. Availability of multiple services means women are not always accessing at the same level that they began

Steps "forward" (i.e. permanent housing) do not preclude someone from accessing a more basic services somewhere elsewhere on the continuum. Rather this way of structuring programs encourages women to identify when extra support is needed, and opt into variety of services

Allows for continuity of community—This approach leads to a feeling of safety, even for those not currently using/needing services because they know they can return if needed. It helps participants mark their personal successes allowing women who have achieved particular goals to return to the agency anytime—or simply utilize other services—and therefore see where they began and where they are now. Finally, it enables women to mentor newer members of the community to programs by explaining rules, helping orient them to procedures, or be a part of setting up activities.

"[There's] no time limit to our services. It's a source of ongoing support and connection to women in the community."

-- Women's Daytime Drop-In Center
Berkeley, CA

Recommendations for Implementation

Make sure staff understands the impact of offering services in this way
Do they know why it's a best practice? If not, they will be less effective. [See mission-driven approach]

Examine the organization for barriers for engagement
Are there currently programs or services that are time-limited or do no allow for ongoing access? If so, is there a way to modify them?

Create programs with the understanding that multiple admissions may be needed, according to the individual

Recognize accomplishments
Set achievable goals with the women. Recognize achievements that

are based on progress. Sustained success should in no way jeopardize a woman's ability to access services. For example, do not celebrate a woman for living in housing for a year then imply "now that you've lived here for a year it is time for you to start thinking about moving out." See Practice Pages for ways to more detail.

When creating housing, make it permanent
Permanent housing is the ultimate ongoing service.

Conduct evaluation to deepen understanding
It benefits the org to know why women come back (or don't leave). Think about ways to quantify the benefit of having no time limits, which will help the agency explain the value of this principle to outsiders/supporters. Such evaluation could lead to future programming (do women come back after job loss? Prison? Is there a program that could help support them in their job?)

Box
- Quotes from LAMP: "Don't see services as measuring one's value… for example, someone who is in [our] shelter and someone who is in [our] permanent housing are the same, they are both where they need to be. If someone moves from permanent housing to shelter, it isn't viewed as a setback, it is viewed as a movement to where they need to be at that time."
  - This is in the context of mental illness and substance abuse and because LAMP operates many types of housing. Other agencies may perceive movement from housing to shelter a setback.

Practical Application 7.1

Ways to Structure Programs with Ongoing Access
An Implementation Guide

Ongoing access extends the idea of drop-in services to make services available when people need them, and as many times as people need them. It is a way of lowering barriers to service. This guide is intended to help people understand how the organizing principle of open access can be implemented, and why it is beneficial.

Drop-in day center
A drop-in center exemplifies the notion of ongoing access. The purpose of a drop-in center is to make all kinds of services (showers, restrooms, sleeping area, a safe and comfortable place to spend time, social opportunities, telephone/internet/mail services) available with few or no barriers to entry, so that a person can access them as-needed and without an appointment. A drop-in center may also have a menu of service provided at specific times (like meals).

Permanent housing and permanent, supportive housing
Permanent housing also exemplies ongoing access because the person has uninterrupted access to housing--there are no time limits associated with this type of housing. Very low income should not be a barrier to entry, however, if a resident's income increases such that she could afford market rate housing, the providing agency may help her make the transiton in order that a person with lesser means could access decent housing. Eviction prevention and safe transitioning to alternate housing are often among the supportive services included in this type of housing. *Only permanent and permanent supportive housing provide a long-term solution to homelessness.*

Same day and/or first-come, first-served style services (i.e. no appointments needed)
Unmet appointments can cause a sense of defeat for both clients and staff members. Some clients' lives are very chaotic, making appointment-keeping an impossibility. By allowing same day access, or, a time each day in which there is open access, a woman has a chance to get the service she needs on the day she is ready, and without prior planning. The agency may also set appointments for those who need them.

Open or "drop in" support groups
These type of support groups make it easy for women to use them at times they need extra support. They may also be a bridge to building a deeper sense of trust for others or the agency. The agency may also have "closed" support groups whose members who have committed to attending each session and working on a particular issue.

Open learning lab (use not limited to those enrolled in classes)
Proving a time when women may check their email, do internet research, read a book, or drop into a class helps extend the reach of educational and technological resources. Some women may not have a need or

preference to participate in structured learning opportunities, but are very committed to self-education. The learning lab may also have classes or hours that are designated for classes following a tradition schedule.

Summary: Structuring services and programs to include an element of ongoing access promotes use of those services, because services are not reserved only for those who are "high functioning" or have the stability required to meet certain requirements. Using ongoing access as a framework provides many opportunities for women to try new services and return to services that were useful. As the list above illustrates, agencies can use ongoing access in combination with more structured or traditional approaches to create many levels of service and commitment.

What's the Purpose of Ongoing Access?
A. In service provision
1. It allows people to make progress at own pace, because services are always available.
2. Women's self-identified needs drive services, not artificial deadlines or other criteria.
3. It allows people to move on (leave services) knowing they may safely return, if needed
4. The agency challenges a "number dependent" notion of service provision. The agency evaluates the impact of its programs in many ways. It documents how many people receive or "complete" a certain service but understands numbers do not tell the whole story. For example, completion of a class, for example, does not necessarily mean that the woman will not a) that the woman's needs for that type of service have necessarily been fulfilled or b) that the woman will not want to refresh her skills by taking the class again. Similarly, counting the number of women who have completed a transitional housing program will be more useful if that number is compared to how many obtained permanent housing, and paired with an analysis of what the barriers to permanent housing are.

B. In Housing
1. Permanent, affordable housing is the housing option the agency pursues most actively
1. The time-limited nature of transitional housing may hinder an individual from making progress in other ways
a. Resources are diverted away from maintaining one's stability in housing, because new housing must be sought
b. Other supportive services goals may not be met due to inconstancy of housing (mental health engagement, schooling, employment readiness, etc.)
2. When an agency creates permanent housing, it fills an important community need. While transitional housing may be useful in some situations, permanent, affordable housing is not overabundant is most housing markets.
ii. Provision of permanent housing ends cycle of homelessness (where transitional ultimately perpetuates)
iii. Permanent housing builds stability-- Allows woman's feeling of safety, security and confidence to evolve
iv. Does not create false success rate for the agency. In other words, time-limited programs may consider a "graduation date" the point from which the agency considers the person self-sufficient rather than what is actually occurring in a person's life (such as coming to a natural ending point **or culmination).**

Practical Application 7.1 (continued)

Ultimately, an agency's need to report "successes" could set the individual up for failure.

Questions and Answers about Ongoing Access
Here are some common questions we have heard, along with our answers. This is not to say that these are the only ways to answer!

Question: Do people become less motivated to move forward because services are always there?
Answer: This is a question that often comes up while discussing this topic. We believe it is essential to provide some services for women who need them – when they need them. If a woman is becoming less motivated, staff can work with her to set goals to help her move on to where she wants to be. But if she does/can not achieve these goals, this may be an indication that she is not ready to move on. It's important create individualized paths to help give each woman the extra support she needs.

Question: Does lack of time limits enable inertia?
Answer: Some people work well in structured environments (i.e. time limits), so people do not. When working with a particular woman, it may become evident whether or not she responds well to structure. She may voice that she works well with deadlines. If so, staff may individualize her services to include goals, deadlines, and the like. However, note the difference between individualizing services in this way and organizing programs to be time-limited. Since ongoing access is an organizing principle, the agency is saying that the services will still be available to a woman, whether or not she meets her goals on the timeline she has worked out with staff. Access to services is a safety net for her, not a rug to be pulled out from under her as punishment.

Question: When are deadlines appropriate?
Answer: Again, deadlines may be useful for individuals, as discussed above. Deadlines may be set as personal goals. However, do not deny future services, or force women out of services because of deadlines.

Quality of life is larger issue underlying many questions about ongoig access. Some people feel that quality of life is gained by achievement of particular goals. For some, this idea necessitates a person to continually "move forward" toward bigger or "better" housing-- perhaps in a different neighborhood-- employment, and the like. Sometimes these questions are motivated by a sense of frustration on a service provider or volunteer's part that an intelligent, talented woman is somehow not reaching her potential to achieve more. This type of concern is common in homeless service environments. However, perhaps an individual feels her life has more quality by staying near her friends, in a setting that is safe and familiar. It is important to realize that people in "the mainstream" also may not be achieving their fullest potential.

Checklist 7

Big Picture

- [ ] We strive to remove barriers to gaining or reconnecting to services.
- [ ] We do not impose artificial timelines for "healing" or "success."

Tools for Building Skills and Tools for Skillbuilding

- [ ] We give staff training and support around issues that may arise around this service model i.e. feelings of loss, failure, or frustration when participants experience setbacks (for both participant and staff).

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff leaves an "open door" with participants leaving the program.
- [ ] Staff does not stigmatize those who return for service, or need a higher level of service.
- [ ] Staff is able to explain the purpose of the ongoing-access model.

Actions

- [ ] We build our access model around that of a healthy family; we allow for multiple chances. We also maintain healthy boundaries.
- [ ] We advocate in community circles for lowering barriers to service.
- [ ] We recognize accomplishments.

Section 3 | PROGRAM SERVICES

8 : Community Meetings
9 : Housing & Rental Assistance
10 : Support Groups
11 : Incentives

PROGRAM SERVICES:

An Introduction

This section focuses on **services**, the essential building blocks of service agencies. One might wonder about the ordering of this report: Why are services the third section—behind core values and organizing principals?

While planning this report, we expected that all of the practices we would hear about would be services. As it turns out, interviewees reported that the practices *around* the services , which shaped them and contributed to their efficacy (core values and organizing principles,) were as thoughtfully considered as the services themselves. Services are richer and more relevant when they are guided by a congruent set of values related to the agency's mission, and when they are organized around a framework that helps services fit together seamlessly and usefully.

Some of the services described herein were offered at almost every agency interviewed. Others, though highly effective, involve a greater degree of complexity, which may make them harder for some agencies to implement. Whatever the case, we feel that the services contained in this section can be successfully adapted to suit a variety of contexts.

8: Community Meetings

Community Meetings: A Definition

A regularly scheduled gathering of agency participants and staff members that share in discussion and address pertinent issues with the purpose of creating a stronger community.

Why is it a Best Practice?

Service numbers ebb and flow according to conditions beyond the agency doors. Within these ever-changing landscapes, community meetings inject a valuable element of continuity, routine and organization. Community meetings can complement a loosely structured program or residence. They create cohesion and build a unified and empowering atmosphere. Here, staff members and participants can depend on consistent communication with each other. Meetings provide the opportunity to present expectations and discuss policy issues. They are also a chance to address community concerns and engage in dialogue in a democratic and fair way.

Community meetings can strengthen bonds within the agency. Relationships are sometimes built through proximity and exposure to one another, so community meetings can result in linkages of support between women. For participants who are not as active in community life as others, attending regular required meetings may aid in forming relationships with staff members and other women, hopefully fortifying trust between all involved.

Finally, community meetings can widen social networks and spread information that helps women with goal attainment and quality of life. Meetings can include presentations from other community groups, giving

participants exposure to a wider array of peers and resources. Women can take on leadership roles by presenting relevant topics such as women's history or safety tips. Camaraderie can be developed through activities such as cooking dinner together or celebrating holidays and birthdays at the regular meetings. These activities build community and bring an element of joyousness for all the share.

Qualities of Community Meetings

Agencies conduct community meetings in a variety of ways. Though the details of these meetings vary from agency to agency, common characteristics help structure effective meetings:

Occur on a regular schedule – Most agencies reported conducting meetings that occur on a constant timeline, such as weekly or monthly. Some agencies reported always holding such meetings on the same day of the week at the same to make it easier to remember for all involved.

Democratic structure – Meeting formats that encourage participants to give input how the meeting is conducted, vote on future changes, and add to the agenda encourages involvement. An open forum component in which everyone has an opportunity to speak or ask questions is useful.

Staff and women participate –Effective meetings engage both the staff and the women participants. Some agencies provide the opportunity for clients to take on a leadership role by facilitating discussion or presenting a topic.

News-sharing, socializing, meals – Although most agencies used community meetings as an opportunity to discuss community concerns and policy changes, incorporating special features can make the meetings more exciting. Sharing local news, socializing with friends, or cooking a meal together can strengthen the community in ways not possible without a formal gathering as the impetus.

Participation may be required – Required community meetings create cohesiveness within the group because everyone receives and shares the same information at the same time, minimizing the chance for misunderstanding. Required attendance establishes an expectation for everyone. Attendance symbolizes the value of community involvement, an investment in the community, and a personal responsibility for its well being.

Recommendations for Implementation

Meeting styles tend to evolve with the times and the population. That said, the recommendations below are geared toward strengthening the potential of the practice:

Establish a regular schedule
A regularly scheduled meeting provides stability and consistency for the women. Hold these meetings at a recurring date and time, such as the first Friday of every month at 2pm to help women remember the meeting, even if they do not have a calendar or personal date book.

Consider making meetings mandatory
Though instituting a mandatory requirement within agencies that seek to be flexible and client-centered may seem counterintuitive, many agencies felt that the requirement was a reasonable one, and reflected a minimum basis for participation in community. Mandatory attendance is one of the few ways everyone can be held to the same expectation regardless of their skill or circumstances. Many agencies felt the attendance at community meetings was an important marker of personal responsibility.

If mandatory, meetings should be scheduled at times that don't conflict with any other local service or activity in which clients participate. For example, if many of your participants receive donations every Friday at the neighboring VA, don't schedule a mandatory meeting for that day.

Focus on community building
There are many ways in which community meetings can be more than just a required obligation, but also a practice that improves the quality of services within the agency. Community meetings that women look forward to will be much easier to require and more fun to implement. See Practice Pages for ideas and examples.

Structure neetings to encourage women's leadership
Women's service agencies offer a unique setting in which participants may develop leadership talents and new skills in a safe, women-only environment.

Staff members can ask for volunteers or invite women whom they believe

are ready for such a responsibility to facilitate a discussion or a whole meeting. Staff can prepare the women with resources, public speaking tips, and encouragement before the day of their presentation. These experiences can be very powerful for those women who have never experienced being seen as a leader.

Some agencies, like Daybreak in Santa Monica, CA, have instituted client counsels. Daybreak's client counsel is elected each quarter and plans events and activities for the quarter. Client counsels might also resolve disputes, help review or set policy, and administer am activities budget.

Leadership opportunities also come in others forms: Participants can be involved in performances created during art or dance classes, they can receive recognition for a recent project, or they can be involved in writing and distributing a community newsletter.

BOX:
Quotes from agencies.

BOX:
We don't accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something. ~SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR

Practical Application 8.1

Ideas for Community Building at Community Meetings

Adopt Traditions
Establishing traditions is fun and adds an element of continuity from meeting to meeting. Clients and staff will look forward to the meeting for its traditions (an incentive in itself), which can help people remember when the meetings are. Traditions can be welcoming to women who are new to the agency and offer another note of friendly familiarity to those who have been away a while.

Naturally, communities create traditions over time. Here are some examples of traditions from community meetings at the Downtown Women's Center (DWC) in Los Angeles, CA, that are also representative of activities at other agencies.

1. Participant of the Month Award—Each month, DWC recognizes a woman for her personal growth, spirit of neighborliness, involvement in community, or achievement of a personal milestone. Honorees are selected monthly by a staff committee from among a group of names suggested by participants and staff. The honoree for each month is revealed as part of the community meeting's program.

Elements of the award include:

A specially prepared scroll or proclamation, in which the honorees special qualities and accomplishments are enumerated. These accomplishments could have occurred off-site, as well. For example, perhaps the honoree volunteers elsewhere or had an active role organizing an event at another community organization. Her special qualities may be already well-known to all, or, if she is a more low-key person are deserving of wider recognition. The scroll is read by a staff member and presented to the honoree.

Prize—Prizes have varied over time. When possible, they are matched to the honoree's interests. DWC makes an effort to create a prize that the honoree could share with a friend or loved one, for example, two passes to the movies and a gift certificate for a coffee house.

Flowers—A bouquet of flowers, along with the prize, adds an element of specialness.

Community Recognition—The honoree's photo is displayed in a frame that was specially decorated for the award ("Participant of the Month" is emblazoned on the mat board, along with a space to display which month). This photo is displayed (with the honoree's permission) prominently so that anyone entering the agency can see it. The frame stays with the agency, and is always used for this purpose. A copy of the photograph is offered to the honoree. The opportunity to give a speech is also offered to each honoree.

2. Birthday Celebration—Celebrating birthdays is another way to bring the community together. Birthdays can be a lonely time; community birthday celebrations affirm one's importance to the community, and also affirm the importance of having a place to celebrate life's joys.
DWC has incorporated birthday celebrations in different ways. Every woman receives a gift on her birthday. The staff makes sure to prepare a few extra gifts for the drop-in Day Center's celebration, so as to be sure to have enough for everyone whose birth month It is. Each community meeting ends with the birthday celebration. The community sings and gives gifts to those celebrating their birthdays, and a special lunch and cake are served. Ending the meeting on this up note creates a festive atmosphere for the lunch that follows.

BOX
Variation: DWC has a volunteer group—the Birthday Guild-- dedicated to celebrating the birthdays of those women who live in the agency's permanent housing. The Birthday Guild has amazed and dazzled everyone at DWC with their inspired, themed parties, a different one for each month. In addition to the party, which celebrates all of the birthdays of that month with dinner, dessert, gifts, and entertainment (karaoke, dancing lessons or demonstration, or simply music playing in the background), the Birthday Guild ensures that each resident receives fresh flowers delivered on her day of birth. For information or guidance in starting your own Birthday Guild, contact Downtown Women's Center (Los Angeles)'s Volunteer Coordinator www.dwcweb.org. Click on the staff page to find the Volunteer Coordinator's email address.

Examples:
A Night in Paris
A Night at the Oscars (the party coincided with the Academy Awards telecast, and included ballots in which woman could cast their votes for award winners)

3. Raffle—A raffle where everyone has a chance to win injects an additional note of interest in a community meeting. DWC distributes raffle chances to women throughout the month (often for having gone "above and beyond"). Tickets go into a bin for the community meeting's raffle. Not only does the woman win a prize, but her extra efforts have been acknowledged.

Community News and Notes
1. Community Newsletter—Community meetings are a good occasion to distribute a community newsletter that has been created by community residents.

2. Appoint a Reporter—Consider asking for participant(s) to volunteer to gather information about community events, job openings, and neighborhood news. She can present her findings at the meeting; she could also maintain a bulletin board at the agency, and use the community meeting to remind participants where the volunteer is and how to get involved in newsgathering.

3. Everyone Contributes—By creating a News and Notes section, anyone with information pertinent to others can raise their hand and pass it along.

Appreciation for Self and Others
Taking time to focus on appreciation helps keep the meeting's tone positive and inviting. Exercises, activities, and discussions highlighting empowerment, love, and gratitude can provide a reprieve from the harshness of life outside. Further, this element seems to help instill a sense of identification with and investment in the agency, which in turn can strengthen the bonds of community.

Examples include:
1. Sharing Participants Writings and Reflections—Agency participants, especially those participating in creative writing or other classes may enjoy sharing their writings. There are several ways to promote this practice: Staff members may invite women in advance to share at a meeting, a monthly contest can be held where one or more women's writings is selected for inclusion in the meeting, members of a particular class can prepare a short survey of work they've produced over the last month.

2. World Culture Appreciation—Each meeting could include a segment highlighting a different culture. Information about some of the triumphs or special moments in the history of the culture may be shared, as well as short biographies of notable women of that background. To really go the extra mile, provide a meal influenced by that culture as a meal to accompany the meeting!

3. Special Achievements—A regular segment acknowledging the special achievements, accomplishments, milestones, or events of community members adds interest and helps people get to know each other. For a less formal feeling, women can be invited to share any special moment they experienced during the month.

Topics Specific to Women
Women may have contact with a variety of service organizations. Agencies that service mixed-gender populations may overlook issues of specific relevance to women. Our agencies become a rare haven by providing a venue to address women's issues.

Some topics that might be discussed include:
1. Women's Health—Focus on a different aspect of women's health each month, or combine discussion of a new topic with reminders about other health topics discussed. If such information can be paired with opportunities for health screenings or assessments, all the better.
2. Women's Safety Tips— Community meetings are a great opportunity to review a few self-defense techniques at a time. Keeping in practice and having physical memory of how defense maneuvers feel can help women feel more prepared. Stay focused on empowerment, not fear.
3. Women's History-- Sharing a profile of an exceptional woman or woman's event can lend to the sense of empowerment.

Checklist 8

Big Picture

- [ ] It is important to convey information consistently.
- [ ] It is important for participants to have a forum in which to express concerns, ask questions, and discuss ideas with staff and other participants.
- [ ] It is important to establish regular opportunities to come together as a community.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] Participants have the opportunity to develop comfort in public speaking/presenting.
- [ ] Participants have the opportunity to develop leadership skills such as facilitation.
- [ ] Participants and staff have the opportunity to develop administrative skills such as agenda-creation.

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] The information conveyed is community meetings is of use to the participants.
- [ ] Varying levels of participation are available to participants, for example: attending and listening, contributing agenda items, asking questions, providing information, contributing agenda items, making presentations, facilitating all or parts of the meeting.

Actions

- [ ] Community meetings are held on a regular schedule.
- [ ] Community meeting schedule is known to participants (posted on bulletin board, included in orientation materials, announced).
- [ ] Staff participates in/attends community meetings.
- [ ] Community meetings have themes or agendas.
- [ ] Community meetings have "open forum", "Q & A", or a similarly less structured element.

9: Housing & Rental Assistance

Housing & Rental Assistance: A Definition

A structured approach with definable outcomes to securing housing for women. Housing or rental assistance may include: collaborating with housing sources to secure housing placement; advocacy to mitigate/correct a woman's rental history; deposit matching or similar financial incentive/ assistance; or skill building in maintaining housing stability.

Clare House in Anchorage, AK offers a "Home Sweet Home" program to help women overcome poor rental history. Those who successfully complete the course receive a certification to show potential landlords. Clare House has also reached out to landlords to the build rapport and connections necessary to involve them in the success of the program.

"Rent Smart, Money Wise" is the name of a curriculum developed to address barriers to affordable housing and financial planning offered by Dorothy Place in Bellingham, WA.

Models

We've identified three models for structuring Housing or Rental Assistance Programs: Advocacy, Partnering with Landlords, and Skill-Building. Programs including a combination of the three approaches are likely to achieve greatest success rates.

1. Advocacy (Invervention)—The agency helps mitigate a woman's history of evictions or unlawful detainers, or provides other aid in

attainment of housing. Advocacy takes many forms:

- A case manager working on behalf of the client to expunge, amend or overcome an unfavorable rental history from client's credit report through mediation with past landlords or the appropriate entity.
- The agency partners with the appropriate local entity (such as the area housing authority) to provide "rental history improvement" certification. Successful completion of course ensures participants' unlawful detainers are expunged and/or receive a reference letter to present with housing applications.
- The agency awards matching gifts or security deposits to women who have been accepted as renters. Deposit matching may occur in conjunction with successful completion of a course such as those described in the two categories below.

2. Partnering with Landlords

The agency develops relationships with local landlords to secure housing placement and success as tenants.

- Agency and landlords agree upon a mechanism (usually a course whose curriculum includes input and approval from landlord partners) to certify women have attained skills necessary to be a good renter.
- Successful completion of the course ensures (or boosts chances) for placement in housing landlords offer.

3. Housing Retention Skill-Building

The agency provides a class (with no housing placement attached) aimed at imparting participants with information on how to be a successful renter and good neighbor.

Why is it a Best Practice?

Closing the front door to homelessness is the ultimate goal of Housing/Rental Assistance programs. By offering concrete help in resolving clients' problematic rental and credit history, facilitating access to housing or housing placement, and building client skills toward long-term tenancy, agencies can help women achieve permanent stability.

Both the prospective renter (the agency's client) and landlord benefit from Association with a Housing/Rental Assistance programs. It provides the renter a form of reference that can take the place of a co-signer (especially important for women without a supportive family network) and informs the landlord what level of follow-up support the renter will receive

from the agency as a Housing/Rental Assistant program graduate. This provides an incentive for landlords to accept to women into housing whose rental histories might otherwise be deemed too risky. People in poverty are often subject to substandard conditions at inflated prices. Poor rental and/or credit history further diminishes a person's chance for decent housing. Involvement in Housing/Rental Assistance programs improves a prospective renter's chances to access habitable housing with a reputable landlord. Acquisitions of permanent housing and increased standard of living are dual outcomes for program participants.

"Good Neighbor"- type classes help women acquire important skills. Some participants—such as a young women emancipated from foster care or a mentally ill woman recently stabilized on a medication regimen--may have had no role model or rental history to aid in maintaining housing. Skill acquisition reduces fears and builds confidence. Learning the steps necessary to secure housing, negotiate repairs, manage fixed and variable household costs transforms the idea of long-term tenancy from a seemingly insurmountable challenge to an obtainable goal.

Housing/Rental Assistance programs build community. They encourage public/private partnership and demonstrate concrete outcomes in resolving what many communities view as an intractable or unsolvable problem: homelessness. Involvement of local government (housing authorities, city and county entities), private landlords, and non-profit agencies builds the momentum and the will to maintain a range of permanent housing options for those who in need—both graduates of the program and those who would benefit by future enrollment. The outcomes of successful programs speak for themselves.

Finally, Housing/Rental Assistance programs provide an ancillary benefit: public education. They help demystify homelessness by connecting real people in need to what they need—homes. Stigmatization experienced by people with a history of homelessness while seeking housing is reduced through a certification and reference process created through landlord partnerships. Seeing people housed through the efforts of landlords, city officials, or neighbors validates the work of the partners and participants involved. Programs like these can catalyze awareness of the factors contributing to homelessness and engage community stakeholders as part of the solution.

Qualities of Housing & Rental Assistance

Above, we described three models for structuring programs. The qualities described below described below contribute to the effectiveness of such models and programs.

Clearly-defined collaborations that result in housing oppportunities-- Clear commitment on services to be offered by partnering municipalities, government agencies (such as housing authorities), private landlords and other non-profits is crucial. Clearly defined roles prevents unnecessary overlaps, and helps each entity involved communicate, follow-up, work toward stated goals and understand the capacity of the program/ identify areas for growth. Furthermore, clearly defined partnerships help express the following to the client:

- The sponsoring agency's role and limitations are
- The roles and limitations of the other partners (program collaborators)
- What is expected of the client
- How the agency, client and any other partners involved will communicate and interact

Placement in housing for those successfully completing program— The majority of agencies we interviewed reported scarcity of affordable housing in their communities. Thus, programs designed to connect clients with actual housing fill an immense need.

Structured surriculum culminating in certification—Courses aimed at acquisition and improvement of real skills in identifying, acquiring and maintaining housing. Topics range from communicating with prospective landlords, to basic home maintenance tips and "good neighbor" practices, to specific money management curriculum to ensure good planning for rent and variable costs such as utility payments. Certification provides landlords with a formal record of the client's success in meeting standards set forward by the partners in the Rental/Housing Assistance collaborative.

Significant incentives— Create a winning situation for all involved.
For participants/clients: Depending on the structure and resources Housing/Rental Assistance program any agency creates, one or more

significant incentives to participation exist. Examples include:
1) Access to placement in housing (or at least a wider variety of housing options) significantly boosts client's investment in completing the program.

2) Agency-sponsored matching funds (i.e. security deposit or monthly rental subsidy) to those who complete Housing/Rental Assistance Program and have been accepted into housing is another motivator.

3) Repair to credit history coupled with "certification" as good renter or similar letter of reference.

For landlords: Improved occupancy rates and a pool of "certified" renters is the incentive. Partnering with a reputable agency reduces landlord's need to advertise, provides possibility of long-term, stable renters who have the support of a social service agency that is invested in their success. For those to whom social responsibility is important, knowledge (and acknowledgement) that their participation in the program furthers women's chances toward rental stability and long-term housing may be an incentive.

For municipal entities: Provides municipalities collaborative opportunities to meet their own housing mandates. Ability to demonstrate to city officials, voters, community members and other stakeholders that they are taking proactive steps to end homelessness.

For agency: Increased options for women agency serves, improved housing placement/outcomes, wider base of collaborations.

Recommendations for Implementation

Agencies fill a great need when they develop the capacity to work as a facilitator between those needing housing (clients) and housing providers (whether private landlords, other non-profits, or government entities such as local housing authorities).
Housing/Rental Assistance Programs need quantifiable outcomes
The reason to implement these type of programs is clear— to aid clients in achieving housing. Program design should include realistic goals, and outcomes should be carefully documented. See Practice Pages for help in

planning. For example:

- Housing Placement: How many women were placed in housing each year?
- Housing Retention: How many of the women placed were still in same housing after six months, one year, two years, etc?

See Practice Pages for more examples and help in planning.

Document the outcomes of supporting practices/services

In addition to coordinating housing placement or housing vouchers, agencies may offer additional services to aid clients in securing housing. There efforts help sustain the program, so be sure to document them. Examples of supporting practices or services include:

1. Monthly rent subsidy/supplement (paid for by agency or partner)
2. Rent reduction agreements (negotiated by renter or negotiated between agency and landlord on behalf of renter)
3. Roommate placement program
4. Negotiated agreement with landlord regarding rent increase schedule

Institute a deposit matching program

Offer graduates of Rental/Housing Assistance Programs matching funds toward their security deposit. This both removes a barrier to housing (saving both monthly rent and needed security) and provides additional incentive for participation in program. Moreover, through the partnership agreement with the landlord, the security deposit or its remainder could be returned to agency (rather than renter) should a client move out.

Define intervention steps agency will take to prevent eviction

If a woman who is placed in housing is struggling to maintain her housing, how will your agency support her? Consider the list of options in the Practice Pages as a place to start the conversation in your program design.

Create well-defined partnership agreements

Unless the agency is itself a housing provider, partnerships will be crucial to the success of this type of program. Enter into collaborations by spelling out the responsibilities of each partner, including target numbers, creating follow-up procedures, defining eviction procedures, and more. For a comprehensive list and guide of things to consider, refer to Practice Pages.

Acknowledge partners

Regular, official recognition by your agency of the entities collaborating in the Housing/Rental Assistance Program you agency develops should not be overlooked! Public acknowledgement assures your partners that their involvement is valuable, and it could be a small incentive for some to continue their participation.

- Acknowledging them in agency newsletter and website
- Recognizing them at annual volunteer appreciation or gala event
- An press release to your local paper, listing the partners, and explaining how the program is a community benefit
- Annual celebration of success of the Housing/Rental Assistance Program where both clients and collaborating partners are honored

Prioritize evaluation

If you read the first recommendation and document the outcomes of your program, you will have a good basis to begin your evaluation. In addition to those outcomes, consider the following in your evaluation.

1. The Housing/Rental Assistance class your agency offers must continue to meet the needs of your clients. Are any changes or updates needed?
2. Your collaborative partners must remain reputable. Have you received any information to the contrary from those placed in housing?
3. Housing market changes must be monitored for fluctuations that may affect viability of program.
4. Look for ways to expand program to reach more people in need.

Practical Application 9.1

Sample Curriculum for Housing and Rental Assistance Class

Session 1: Overview of Section 8, subsidized housing, relevant programs
Session 2: Budgeting for rent, utilities, and other fixed and incidental expenses
Session 3:Apartment Seeking
- What kind of housing is right for you?
- Reconciling wants and needs
- Resources for your housing search
- What questions to ask
- Making a good first impression
- Negotiating terms
- Renter's Rights
- Landlord's Rights
- Habitability
- "How To": Cleanliness and simple repairs
- Requesting repairs
- Being a good neighbor

Session 4: Communication + Education: Problem-solving common issues that arise when renting
- Renter's Rights
- Landlord's Rights
- Habitability

Session 5: "How To"
- "How To": Cleanliness and simple repairs
- Requesting Repairs
- Being a good neighbor

Session 6: Eviction prevention/Maintaining oneself in housing
- Non-violation of lease agreement
- Communicating needs and difficulties with landlord
- Accessing help/support in case of financial emergency
- Identifying neighborhood resources
- Maintaining connection with host agency/case managers
- Maintaining social support and developing networks in your new neighborhood

Session 7: Site visits (if possible), or Visit from Landlords: Great Tenants

Session 8: Review

Practical Application 9.2

Guide to Planning Housing/Rental Assistance Program
Documenting Results, Creating Quantifabiity: Making it Work from the Program Design End

Documentation is key for making this program fly. This type of program is very exciting both for the women involved and the agency's supporters. Women will want to know what their chances of being helped by this program are. Donors will want to see how their contributions are making a real change in people's lives. It is important to know what results to expect from year to year. Good documentation can aid in many ways.

First of all, when planning the program, it is important to set achievable targets. For this reason, it is also important to document EFFORTS to see where the work occurs and what may need adjustement.

Here are some questions to keep in mind for yearly evaluation. Create documents to be able to capture the answers to questions like there.
- Housing Placement: How many women were placed in housing each year?
- Housing Retention: How many of the women placed were still in same housing after six months, one year, two years, etc?
- How many women fitting definition of "chronically homeless" achieved housing? (This speaks to the ability of such a program to end the cycle of homelessness for these individuals)
- How many housing vouchers (or deposit matches or rental subsidies) where awarded to clients?
- How many community partners have joined the program?
- How many women received certification?
- How many home visits did agency provide?

Planning Intervention Steps
What issues should you consider?
1. Rent subsidies (emergency or "one time" or ongoing?)
2. Helping woman with support to address serious, immediate issues that might take more than one month to resolve. Under what conditions would agency provide subsidy/pay rent to keep client's housing placement secure until her return?
   a. Hospitalization
   b. Need for temporary skilled nursing care convalescent care
   c. Treatment for substance abuse
   d. If client re-enters transitional housing
3. Aid woman in re-entering permanent housing with more on-site support, if has determined she is unable to live independently.

Creating Clear Partnerships
1. Target numbers. How many clients need to be placed each year for both parties to define this venture is viable for both the agency and the housing provider?
2. Provision of Security Deposit. If the agency is to provide the security deposit for each referred

renter, are the mechanisms in place for the landlord to return the security deposit to the agency should a renter move out?

3. Define agency's continuing care/follow up plan. Once a client is placed in housing, what services will your agency provide to promote her rental stability? Will a Case Manager or other staff person make home visits? How many and at what intervals? Will the client be required to attend a housing support group at the agency? If not required, is there an optional support group for clients?

4. Define eviction prevention procedures. Will the housing provider/landlord notify the referring agency [that means you] if the client's rental status appears to be in jeopardy due to violation of lease, non-payment of rent, etc? How much notice should the agency receive (i.e. 3 working days, 7 working days, etc.) Let housing provider/landlord know what intervention steps (recommendation above) agency is willing to take to prevent client's eviction.

5. Define rental retention agreements. Is the housing provider/landlord open to considering rent reduction activities as a means of renter retention? If so, what sorts of activities would be considered? How often might the renter access this option (monthly, semi-annually, annually)? Will the referring agency need to advocate for client, or may the client self-select?

6. Training. Will the agency provide any trainings to the housing provider/landlord to better prepare them to working with adults who have experienced homelessness, mental illness, etc. Will there be an orientation for program staff and the housing provider/landlord? Will contact and procedural information be exchanged?

Practical Application 9.3

Program Sustainability Steps

1. Without housing placement opportunities, Housing/Rental Assistance programs lose a lot of their "umph" and efficacy. Strong collaboration is essential to the value and success of this kind of program.

- Put attention and care into establishing viable collaborations

- Maintain existing collaborations through good communication, rapid response to problems, adherence to protocols established, and a regular meeting schedule.

- Expand base of collaborators to extend the reach of the program to clients, increase available housing options, and strengthen the program by ensuring it will not be overly reliant on any one partner.

2. Plan to continually cultivate partners. The strength of the program lies in the strength of the partnerships. Allocate appropriate time to the cultivation and maintenance of partnerships. This is a time-consuming but important endeavor, requiring numerous interactions between the many people involved in the process. It requires a sustained output of time and energy on the part of the agency.

3. Establish system of care for women who have achieved housing.

a. Define timeline that housing support will be provided. Or, will there be a "no time limits" approach to the support offered?

b. Define goals, outcomes, field/home visit schedule and outreach plan for program staff who are working with housed clients.

c. Consider whether agency will offer a "graduates" support group to those who have completed the program and obtained housing.

d. Connect women with other community-based resources

4. Develop intervention plan for how best to support women who are struggling in their housing placement.

a. Is there a fund that Housing/Rental Assistance graduates can access in case of financial emergency?

b. To what extent will agency work with landlord in order to support client?

5. Be prepared to advance the program. We understand this type of program is easier to enact in "renter's markets" than in highly impacted housing markets. Your agency's ability to articulate the incentives to potential partners is key to helping landlords understand what benefits they would receive through participation. In tight housing markets, where private landlords do not have trouble keeping a high occupancy rate, investing time in creating partnerships with them may not be fruitful. In this case, a more successful approach might be for the agency to establish a designated fund to provide housing subsidies itself or to work with the city to allocate municipal vouchers that eligible clients could use city-wide.

Checklist 9

Big Picture

- [ ] Housing acquisition and retention are keys to ending the cycle of homelessness.
- [ ] We believe in involving other entities and individuals in finding solutions to homelessness.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] Participants are offered classes…

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff members develop rapport/liaise with participating landlords.
- [ ] Staff can identify potential issues that may arise for individual women.

Actions

- [ ] We regularly assess the demand of this program, so we can sustain it with appropriate numbers of partners.
- [ ] We establish partnerships with entities and individuals that can help broaden the array of housing available to low-income women.
- [ ] We conduct ongoing outreach to landlords for involvement.
- [ ] Our collaborations are clearly defined—each partner understands their roles and responsibilities.
- [ ] We have instituted a deposit matching program.
- [ ] Women who have completed program receive substantive ongoing support.
- [ ] We have a clear system for documenting program outcomes.
- [ ] We intervene to help struggling residents maintain housing.

10: Support Groups

Support Groups: A Definition

A group of people with common experiences or concerns who provide emotional and moral support for each other. Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary, © 2002 Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Support groups can be facilitated by trained staff, volunteers, or peers. They differ from case management in that that emotional content is often the focus of support groups (though they may combine educational and informational resources as well).

Why are they a Best Practice?

Executive directors we talked to noted that support groups were among the least resource-intensive and most-appreciated services offered at their agencies. Aside from capable facilitators, support groups are fairly easy to implement. They require few special resources aside from a meeting space that affords a level of privacy with which participants are comfortable. They can be customized to meet an array of issues, and are flexible enough in nature start up quickly in response to a community need.

Support groups help women enlarge their supportive networks—or cultivate one for the first time. Joining a support group reduces social isolation and provides participants with fresh perspectives by listening to the viewpoints of those they may not already know. In most support groups, a range of participate levels is acceptable but those who are quiet might receive help being drawn out and those who tend to dominate learn how to respect the space of others. Communication skills are fostered and reinforced as women are encouraged to voice their needs and pay attention to what others are voicing.

Qualities of Support Groups

Increase social support and build new supportive networks-- It's common for women to know each other from other settings or through their history together at the agency. Prior history can lead to both wonderful friendships and long-standing annoyance with each other. Support groups help break down the latter by allowing new forms of engagement with women who are acquaintances. Support groups can lead to deeper friendships with old friends and new friendships with others.

The group becomes a network-- Women can share tips for accessing services, addressing unique situations or overcoming barriers. Announcements can be made. Problem-solving assistance can be sought.

Friends and not friends-- Women need not be friends to be in a support group together; but they could leave having gained mutual respect, a stronger understanding of each other, or a new friend. Moreover, successful support groups create network of people who, though they may not think of each other as friends, share a common experience and will look out for each other.

Reinforce communication skills— The group (with clear ground rules) gives women the freedom to express selves and difficult feelings in a respectful environment. Sharing, with positive results (empathy, respect) can be a new and empowering experience that builds confidence in self and trust in others. Participants can also build skills in active listening and patience in hearing others out. Differences of opinion often arise in support groups and the group provides a safe environment for expressing views and resolving disputes.

Community building tool—Participating a support group highlights that an individual is part of a community—the group! Along with breaking down an individual's isolation or feeling powerlessness, this direct experience with community can improve an individual's interest in the well-being of others-- the group. In getting to know each other, women often hold each other accountable to the statements or goals or dreams they have made. Finally, opportunities for leadership abound. Whether the group is led by peers trained in facilitation, involves customs that ask participants to volunteer for a particular role (managing attendance, doing outreach, beginning each meeting, coordinating refreshments), or simply shows women the benefit of everyday mentoring with another, the process is one of supporting women in developing their strengths.

Increase engagement—Positive experiences in a support group can both enhance opportunities and remove barriers to women's exploration of other services at the agency or elsewhere. Hosting support groups on-site but inviting "outside" community members is a way of introducing the agency to new women.

Method of healing and/or rehabilitation—The experience of receiving consistent support may be new for some women. Positive experiences in a support group can lay the cornerstone for future growth and healing. No matter how informal, support groups are educational; they help improve a participant's knowledge of the topic of the group, shed light on one's feelings or perceptions, and provide opportunity for deeper self-understanding.

Sustainability is high—Support groups don't require a large amount of resources to be successful. Facilitators can be trained via periodic workshops either developed or sponsored by the host agency or a partner. Groups can be led by staff members, volunteers, or peers of those participating in the group. Groups can be on-going or time-limited, depending on the needs of the participants, the topic, and the resources of the agency. Groups can be structured as drop-in (or "open") opportunities or invitation-only or "closed" groups.

Recommendations for Implementation

Explore collaboration opportunities

Determine whether or not your agency has the capacity to offer counseling services/support at other agencies or sites. Your services may be unknown to people who could benefit from them; offering support groups at satellite locations or partnering agencies is a cost-effective and important means of introducing services where they are needed.

Set Ground Rules

Ground Rules are essential so that each participant knows what is expected or acceptable in the group and group member's sense of safety can be established. Groups can establish or agree upon rules together (often with guidance of facilitator or past participant) or they may be established by the agency or facilitator.

Aim to demystify and engage
As with many mental health services, support groups may carry a stigma or be misunderstood by those who are not a part of one.
Talk about them: Describe support groups in order to give a mental picture to those who have never participated: what support groups are and are not, how they run, what a meeting looks like (time, day, sitting in a circle, what the topic is, if any, what requirements, if any, there are to participation, refreshments, etc.) who can come, etc.

Involve participants in outreach
Offer venue or opportunity for current or past participants of support groups to talk to new people about them. This might include describing them (as above), being on the agenda at a community meeting, inviting new members, distribution flyers/invitations to new people, etc.

Give tours of meeting place
If support groups meet in an office area, closed space, area that clients to not normally visit/see, or, if they occur at another agency, offer periodic tours while groups are not in session so that women who are not currently participating can get a feel for the place and become comfortable with what to expect.

Implement outreach for wider community
Whether a larger community will be invited or groups will be offered at a collaborating agency, create an outreach plan that involves visiting other agencies, hotels, parks or meeting places to talk about groups to women who wouldn't know about them otherwise; meet with staff at collaborating agencies, post and circulate flyers/invitations, and generally go the extra mile to be available.

Make facilitators visible
As much as possible, facilitators (whether staff, volunteer, peer, or contract/part-time) should be visible and well-integrated in the life of the agency. By circulating informally to introduce themselves to new agency clients and acquaint themselves to other clients not currently accessing support groups or counseling, they make themselves available for questions and answers about support groups. Facilitators may also want to periodically participate in or regularly attend community meetings to both speak about support groups and hear what women are talking about. Knowing the other staff members and their roles allows them to make appropriate in-house referrals and boosts their credibility with clients.

Consider developing in-house training for facilitators
Your agency knows the needs of its clients. By hosting an in-house training for facilitators of support groups offered at your agency, lessons learned through accrued experience can be shared, and your support groups refined and improved. Your training may supplement trainings facilitators receive elsewhere. You may decide to gear your training toward volunteers or client/peers in order to give them the tools to effectively facilitate groups. Your training could eventually become a resource for other agencies, individuals and community members in your area.

Boxes—Quotes from Interviewees

Possible Boxes—Quotes from famous people
I am part of all that I have met—LORD ALFRED TENNYSON
No one person can possibly combine all the elements supposed to make up what everyone means by friendship. -- FRANCIS MARION CRAWFORD
Before we can make friends with anyone else, we must first make friends with ourselves.-- ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Practical Application 10.1

Support Groups
Practical Applications 10.1

Brainstorm: Types of Support Groups

Survivors of Sexual Assault
Survivors of Childhood Sexual Assault/Molestation/Incest
Survivors of Domestic Violence
Survivors of Violence/PTSD
Overcoming Alcohol Addiction
Overcoming Drug Addiction
Job Seekers
Anger Management

Coping with Mental Illness
Coping with Chronic Illness
Healthy Living/Healthy Choices

Self Esteem and Confidence Building
Physical Activity Group (adjusted by level of _____)
Preparing to Enter Housing/Newly Housed
Preparing to Move to More Permanent Situation
"Transitions"
Communication Support (may include different scenario each week)

Mothers/Single Mothers Support
Moms Away from their Children Support
Reunified Family Support
Healthy Relationships
Dealing with Divorce
Grief/Loss of Loved One

GUIDE TO PLANNING A GROUP FOR THE FIRST TIME

PHASE 1 - PLANNING
Group Structure
1. Determine need for support group on a particular topic
2. Determine which facilitation method would be most feasible or appropriate
a. Peer

b. Volunteer
c. Staff
d. Clinician/Therapist

3. Determine logistics.
Decide upon group's structure. Will the group will be short-term or ongoing; open to all or "closed" to everyone except those who have signed up and made a commitment to attend regularly. Is there some way prospective members will be invited to participate?
Decide length of meetings
Decide whether/how to include incentives for participation
Decide whether/how to include refreshments. If serving refreshments, develop a system for their preparation and clean-up. (Refreshments can also be an incentive)
Identify/reserve meeting space. Will participants feel safe/comfortable in the space? Does it provide adequate privacy?
4. Specify goal(s) of group. This may include creating a mini-mission statement for the group. Remember to keep goals reasonable. For example, it is unrealistic to expect that any participant feel completely healed after participating in Assault Survivors Group. More reasonable might be a) experiencing a safe place (the group) to voice feelings, b) gaining the skills to identify safe, supportive people in order to form a support network, or both. Note: Facilitators may prefer for participants to identify goals as part of the process. If so, help the participants shape goals so that they are attainable. This is essential to group members' ability to achieve a sense of accomplishment or relief. See above.

Prepare and Empower Facilitator(s)
5. Identify facilitator(s). Remember that first-time facilitators especially should have supervision and support mechanisms in place.
6. Ensure adequate training and resources are available to facilitators.
7. If more than one facilitator, have them arrange team meetings to prepare as a team for launch of the group.
8. Facilitator(s) determines "agenda" for each session in advance and makes list of the resources necessary. Examples include: individual readings (to be given out prior to the session to which they pertain) or a bound copy of all the readings that will be discussed; art supplies; other materials. See item 10 for more on this topic.
9. Brainstorm to identify potential crisis-related issues that may arise, and discuss problemsolving scenarios.
10. Whether one facilitator or more, identify support network for the facilitator.
a. Someone to debrief with after each group, bounce ideas off of, advise/support.
b. If materials are necessary for group, provide someone who can help the facilitator by preparing or gathering them. This could be anything from photocopying to helping seek particular donations to support the groups efforts.

Practical Application 10.1 (continued)

PHASE II – IMPLEMENTATION

1. Spread the word. Create invitations for specific individuals, invite people in person, or post a sign-up for anyone who is interested.
2. Host one or more informal "information session". This could simply be an extended announcement at lunchtime. The goal is to briefly describe the reason for the group and how it will be structured, and invite Q & A opportunities.
3. Always be prepared. Though it's hard for anyone to "always" be prepared, facilitators should be cognizant of the fact that their energy helps set the tone for the group. If facilitators are running around or stressed before a session, it may spillover into the session. Having things done in advance lends a sense of confidence and ease.
4. Arrange a special kick-off. It's not uncommon for participants to be nervous. Think about ways to make the session inviting and comforting. Affirm each woman's decision to attend, even if only this session. Discuss what feelings people might be having (nervous, excited, scared, want to leave, not sure if ready to commit, etc.) Flowers in the meeting room could lend an air of specialness and focus. A short reading or a small incentive on each woman's seat that she may look at while the group gathers would help give those who arrive early something to do. Make refreshments that are easy to access so as not to disturb group energy. (Some facilitators prefer to do refreshments after the session ends to allow women to casually debrief.)
5. Establish ground rules for participation. Make sure they are clear and everyone understands them. It may be helpful to post them in the meeting room.
6. Follow through. Be vigilant/enforce ground rules in order to create safety for all. Make sure each session begins and ends on time. Keep participants briefed on any changes to the schedule. Clarity helps diminish unease.
7. Stay in tune with how participants are doing. It's important to touch base with participants casually throughout the week. This doesn't mean a formal meeting, but rather simply noticing people, saying hello, being available to conversation or someone's need to talk. If a woman has been absent, express that she was missed. If your group requires a specific attendance commitment, follow through as appropriate.
8.

Checklist 10

Big Picture

- [ ] Support groups broaden a woman's supportive network, and thus her opportunities.
- [ ] Support groups aid with communication skills.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] We have designed/offer a facilitators' training to prepare new facilitators and help experienced facilitators revisit skills.
- [ ] We offer specific training in active listening.

Markers of Compentency

- [ ] Facilitators are non-judgmental.
- [ ] Facilitators are ability to work with a variety of different people using a variety of different communication styles.

Actions

- [ ] Support group facilitators circulate informally outside of groups, to gain visibility with potential future participants.
- [ ] We conduct outreach to demystify support groups.
- [ ] We offer support groups several times a year.
- [ ] We develop support groups on new topics when we see there is a need.
- [ ] We ensure that group members follow agreed-upon ground rules.
- [ ] We provide appropriate space for support groups (private or semi-private settings).

11: Incentives

Incentives: A Definition

Incentives can be a material or psychological motivator used to encourage women to participate in services. Incentives should be used with the participant's best interests in mind.

Why is it a Best Practice?

Incentives give women an "excuse" to try something new. New programs are "unknown quantities" to the women who are the intended audience. First-time (or even repeated) participation in a program or service may bring up reluctance, fear of disappointment or discomfort about social situations for the prospective participant, whether she names it as that or not. Incentives lower barriers to participation, aid in introducing new activities or programs, enliven an ordinary day, and/or provide a tangible reminder of participation. Ongoing activities experiencing a decline in participation and might benefit from the sparkle of a raffle gift, in addition to enhancing the curriculum and assessing whether other retoolings are needed.

Incentives may be seen as door-openers. Once "in the door," the activity can be demystified by participation (listening, doing, or even sitting near enough to observe the happenings). Next time, a woman may be more willing to try the event, service, activity or program because now she knows what it is like. Or, she may return again for a chance at incentive. Either way, she is reaping the benefits of her involvement in a new activity.

Incentives are also empowering or fun. They recognize a woman's achievements and progress (i.e. a completion certificate, graduation ceremony, special culminating event or outing). Incentives add an

element of uniqueness, the make an ordinary day more special, making time more memorable more enjoyable. They create opportunities for bonding as women can congratulate each other on winning a raffle, as they can encourage each other to complete a support group in order to experience graduation together.

At their best, incentives are a motivational bridge from reluctance or fear to comfort in a new situation.

Qualities of Incentives

A majority of agencies interviewed used incentives and believe in their usefulness as part of programming. Incentives come in many forms; examples are discussed in this section. One very basic way of conceptualizing an incentive is as a token of appreciation for participating.

Here are some qualities of effective incentives:

Effective incentives promote engagement— Offering incentives helps break the ice for a woman who is new to the agency's services. A snack or a small gift (the incentive) may be the woman's stated reason for participating, but while the woman is engaged in the activity, she will likely see the benefit of the actual activity to herself. The incentive helps to introduce the woman to the activity, and thus demystifies it.

Encourage participation— Offering incentives helps women to overcome barriers to participation. Incentives such as special refreshments or tea in special cups mirror the kind of hospitality and welcome that someone might offer in their own home. A small participation gift, or chance at a raffle prize might be enough to motivate a woman to woman to be a part, rather than sitting on the sidelines.

Highlight a participant's value-- Incentives are another way of highlighting a woman's value and worth by showing that they are deserving of recognition.

Add a small element of specialness—Incentives can help make activities fun, unique and exciting. Incentives (such as a raffle drawing) can provide a break during activities that bring up difficult emotions or are information-heavy. Incentives deviate from the "drudgery" of the

everyday or "predictability" of many social services. They provide a small alleviation of day-to-day struggle.

Are a form of recognition and goal-setting—Incentives can be used to acknowledge accomplishments (i.e. attendance at five classes!) and encourage the setting of small, achievable goals as well as larger, life-altering ones.

Are proportional to the activity and level of participation—The "value" of the incentive should not be more than the value of participation itself. The idea is that eventually, participation will be its own incentive. When highly valued items are given away often as an incentive, it focus become the prize (incentive), not that activity. However, some incentives are larger than others. For example, in the Housing and Rental Assistance chapter, we talked at length about the incentive to participation in an in-depth course to improve one's skills at being a tenant, etc. Some of the incentives discussed—like guaranteed housing placement-- were very large. This incentive is appropriate to the type of commitment needed to succeed in such a course.

Are relevant to the service/activity provided— It's always preferable to tailor the incentive to the program or activity. This helps reinforce the purpose of the activity or service and bring participation in the activity full circle. See the box below for examples and ideas.

The Downtown Women's Center in Los Angeles, CA matches the incentives offered to the type of program or service. Incentives may include all or some of the following:

Health workshops: sugarless candy, condoms, eyeglasses

Participant of the Month: picture on the wall, movie tickets for self and friend, gift card

Support Group culmination: certificate, graduation ceremony, self-care items (journal, aromatherapy lotions), flowers

Writing workshop: opportunity to present the work aloud to an audience, see work published, receive copy of publication

Recommendations for Implementation

Think broadly about the different kinds of ways to incentivize
Consider non-material incentives and material incentives.

Ask women what incentives they like
Keep up on what kinds of incentives are especially appreciated. The woman could suggest things that the staff never considered. The popularity of some incentives waxes and wanes over time, especially if the incentive is a material item that other agencies also give out. Asking for suggestions on incentives could occur as at a community meeting, as part of the agency's internal assessment activities or through informal conversation.

Evaluate the size of the incentive in relation to the task/activity
The incentive should not overshadow the benefit of the activity. Activities that easily engage women do not need flashy incentives, because participation itself is already seen as a reward. Newer activities or those that require a lot of diligence or effort may merit a larger incentive.

Tailor incentive to the program
Matching the theme of the incentive to the program reinforces the value of the program. For example, exercise-related incentives could be used for a calisthenics or yoga classs (a pedometer, yoga mat, exercise clothing, walking shoes) serve as reminders"of the activit y, and may be used while participating in the activity.

Determine the purpose of the incentive

- Introducing/kicking off a new program– Incentives generate buzz and excitement. Personalized, hand-delivered invitations are a great immaterial incentive with which to begin. They convey the importance of each individual invited. A small participation gift for all who attend ends the meeting on a high note.
- Introducing a new participant/creating entrée into an established activity-- Want to recognize someone's first time in the group? Institute a "welcome gift" tradition in the group.
- Reason for attending each meeting—Raffle! It's always exciting and there are equal opportunities for everyone to win each time.
- Graduation/attendance award—For groups that require continuous attendance or a substantial commitment, you

Practical Application 11

Making it Work: What Do Incentives Look Like?

There are two main types of incentives: material incentives and immaterial incentives.

Material incentives are tangible goods, prizes, or gifts. Like all incentives, they should be chosen with the participant's best interests in mind, therefore they should not be harmful to the participant.
Appropriate Material Incentives: Gift cards for use at a store or restaurant, useful items (like a pretty, purse-sized notebook and postage stamps), items that bring joy and a sense of dignity
Inappropriate Material Incentives: Cigarettes, worn-out items, items that agency gives out on a regular basis (i.e. ordinary toiletry kits).

Material incentives are often used for first-time engagement. Material incentives may provide enticement to participate in activities that might be perceived as dry (information sessions) or scary (health education or screenings), because the immediate benefit can be seen by the participant.

However, incentives do not have to be material objects. Immaterial Incentives, such as they can be opportunities, praise, recognition, or earned privileges, are very meaningful.
Immaterial incentives encourage participation through recognition and affirmation. They may be more powerful than material incentives in certain instances, for they have a more emotional impact. These incentives are really opportunities to recognize women for their achievements and give women leadership opportunities. Using immaterial incentives can help create a bond and build community among women and staff at your agency. A final benefit is that they avoid or help alleviate the conundrum of participation being overly contingent on receipt of material goods.

- Public Acknowledgment— We sometimes forget how powerful it can be to simply state a person's good works out loud, whether in conversation with the individual or amid a group of peers (depending on the each person's preference). Congratulations, verbal celebrations of achievement, and applause are sometimes absent in the day-to-day lives of those we serve.

- Positive reinforcement— Never underestimate the power of kind words, encouragement, and recognition of someone's progress. Recognition from staff and others important to the women is highly valued and should be incorporated as much as possible. It is important to give positive reinforcement not just at times of "success" but also when someone is struggling or having a difficult time.

- Box: Examples: "You expressed that thought very powerfully" or "Thank you for sharing your beautiful smile with us" or even, simply, "Thank you for joining us." All positively reinforce a person's presence and participation.

- Behavioral incentives—A subset of immaterial incentives are those meant to acknowledge a certain change in behavior. For example, some programs allow privileges such as participation in outings, participation in a decision-making body, or weekend passes after women pass certain milestones (for sobriety, group participation, etc.).

An immaterial incentive that Daybreak Day Center and Shelter in Santa Monica, CA has used for support group participation is allowing participants to decide upon the next month's activities calendar.

Effective Strategies in Structuring Material Incentives/Avoiding "dependence" on the incentive: Service providers we spoke to were very conscientious about their use of incentives. They spoke of wanting to achieve balance with the incentive, wanting to ensure that the incentive did not eclipse the benefits of the actual activity. While an incentive might be the stepping stone to participation, the aim is that participants will (eventually) experience the activity's intrinsic value and understand the relevance of the activity to their own lives. Incentives are meant to stimulate a woman's natural urge to learn and grow by helping to make tangible (and immediate) the benefit of participation; thus service providers carefully considered how they offered incentives in order to avoid setting up situation whereby women would not participate unless there was a gift attached. Here are some effective strategies that service providers employed in structuring their use of incentives:

- Intermittent schedule—a raffle is a chance for everyone to win. Participation in an event with a raffle incentive means women understand they may or may not walk away with a prize each time. However, they can share in the excitement and enjoyment of it, congratulate the winner and be congratulated when they win.

- Refreshments as incentive—Healthful, attractively presented snacks are another way to avoid over-dependence on other material incentives. Moreover, a nice snack is something to be shared together, much like a woman would offer to guests in her own home.

- Use immaterial incentives instead

Checklist 11

Big Picture

- [ ] We strive to provide the services best suited to each woman's individual life situation.
- [ ] We understand that each woman's steps to success are unique and different.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] We provide active listening training to staff.
- [ ] Staff are provided adequate time to meet with each participant, so customized plans can be developed.

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff members are good listeners.
- [ ] Staff members are perceptive at identifying needs that may go unvoiced.

Actions

- [ ] We don't require women to follow a standard or template service plan.
- [ ] If we don't offer a service a woman needs, we strive to fulfill it for her through one time action and/or connect her with (not simply refer her to) an agency providing the service.
- [ ] Staff takes pride in crafting customized service plans.

Section 4 |
SUSTAINABILITY

12 : Fostering Staff Leadership & Development
13 : Mobilizing Community Support
14 : Ongoing Evaluation

12: Fostering Staff Leadership & Development

"The nature of nonprofits places an expectation on employees to work for the cause, not the paycheck." (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003, p. 7) Anyone who has worked for a nonprofit knows that such organizations generally cannot compete with the pay scales of either the private or public sector. What nonprofits offer, however, is the opportunity for employees to work for a cause for which they feel passionate. Scholars in disparate disciplines (Peter Frumkin, a scholar of nonprofit management, Jennifer Wolch, scholar and geographer who has worked with homeless women in Los Angeles) have written about the importance of the expressive aspect of the nonprofit environment—the eclecticism, creativity, and openness to new approaches that the sector embraces—in providing alternative perspectives and much needed services. Yet small operating budgets, small staffs, low pay scales, and limited resources pose challenges to sustaining this unique

dimension because they create working situations that are ripe for burning out employees.

Fostering Staff Leadership and Development: A Definition

Establishing an environment where the ideals of the agency's mission and vision facilitate growth and professional development for staff members so that they, in turn, can serve agency participants most effectively.

Why is it a Best Practice?

Nonprofits that recognize the importance of their staff resources establish policies and programs that allow staff members to further existing skills, develop new ones, and lay a foundation these for skills to be passed on through practice, mentoring, and community engagement. Leadership development is a key aspect of this practice, for it is not just through acquiring skills that employees benefit, nor do enhanced skills create the biggest returns to the agency. The community is a witness to each staff member's development. As staff members acquire skills and experience, they also develop institutional knowledge, and can pass on their wisdom to newer employees. These staff members act as role models not only to their coworkers but also to agency clients and volunteers. This practice maximizes an agency's potential by recognizing the worth of its employees, understanding their role as leaders in the community, and creating a pattern of action to retain staff and build the organizations. Fostering staff leadership and development creates a continuous circle of positive inputs to the organization.

Qualities of Fostering Staff Leadership & Development

Uses the mission to guide development of staff

- Agency directors may be used to applying the principles of the mission statement to creation of services for clients. Reflecting on its applications for staff members will create a more coherent organizational philosophy and practice.

"Staff – you cant do this work without them. They are the ones building relationships with clients, so the staff must be like them and reflect their needs. The staff is non-judgmental, patient, ethnically diverse. They do not give up. They come from a variety of opinions and backgrounds (not all liberal), but where their opinions differ, **they are able to leave it aside and work in the manner set forth by the agency.**

--YWCA Angeline's Center for Homeless Women *Seatlle, WA*

- The dignity and respect the agency expects for clients and service delivery can best be achieved by treating staff in the same manner

Puts mechanisms in place to prevent staff burnout -- The agency recognizes the danger staff burnout poses to the agency's ability to function effectively and thus takes measures to prevent it. These measures range from paying staff a living wage, having adequate tools for staff members to complete their work, providing supportive work environment, flexible hours, training opportunities and so on. See Practice Pages for more ideas.

Offers incentives that other workplaces may not--
i. childcare, flexible hours, education/training opportunities
ii. Acknowledges other things that are important— sees staff holistically, not just as someone who punches a clock
ii. Is a way of addressing pay disparity of other fields

Attracts dedicated, patient, and hard working staff that serve as the largest asset of the agency--
Agencies with high-quality services and good working conditions develop excellent reputations throughout the community, which attracts prospective employees. Make sure evaluate your agency's offerings on a regular basis. Is the agency as competitive as it should be?

Recommendations for Implementation

Evaluate agency's wages to ensure that staff is being paid a livable wage

Make sure staff members fully understand the agency mission and philosophy upon hire
Create or update a new staff training module around the mission.

Conduct leadership training and team-building workshops with staff on a regular basis.
1. Staff members have varying levels of leadership skills and various approaches to teamwork. Allow staff members at all levels the

opportunity to build skills and share their existing skills with others.
2. Providing opportunity to acquire new skills, mentor other staff members, and explore ideas through simulations in safe workshop environment will create consciousness of the importance of skill-building and show how much the agency values these qualities.

Make burn-out prevention a chief concern

Cultivate leadership (above)

3. Create supportive environment among staff members by encouraging teamwork and teambuilding. Help employees establish relationships with each other with each other through small, informal events, etc. [practice page] Do not tolerate back-biting, sabotage among agency staff members or poor supervision.
4. Provide appropriate supervision to provide support, monitor for overburdening, and ensure equitable distribution of duties
5. Encourage staff check-ins for difficult situations

a. Process difficulties

Encourage innovation

Give staff the flexibility to start their own program/activity with the women based on their interests

b. Clare House notes that their staff members "[Feel] that they are a vital part of the program- their opinions matter in the development of the goals and structure of what we do."

Implement staff incentives. Examples from research

c. Flexibility for mothers (Amethyst – babies can come to work with mothers for first 6 months),
d. Educational opportunities/Professional Development (Homeless Women Veteran's Project)
e. Flexible hours

Implement a recognition program to reward hard work

Practical Application 12

How to use the mission to guide development of staff

Does the agency have a stated belief in social change? Empowerment? Increased opportunity for women? Though you may be used to thinking of them only in terms of working with clients, they also relate to staff development. Hold a brainstorming session with staff members to find out how they see the mission relating to their development.

i. If the mission isn't congruent with this idea, then utilize the philosophy behind the way you treat your clients and participants
Congruency: Work is environment where staff implements the philosophy that they live by

Social service agencies often attract people who want to "do good," allow them the opportunity to walk the walk. (Don't stifle creativity)

"People are here because they believe in the work they are doing and it is important to their own mission and goals."

Recognize staff achievements
Acknowledgement at staff meetings and community meetings, a regular staff feature in the agency newsletter.

Puts mechanisms in place to prevent staff burnout

- Pays staff members a living wage
- Offers regular training or in-service workshops
- Doesn't burden staff unnecessarily-- mission driven approach is used to evaluate what new challenges agency will take on
- Agency leadership seeks to establish environment where staff can support each other through difficult situations
- Agency volunteer and in-kind resources are maximized in order to be helpful to staff members
- Example: Trusted volunteers are treated as auxiliary staff. They take on special projects to reduce staff workload, or develop a system so that volunteers can be a "relief team" for staff—allowing them to take breaks for have a few hours for quiet work.
- Resources, supplies, and equipment employees need for their jobs are available staff
- Tools are given for staff to improve quality of services (training, adequate equipment)

Burnout Prevention

Staff Meeting Activities

Staff Recognition

Lisa Watson, executive director of the Downtown Women's Center in Los Angeles, asked staff members to email her a sentence about what they liked and admired about each coworker. She then compiled a list for each

person with their coworkers' comments. (The lists preserved the wording of the comments, but did not identify who gave each comments. In this way, the lists were especially powerful.) The lists were printed on special paper and decorated, suitable for framing. At the agency's staff holiday gathering, each staff members' list was read aloud and given to her as a gift.

Mentoring
Some people come to mentoring more naturally than others. Good mentors are confident in their own abilities, yet open to learning from others. They tend to see the good in others and aren't afraid to help others succeed. Good mentors understand the need for correction, and help correct errors and bad habits diplomatically and with compassion.

Checklist 12

Big Picture

- [ ] We believe our staff is our most important asset in providing high-quality services.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] Leadership development is a regular component of staff meetings.
- [ ] We offer every staff member on- and off-site professional development opportunities to increase skills.

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff members work collaboratively.
- [ ] Experienced staff mentors newer staff.

Actions

- [ ] Our agency's leadership is committed to establishing an environment where staff can support each other through difficult situations.
- [ ] Our agency pays staff a livable wage.
- [ ] Our agency ensures that resources, supplies, and equipment that staff needs for their jobs are available.
- [ ] We recognize staff members for improved skills.
- [ ] We acknowledge staff members' professional milestones.
- [ ] We cultivate leadership in the following ways: _____, _____, _____.

13: Mobilizing Community Support

Note to self See Volunteer Managerment PDF by Urban Institute saved in PDF re: training and prof development as effective in retention. Could as be used n staff development. This info early in report ie first page exec summary.

Mobilizing Community Support: A Definition

Raising awareness and stimulating support from members of the surrounding community in order to increase understanding of the issues faced by the population served. In turn, the community can act to advocate on behalf of the population and create a stronger foundation and resource pool for the agency.

Why is it a Best Practice?
Mobilizing community support allows the agency to reach citizens of

the general public, beyond the "social service" or "activist" communities already working with the organization. Increased public awareness of the cause of ending homelessness helps the community can take responsibility for changing circumstances within it. Likewise, community members realize that the solutions to homelessness can come from them. It takes a village to create social change, however change cannot occur until the village is aware of the problem. By educating and empowering the public, citizens can own the mission and work to actualize it in their own ways.

By actively engaging its community, the agency builds a strong reputation for itself. A larger number of people will know the work that you do, building your credibility in the surrounding area and making individuals more comfortable contributing to your cause. Neighboring social service agencies are more likely to refer their clients to agencies that they trust, and though nothing is a substitute for high quality services, a strong reputation in the community is also a huge asset.

Mobilizing community support opens the door to overlooked resources and increases the pool of supporters. Positive community outreach can be the key to recruiting lifetime supporters-- funders, board members, volunteers and donors-- who become a part of your agency's family. Investment occurs when potential supporters see how their involvement affects the life of the agency.

Involvement in the community is also a method of stimulating future partnerships and collaborations. Neighborly relationships with surrounding social service agencies build bridges that lead to the potential for innovative partnership. Many agencies have similar values and ideals; by collaborating as a community better ways to serve the shared needs of the population are developed. See the Collaboration section of the report for more information on this idea!

Finally, community support is essential to the sustainability of any agency. Whether the agency is experiencing high or low times, a supportive community necessary to carry the agency forward.

Qualities of Mobilizing Community Support

Many agencies we interviewed have been successful in connecting with

their communities and rallying support behind the agency's cause. We asked the agencies several questions regarding community support, including "How does the community learn of your agency and its programs" and "How does your agency learn of needs in the community?"

Agencies described the following benefits resulting from community mobilization:

Stimulates community education, dialogue and action in support of the cause – By engaging the larger community, agencies extend their circle of impact. Increased public awareness of the issues your mission addresses has potential to increase actions on behalf of the population served.

Increases visibility of the cause and the work – People are more likely to contribute to agencies that have a positive reputation in the community. Being active in the civic realm and making sure the voices of homeless women are heard helps people understand what your agency does. This can make people feel more secure referring potential clients, as well as more confident in giving time or money to your agency.

Engages clients as a part of (not separate from) the community - Clients are equal members of the community. By involving clients in community functions, the agency "lives by example," and provides both clients and the surrounding community with the opportunity to interact as friends and neighbors. Bridging social distances and modeling inclusivity breaks barriers by raising the comfort level of everyone involved.

Empowers everyone to make a difference –By reaching out to the community, your agency empowers individuals with opportunities and resources to make an impact on homelessness and society at large. Be explicit in letting others know what actions they can take. See Practice Page for more.

Promotes agency's sustainability– Members of the community cannot contribute to your agency unless they have been made aware of the work that you do. By mobilizing people to rally behind your cause, you are opening the door to potential new supporters who can increase your resource pool, whether it be through donations of goods, money, or time.

Recommendations for Implementation

In an effort to help agencies mobilize community support, we have distilled some lessons your agency may with to consider.

Take strides to increase transparency

Because people feel more confident supporting an agency that can be held accountable and has "no secrets," your agency should make an effort to be as transparent as possible. To understand transparency ask yourself: do your supporters know what is going on internally? This question should be asked with both your service provision and your administrative decisions in mind. Some steps you can take to increase transparency include:

- Hold an annual Open House for your supporters
- Invite supporters to take part in a Q and A session
- Encourage all guests to take a tour of your agency
- Distribute a regular progress report of your agency's changes and accomplishments
- Update your website regularly; create a website if your agency doesn't have one

Focus on inward and outward community building

While planning for the future of your agency, it is important to balance an inward and outward focus. This will help you to assess what is working well with the organization and what

Inward Community Building – Make sure the clients, volunteers, and staff of the agency have both formal and informal opportunities to attend social events, work on joint projects, and break down interpersonal barriers.

Outward Community Building – Review the ways your agency involves itself in civic activities. Do these activities help engage supporters? Bring awareness to conditions homeless women face? Are they varied enough to reach new audiences? Answering these types of questions can help your agency assess where outreach efforts are needed and help plan projects and partnerships.

Keep supporters engaged in your activities – Caring people want to create the social change your agency advocates. Listen to their suggestions. Devise new opportunities for them to help, or for them to deepen their

commitment. Show supporters that they have a role in the agency's future. The more engaged supporters are, the more invested they will be.

- Hold workshops or trainings to educate the public on issues that effect the population you serve
- Send newsletters or e-mail updates to your supporters on a regular basis
- Build your volunteer force and host regular activities for them
- Consider hiring a Volunteer Coordinator if your agency does not already have one.

Build advocacy skills

Though service-provision may be your agency's number one concern, explore ways that your agency can become a capable advocate. Your agency may be the only one in your area that can give voice to homeless women.

- Provide your supporters with educational materials about to the particular conditions homeless women in your region face
- Consider dedicating staff/intern/volunteer resources to updating and revising educational materials.
- Develop a Public Outreach Team
- Women's Advocacy Project

Participate in coalitions or events with other similar service providers

While taking care not to overextend your agency with involvement in many outside activities, participation in well-chosen opportunities can build strong community relations and lead to future partnerships or collaborations.

- Send representatives to speak on panels
- Become involved in neighborhood councils
- Join coalitions involving other service providers that overlap services with you (example: Mental Health, Domestic Violence, etc.)
- See the Collaboration section of the report for more information on partnerships and co-location

Provide community engagement opportunities to clients

Helping clients engage in community events creates a more inclusive environment both inside and outside the agency. This is another way to demystify homelessness to the public, break stereotypes, and increase the comfort level of all involved.

- Provide opportunities for clients to public events like the theater

Practical Application 13.1

Mobilizing Community Support
Practical Applications 13.1

Annual Event
They provide the opportunity for reuniting with your cause. Some organizations participate in a regularly-scheduled community parade, others host picnics, open houses, or parties.

Public Outreach Team

Volunteers Supporting Volunteers
System for longer-term volunteers to reach out to new ones. Maybe as simple as a phone call to check in after the first day of volunteering, and occasional emails and calls through the first few months of volunteering.

Ask a staff or volunteer to host a low-key event in their home so that volunteers can get to know each other or reconnect. This could be a tea party, dessert party, white elephant swap or something similar. Make it easy for volunteers to come—don't require them to bring a dish or prepare for it (aside from possibly a white elephant gift!)

House Parties
Some people are natural networkers. Compile a guide sheet to enable willing to host parties for their friends in their own home to benefit your agency.

Regular "Write-ins"
Host quarterly postcard parties. Begin with a briefing of recent happenings that affect the community (examples: public policies, elected representatives who have been effective advocates, school projects that have benefitted your community). Provide postcards so that they may send their support or request change.

E-contact
Consider brief action alerts
Comic relief always appreciated

Advocate List
Be in touch with people who like to work on causes.

Special "Thank You" Mailing
Those on your mailing list undoubtedly get plenty of mail from your organization, and some or a lot of this may be solicitations. Sending an annual card that asks nothing of the recipient but rather acknowledges their importance as a member of the community would be a memorable contact. Cards might be designed

by participants or staff and signed by members of the community.

Be careful about purging names from mailing list
Organizations are rightly concerned about postage costs. However, sometimes loyal supporters get purged from large lists, due to inactivity or because of a returned letter.

Keep "Tell a Friend" at the top of your "What Can I Do" List

Checklist 13

Big Picture

- [ ] We believe volunteer and community involvement are critical to the attainment of our mission.
- [ ] We believe that volunteers and supporters help us reach out to a wider community, and that our organization is strengthened by reaching out.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] We provide staff with training for working with volunteers.
- [ ] We have designed a comprehensive training program for volunteers.
- [ ] We hold regular (monthly or quarterly) volunteer in-service meetings to brush up skills or provide information on new topics.

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] We have a strong volunteer program.
- [ ] Staff is able to work comfortably with volunteers.
- [ ] Staff gives appropriate supervision to volunteers.
- [ ] Volunteers are able to speak knowledgably about our history and mission.

Actions

- [ ] Our agency dedicates at least one FTE to volunteer programs (i.e. volunteer coordinator).
- [ ] We provide volunteers with training and support so that they can be effective.
- [ ] Volunteers are involved in our daily work.
- [ ] We maintain a speaker's bureau that gives talks and/or attends events in the community.
- [ ] We invite the community to events at our agency throughout the year.
- [ ] We monitor policy in our community and give input to community leaders.

14: Ongoing Internal Evaluation & Assessment

Evaluation

Establishing effective means of estimating the number of homeless people has dogged researchers for years if not decades. Some of the methodological challenges in counting the number of homeless are also present in conducting evaluations of homeless services-- finding people who discontinued services to be able to compare their outcomes to those who continued services, for example, is difficult. However, the scale at which evaluations take place may facilitate a successful process. Making an effor to understand one agency's services, may be more doable, especially if the agency iteself and not an outside entity is undertaking the effort.

Evaluation research can take two forms: research that aids in program development and improvement (formative evaluation) and research that aims to discern how successful or effective programs have been in helping participants achieve certain gains (summative evaluation). The two kinds of evaluation have different purposes, so are not equivalent measures. As Rossi points out, its possible for a program to perform well on one type of evaluation, but not the other (Rossi 1991, 1046).

Ideally, formative evaluation would accompany the development and early implementation phases of new programs, in order to inform, adjust and "fine tune" programs. Formative evaluations help program staff as well as funders understand how a program is functioning and identify unanticipated issues in the service environment. Additionally, formative evaluations of individual programs can document implementation efforts and promote future replication by other agencies, which is especially useful in the aiding agencies learn from those managing a wider range of programs (replication often made difficult here because programs are often not analyzed/evaluated separately). However, Rossi recognizes that funding is not often directed toward program development (vs. implementation) and therefore formative evaluation activities, when they are conducted, are often limited to one particular activity—quantifying the number of people served in order to demonstrate "fiscal accountability." (Rossi 1991, 1047)

Summative evaluations aim to answer bigger questions about program efficacy. For this reason, such evaluations may be more difficult to conduct, both methodologically and technically. For example, longitudinal studies and randomized sampling aid in determining a program's overall success, but tend to be expensive and complicated. Rossi concludes that strategy to promote summative evaluation is for (a presumably large research entity) to identify a range of homeless programs that appear promising and potentially replicated and evaluate those rigorously

(Rossi 1991, 1051).

Ongoing Internal Evaluation and

Assessment: A Definition

Formal and informal methods of assessing services to understand their quality and impact. Information gained can be used for program modification, as well as future planning and growth.

Why is it a Best Practice?
We usually use this space to describe the worth of the practice in paragraph form. However, in the case of Ongoing Evaluation and Assessment, a list seemed more effective.

- Can be simple or sophisticated
- Helps discover what services, programs, and practices are working and where they can be improved
- Way of ensuring participant-centered planning
- Gives voice to participants
- Establishes mechanism for participants to suggest ideas
- Helps engage participants
- Helps with grant funding— quantifies to the community's needs and the agency's impact
- Helps the public understand what agency is doing
- Helps with strategic planning
- Helps create buy-in from other supporters
- Helps motivate staff and supporters
- Increases a mission-driven service plan
- Increases reflection, awareness, knowledge among agency members of why the service(s) is being offered the way they are
- Enhances agency flexibility (to respond to new needs, to be receptive to change)

Qualities of an Effective Ongoing Evaluation

We recognize that most agencies conduct some sort of internal evaluation in order to meet their granting requirements, make reports to their Boards of Directors, and notify supporters and community members of their successes. These evaluative processes are very important.

The effective organizations we interviewed also involve staff and the women they serve in evaluating their agency. By seeking information

from the constituency group and also those responsible for implementing agency programs, a fuller picture of the agency's effectiveness emerges.

The agency collects feedback from agency participants (Clients)-- Collecting the feedback and ideas of the women being served by the agency can help gauge agency performance on a multitude of measures: the women's understanding perception of the purpose of the service, whether women feel helped (or feel that it helps others) by the service, current "word of mouth" about the services, and perceived barriers to the services. Does the group for whom the service is intended welcome it? Have group members felt benefited by the service? If so, how? Does the group attach stigma to the service?

The evaluation tool is clear and easy for respondents to understand – Designing an assessment usually involves a process of refinement. It is valuable to develop an assessment that is brief and concise, especially if women will be asked to participate in the assessment at regular intervals. (Achieving the "simple" is often the hardest task)

Evaulation tool makes use of standard formats--Developing a standard format so that participants do not have to refamiliarize themselves with response options each time enhances the "user-friendliness" of the evaulation tool, which may increase participation and ultimately enhance the usefulness of the data collected.

Data can be analyzed by staff members ("experts" not needed)-- Assessment tools are meant to be put to use. Do not subject clients to surveys if staff resources do not exist to analyze responses and generate recommendations based on the data.

Results are conveyed to respondents-- Evaluations are conducted in order to understand needs and impacts, and enhance an agency's responsiveness to its service population. As such, the women who participate in the agency's services should be kept in the loop when it comes to what the data revealed or how the information garnered was put to use.

Evaluation produces modifications and improvements in programs and services— Conducting the assessment is not an empty practice. The data collected should produce analysis that can be used to drive agency improvements and future planning.

Recommendations for Implementation

Decide whether your agency requires evaluation methods that are simple or sophisticated
Asking a participant "what did you think of this services" is evaluation, as are written surveys. If your funders don't require a particular set of information, don't be afraid to start small, with a few questions and build evaluation tools as staff expertise at designing assessment tools grows.

Focus
Approach evaluation tasks with particular goal in mind. See Practice Pages for more.

Complement quantitative and qualitative measures
Quantitative methods count services delivered. Common evaluation models are tracking tools (i.e. staff member records how often service is rendered) and yes/no or close-ended questions.

Qualitative methods gather descriptive information. These ask clients to talk about their use of services, share opinions of services, tell what has prevented them from using services and so on. Common evaluation models are interviews or open-ended questions on survey forms.

Both methods are useful in their own ways, but neither by itself reveals a full picture. Strive to obtain both numbers and descriptions. This can be achieved in one tool, or, two different tools can be created and alternated. For example, numbers might be gathered monthly, and perceptions questions asked at some regular interval (i.e. every 4 months or 6 months) to understand more about the client perspective on services rendered.

Remember, you can do it yourself
The agency and its staff is capable of creating useful evaluation tools. Staff members do it every time they ask a client what they think of a service.

Create an interdisciplinary evaluation team on staff
Pulling together a small group of staff members, both those who work directly with clients and those who don't, can strengthen evaluation efforts. The group can share observations on what works and give suggestions for refinement. Further, when more staff understands the process and its purpose, they can more effectively work together to collect

needed information.

Dedicate resources toward collecting and analyzing data
Data is useless if staff members have no time to analyze it. Consider the needs of the staff charged with carrying out evaluation in order to direct support their way.

Don't overdo it
Resist the temptation to ask participants every conceivable question about how they use the agency, especially if you plan to conduct surveys more than once a year. Tools with too many questions become tedious and alienating to respondents. Craft evaluation tools around particular research questions [see Practice Page] – your goal—and make sure questions serve attainment of that goal. You can always keep the questions you delete from your early drafts on hand, in case you think of a way to use them in the future.

Pace yourself: The more data you collect, the more you will have to analyze
We've found that having data that addresses key questions is often times more useful than having "lots" of data. An overabundance of data can be paralyzing, overwhelming, and hard to process, which in turn, could mean the data collected ultimately does not get put to use. If data is not used in ways that the We suggest starting small, and, as the agency refines its evaluation techniques over time, additional questions or survey tools can be tested and put into use.

Provide results: Keep respondents posted
Assessment of impact and improvement (or validation) of services are key reason for conducting evaluation. The women who participate in the evaluation process as respondents are likely to be interested in what will result from their involvement. Create a process for communicating what results from the evaluation. Ideas for keeping respondents posted include: Distributing and posting a summary or bullet list of key lessons learned, describing service or other changes resulting from the survey at the agency's regular Community Meetings, hosting small group or agency-wide question-and-answer sessions once data have been analyzed.

Refine evaluation techniques over time
It's useful to be able to compare data over time. For that reason, asking some of the same questions at each evaluation interval (whether monthly, semi-annually, or annually) is important. However, with experience, every researcher finds that asking something differently or restructuring a

Practical Application 14.1

tool can yield more useful results. Consider comments from those administering and responding to evaluation tools to improve evaluation tools when possible.

The Basics to Creating an Internal Assessment

It is important for those surveyed to know
a) if their input is anonymous and confidential
b) the purpose of the survey
b) how/if their feedback will be utilized

Because agencies might go to the constituency group more than once, devise multiple approaches

Other ways to involve women in evaluation
Distributing surveys to others

Ideas
Exit interviews for residents moving on
Quarterly surveys to understand quality of basic services
Focus groups for former clients

Box:
Daybreak quarterly surveys
Deborah's place quarterly surveys

Effective ongoing evaluation involves the agency

Practical Application 14.2

Building on Recommendations for Implementation

Focus
Approach evaluation tasks with particular goal in mind. See Practice Pages for more.

Examples Matrix:

How successful is _____ service to achieving _____ result for clients. If this is your goal, you are likely looking for quantifiable results. Checking client records and/or interviewing case managers may deliver much of the information you need. Follow up interviews with clients who have received the service to see how long _____ result was maintained could be useful.

How do clients perceive this service? Why is the service so in-demand (or not in demand)?
This is an interview or survey question

On the
Supporting Practices
Community-wide population surveys or needs assessment surveys

Checklist 14

Big Picture

- [ ] We strive to understand the reach and quality of our services.
- [ ] Self-reflection makes our agency stronger and better-prepared to serve our population.

Tools for Building Skills

- [ ] Staff is trained in data collection techniques (interviewing, focus groups, identifying issues from conversation).

Markers of Skills and Competencies

- [ ] Staff contributes questions to evaluation questionnaires.
- [ ] Staff identifies issues for future research/evaluation.

Actions

- [ ] We have created formal means of evaluating programs and services.
- [ ] We also conduct informal evaluation of our programs and services (though conversation with participants, etc.).
- [ ] Our participants' feedback is an important part of our self-evaluation.
- [ ] Our evaluation efforts go beyond counting numbers served.
- [ ] We strive to find ways to quantify or otherwise assess hard-to-measure outcomes such as "quality of life."
- [ ] We keep our evaluation tools concise and user friendly.
- [ ] Completed evaluations do not languish on the shelf—we use findings from our evaluations to improve programs.
- [ ] We update and revise our evaluation tools to keep them relevant and to ensure energy isn't wasted.
- [ ] Some of the mechanisms we use to evaluate our agency are: _____. _____. and _____.

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Daybreak Day Center and Shelter
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www.opcc.net – follow the Daybreak link

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Hannah's House
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714-538-2185
http://www.xc.org/casateresa/info/programs/adoption

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www.LSSM.org

Hillard House
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VAPSHCS, American Lane
Tacoma, WA 98493
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www.puget-sound.med.va.gov

Hospitality House
15003 14th Ave. SW
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House of Rachel, Catholic Charities
349 Cedar St.
San Diego, CA 92101
619-231-2828
www.ccdsd.org

Hope House
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www.serviceleague.org

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www.tprojects.org

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www.theshadetree.org

Sister's Path (ShareHouse)
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80 East St.
Cranston, RI 02920
www.sstar.org

St. Anthony's Foundation – Marian Residence for Women
1171 Mission St.
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-241-2688
www.stanthonysg.org

St. Joseph Center
204 Hampton Dr.
Venice, CA 90291
310-396-6468
www.stjosephctr.org

St. Vincent's Cardinal Manning Center
231 Winston St.
Los Angeles, CA 90013
213-229-9963
www.svdpla.org

Welcome House of Kentucky
205 Pine St.
Covington, KY 91011
859-436-8717
www.welcomehouseky.org

WISE Place
1411 N. Broadway
Santa Ana, CA 92706

Women In Need
115 West 31st St.
New York, NY 10001
212-695-4758
www.women-in-need.org

Women's Crisis Center (WCC)
P. O. Box 933
Brattleboro, VT 05302
802-257-7364
www.womenscrisiscenter.net

Women's Daytime Drop-In Center
2218 Acton St.
Berkeley, CA 94702
510-548-2884
www.womensdropin.org

Women's Development Center
953 E. Sahara, Suite 201
Las Vegas, NV 89104
702-796-7770
www.wdclv.org

Women's Housing Coalition
3004 San Pedro NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110
505-844-8856

Women's Lunch Place
67 Newbury St.
Boston, MA 02116
617-267-1722

Women's Resource Center
P. O. Box 1476
Beckley, WV 25801
304-255-2559
www.fris.org/wrc.html

YWCA Angeline's Center for Homeless Women
2024 3rd Ave.
Seattle, WA 98121
206-436-8650
www.ywcaworks.org

YWCA Pathways for Women
6027 208th St. SW
Lynnwood, WA 98036
425-774-9843
www.ywcaworks.org

Nonprofits: Eclecticism, Professionalization & Worth

Values and the operational approaches that set nonprofits apart from the services provided in the public and private sectors. Nonprofits often have grassroots origins and become more professionalized as they grow. The trend toward professionalization of the nonprofit sector has had its benefits, but is perhaps not entirely salutary, according to some obsesrvers. (Frumkin, 2002). On the plus side, professional education and training brings certification, training, formalization of standards and procedures, research efforts, and collaborative networks. On the other hand, an over-emphasis on professionalism may endanger a nonprofit's ability to effectively suit the needs of their clients in ways that the other sectors cannot.

Frumkin argues that professionalization has the potential to diminish the eclecticism and expressive dimension of the nonprofit sector. The professional practice of duplicating models (sometimes even mediocre ones) may come at the expense developing more innovative ones. As a result, an agency's ability to create and customize services to meet local needs may be depleted (Frumkin 2002, p. 100-101). Secondly, professionalism may produce agency over-specialization and reluctance to create appropriate in-house services, which in turn leads to increased service fragmentation (Frumkin, 2002, p. 100-101). Finally, professionalism may pose a threat to the values, commitments and beliefs that gave rise to the organization in the first place. Organizations arise to meet a need that was not being met elsewhere—even in the presumably professionalized environment. Important insights into addressing critical problems may come from those who have experienced such problems, or those who have little formal training or certified expertise, in short, people who have a personal commitment to a particular social effort or cause. Professionalism brings with it certain assumptions about how "work should be done" and leaves little room for alternative voices. (Frumkin 2002, 101-102)

"In the end, professionalism can be a useful tool for maximizing the instrumental dimension of the work that goes on within nonprofits, but it can inhibit motivating on the basis of values, which may actually be a more powerful tool for ultimately achieving instrumental purposes." (Frumkin 2002, 103-104)

Retaining, encouraging and harnessing the "expressive" dimension of nonprofit organizations becomes a strategic necessity. Without this element of uniqueness, nonprofits loss their differentiation from the other two sectors, but rather veer toward the bureaucracy of public sector agencies and/or the atmosphere of profit-driven businesses. (Frumkin 2002, 103) [Good bridge to Wolch then econ argument by Chanley]

Chanley et al [Chanley, Sharon A., Chanley, Jesse, J., Jr., Campbell, Heather E., "Providing Refuge: The Value of Domestic Violence Shelter Services," The American Review of Public Administration 2001; 31; 393.] estimated the social value of domestic violence shelter services (though not the same as homeless services, some of these overlap, so the study has some useful cross-applications to ours). By conducting short and long-term cost benefit analysis, they asrrived at a minimimum cost-benefit ratio of 4:6 (for every $4 expended, $6 of benefit is gained) (Chanley et al, 2001, 393). The researchers note that in order to maximize their limited budgets, DV shelters often pay below market wages, which may be accepted by the staff out of commitment to the shelter's mission (Chanley et al, 2001, 398). Thus, a higher market wage should be used to measure the full social cost of procuring employment or services for a shelter Chanley notes that volunteers are generally considered essential to shelter operations since organizational budgets are so limited, but,

since they are not included in organizational budgets, their social value often remains unquantified (Chanley et al, 2001, 398). An agency's operating budget was used to determine the minimum operating costs. (ibid) Frumkin (?) likewise agrees that nonprofit workers tend to forego higher wages in order to work in an environment congruent with one's social values [CITE].

Nonprofits: Surviving under Globalization, Managing New Demands

Jennifer Wolch's provocative piece "Decentering America's Nonprofit Sector: Reflections on Salamon's Crises Analysis," extends Frumkin's concerns to a macro level, examining the core values of the entire nonprofit or third sector under the lens. Nonprofits are prone to certain weaknesses and problems, to which Salamon suggests that nonprofits can find their greatest strength in partnering with government and corporate actors. Wolch refutes the efficacy of such a solution, pointing out than in an era of globalization, governments themselves lose their autonomy (and power) to supranational decision-making bodies—international agencies and governance bodies, as well as multi-national corporations (Wolch, 1999, 26). Some governments, especially those that have undergone nation-state realignment (such as Russia) and/or upheaval, have abandoned many service delivery functions to Mafia-like organizations or warlords (Wolch, 1999, 27).

Of course the West is not immune from emerging global paradigms. Wolch sees certain parallels in the U.S. government's so-called welfare reforms. Eager to remain competitive in global markets, the U.S. has jettisoned policies and programs requiring social spending, calling such programs "ineffective" and calling upon the private and nonprofit sector to partner to create better solutions. Several problems exist here. First, what corporations are to do—besides hiring people—remains vague. Second, this model "relies on the proper conduct of business enterprises" (Wolch, 1999, 27), a prescient observation considering the abundance of improper corporate conduct that brought about the recent collapse of U.S. and global financial markets. Third, a large portion of nonprofits address local needs and concerns, while globalization has "weaken[ed] corporate commitments to local communities and regions" (Wolch, 199, 27). In short, in an era where government and corporate decisions could cause indigence to skyrocket, should nonprofits collaborate and "partner" with those sectors? And, if they do, how successful can they be? She argues that the sector's models, established in the 19th century, are not fitting for 21st centure organizations; new structuring and approach needed. The rhetoric of social justice and betterment (31) so prevalent in the nonprofit sector masks the increasingly evident reality that nonprofits are expected to uphold dominant norms and values. Wolch issues a call to action—or at least to questioning. Perhaps nonprofits can be more effective by remaining at the margins in order to help the marginalized. Joining the margins, she hopes to see a new and inclusive social contract (33). Wolch does not spell out how such organizations are expected to fundraise. However, one can conclude that it would be necessary for organizations to focus on building their community support, first by responding to the needs voiced in the community and second, by cultivating in the individual donors, in-kind donors, and volunteers. Neither does Wolch discuss how this relates to sustainability, but, there is a relationship to be discussed.