CONNECTICUT YOUTH SERVICES ASSOCIATION

ADMINSTRATIVE CORE UNIT OVERVIEW

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MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The Administrative Core Unit function of management and administration is comprised of numerous components and requires a broad range of skills for successful implementation by a Youth Service Bureau (YSB) Director. The level of skill for necessary individual activities will vary, depending upon the size of the individual agency.

Management and Administration includes the following diverse activities:

Personnel Management: This function, also known as Human Resources Management, involves recruitment of staff and the hiring process, staff orientation, development of job descriptions, staff development, performance evaluation, promotion, and employee relations. In larger youth service bureaus, this function may be partly implemented by the Personnel department of the municipality; in non-profit agencies, all the functions may be the responsibility of the director. Individual staff supervision may also be included under this function.

Board Development: All YSBs are required to have a voluntary board of advisors; in the case of corporate YSBs, this board is also the governing body. It is the responsibility of the Director of the agency to assist the board in the essential functions covering important areas such as: the responsibility of the board, funding development, budgeting and accountability, recognizing good board members, constructive planning for voluntary organizations, the role of the board President, the relationship of board and staff, making the most of board and committee meetings, the board's role in fundraising and finally evaluation of the agency, its programs and the Director.

Agency Strategic Plan: This skill involved an assessment of the agency's position in time, noting highlights, strengths and deficiencies. It involves the formulation of future orientated goals based on the agency strengths and community needs, the development of a realistic plan for achieving the goals and moving systematically toward goal accomplishment; the goals are specified, action steps needed to reach goals are determined and a schedule of target dates is established for measuring progress.

Grantsmanship: the ability to successfully apply for local, regional, state and federal funding through a proposal writing process by:

a) completing a pre-proposal phase of identifying need
b) assessing agency capability
c) developing the idea
d) selecting the funding source
e) writing the proposal

Fiscal Monitoring: This skill involves the ability to manage the YSB budget throughout the fiscal year.

Budget Development: This skill involves the ability to create and annual budget for a YSB, plan for expansion or reduction, and to be able to adequately defend a budget to a municipal government, an advisory board or a governing board.

Creation/Maintenance of Policies and Procedures: As a YSB continues to become more widely recognized and professionalized, it will be necessary to have written policies and procedures to ensure enhanced agency function.

Maintenance of Regulations/Licensing: Some YSBs are licensed psychiatric outpatient clinics, or licensed child placing agencies. The Directors of such agencies are required to maintain the regulations and licensing requirement through procedures manuals documentation, and treatment plans. All YSBs are required to meet the definition of a YSB as determined by state statute and regulations.

Marketing: This skill involves fostering good public relations between the community, service providers, and the municipality. It involves the ability to "sell" the YSB and its services.

Data Collection: Data collection involved the compiling of information about agency involvement and development of a process to feed data back to the community, funding sources, etc. as a means of documenting overall effectiveness.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation: It is necessary for YSBs to periodically go through a self – evaluation process in order to make decisions for the future. It is a commitment to improve programs in the context of limited resources which involves the continuous monitoring and assessing of program activities, and the capacity and willingness to make changes based on the information gathered. The four steps in monitoring and evaluation include:
1. Identifying and organizing the decision makers
2. Determining the focus of program evaluation
3. Designing the procedures for collecting information and
4. Gathering, analyzing and interpreting the data

NEED ASSESSMENT

Definition: A needs assessment is an attempt to determine the needs of youth and their families matched against the available resources in the community to meet their needs. The most important aspects of a successful needs assessment are that a) it accurately reflects the needs of the population you are trying to assess and b) that it be used to create new programs or initiatives to address said needs.

There are a number of principles to follow when conducting a needs assessment. The first question is, "What do I want to accomplish with my needs assessment?" There are a number of reasons to do a needs assessment:

- To satisfy the Mayor, First Selectman or the YSB Advisory Council
- To gain community consensus on the mission of the YSB and the needs of the youth it is trying to serve

- To have a blueprint to justify why the YSB is addressing a particular issue or a particular program. For example, a YSB can start a Juvenile Review Board because every other YSB that has one has been successful or a YSB can start a Review Board because your town is referring large number of status offenders and first time juvenile offenders to court.
- To justify budget requests

The following is a list of items a needs assessment should include:

- Demographic information about the town
- Specific information about the number of children and youth in town
- Statistical information about youth crime, substance abuse, emergency hospital admissions, mental health problems, child abuse and neglect, etc.
- Directory of available resources for youth
- Survey of youth and families regarding their needs
- An action component! The needs assessment should not be done in a vacuum. It should be part of a larger plan with ways to meet the identified needs, implementation schedules, suggestions of who should be involved, and possible funding sources to meet their needs.
- Survey of youth service professionals responding to the needs of youth

Needs assessments can be administered in a number of ways. Some assessments can be accomplished without YSB staff ever leaving their offices. A Director could just collect statistics, talk to the staff about what they see as the needs, and write up the plan. A caution, however, if you do this you are missing a golden opportunity to get broad community acceptance and support of the YSB, and a commitment to solving the problems of youth in the community.

The following are methods of conducting needs assessment that others have found helpful:

1. Design and implement a survey of $7^{th} - 12^{th}$ graders and administer it through the schools. This is opportunity to get to know and achieve buy in from the Board of Education, school Superintendent, administration and staff. The survey could be administered to the whole student body or a 15 – 20% sampling. Home rooms are the best time to administer the survey, any other class will systematically exclude some youth.
2. Survey all youth involved in YSB programming. This could be done in small groups, individually or written. Face to face contact is advised in small groups since it is desirable to have some of these youth participate in the formulations of the solutions.
3. Community Forums: You could conduct neighborhood or town-wide forums (depending on the community size), where youth and their families are invited to participate in an action planning process. A Nominal Group Process is a good one to follow which will identify and prioritize needs, explore alternative solutions, identify resources and decide on a direction to pursue. Other groups that should be involved in this process include: Youth Advisory Boards, PTAs, PTOs, Junior Leagues, and other voluntary and civic groups.
4. Agency Meetings: You should survey agency professionals however, the same process as the community forum can be used. A general rule is that "buy in does not occur through the mail."

This should not be done as the sole method of identifying needs as it could be biased towards continuing present agency programs as they are.

5. Resource Directory: Agencies need to be surveyed regarding target population, capacity, eligibility requirements, program availability, etc. YSBs are terrific at being flexible and changing programs – other agencies may not be.

A few guidelines on how to conduct needs assessments:

- Be as inclusive as possible, especially try to include a large number of youth
- Make the needs assessment part of a larger plan with an action component
- Use the schools – both their staff and their facilities
- Surveys are threatening – don't set up a system of criticizing existing services; you'll need them later!
- Keep your boss appraised all the way
- Do a lot of hand shaking, back slapping, and general schmoozing. This is not just about needs assessment, it is also about relationship building.

Several skills are necessary to conduct a needs assessment well. The municipality or agency may have someone who can help assist in the following:

- Research techniques and analysis of data
- Group process and facilitation
- Community organization and psychology
- Computer analysis (survey)
- Management and administration
- Action planning

COMMUNITY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Definition: To build a network with individuals and systems to produce collaboration for productive working relationships. Resource Development hinges on a strong foundation of positive relationships with a diversity of individuals representing important institutions within the community. Here are some tips:

- Learn about the community: Develop a list of individuals who have the potential or already offer resources in the community. Initiate relationships with these individuals to build a network of support.
- Reach out to a diverse representation of the community through a variety of social events, open houses, etc. Attend community events that you have been invited to especially if there are local civic or business leaders in attendance. It may feel like schmoozing but if you can make between one and three new contacts at each event, you have been successful.

- Always follow up. Always see through any contacts that have been made. Drop a friendly "thank you" to a host or a "nice to meet you" one to a new contact. Add them to your contact list and if you offered to send information – do it!

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Definition: Community involvement includes engaging those persons who are most impacted by what you are trying to do in the process of planning, developing and implementing programs which benefit youth and families. It means actively soliciting participation in all areas of YSB functions. One of the most important reasons for a YSB to be concerned about community involvement is to raise awareness of everyone in the community regarding the mission and services of the YSB.

Both the causes and the solutions to juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, running away, child abuse, etc., exist in the community. There are several assumptions about people and the community which are important.

- People in the community including youth, have a significant amount of knowledge and skill about the issues that affect youth.
- Leadership resides in every community and by working together within the community, new leadership can be developed.
- Communities are filled with diverse perspectives and through community involvement, allies to create positive community change can be developed.
- If outside resources (people and money) are used, they should act as supports (technical assistance, catalyst for change, etc.) for the local effort.

Youth problems are not necessarily caused by the youth themselves. Problems are often caused by several other community conditions created or influences by the behavior of adults. These conditions include: no recreational opportunities, lack of alternative education programs for learning disabled children, lack of meaningful employment for youth, lack of competent teachers, lack of positive adult role models, etc. All of these conditions exist to thwart positive youth development. Those who control resources and are the decision makers in the community need to be involved in creating solutions. This may include educators, social service providers, city officials, politicians, community volunteers, funding sources, etc. In essence, all of the major environments which impact on a youth's life need to be involved: family, school, peers and community. The YSB staff person should possess an attitude that maintains optimism in the face of adversity and view all persons as important resources. The following are a list of skills necessary to achieve high quality community involvement:

- Group facilitation and a broad knowledge of group dynamics and community psychology
- Knowledge of the community: who are the power brokers and public and community leaders? Who are the people of influence? What is the community's racial and cultural make up? What are the demographics? What are the important institutions? Where do the decision makers gather? What are the identified community needs?
- Ability to build credibility among a wide variety of community members

- Community organization and mobilization skills
- Mediation skills

ADVOCACY

Definition: The arena of advocacy falls into two interrelated domains. The YSB is challenged to advocate on both an individual and systems level. For both domains, advocacy means to speak in favor of, recommend. It is characterized by a person who argues for the cause of another; a supporter or defender. A person who pleads on another's behalf is an active supporter of a cause, idea, or policy.

Advocacy at the local level may include speaking on behalf of a child in order to procure needed services. This may occur at planning and placement team (PPT) meetings, pre-sentence investigation hearings, juvenile court and even within the child's own family. At a systems level, the YSB may advocate locally for an enhanced case management system or to change environmental variables which impact the positive development of young people. Statewide advocacy efforts could be directed towards action which enacts policies beneficial to youth and family issues.

Effective advocacy relies on consummate diplomacy and a full awareness of the total context of advocacy efforts. Advocates must possess a clear understanding of all issues pertinent to a particular advocacy issue. They must be able to succinctly articulate the main issues in an informative rather than in an emotional manner. Advocacy relies on an understanding of the complex systems within which the advocacy occurs. Advocacy efforts are as effective as the information supplied, the credibility of the person/group doing the advocacy and that person/group's ability to influence and change the attitudes of other people and institutions.

There exists significant potential within local communities for a dramatic clash in one's ability to conduct individual and systems advocacy simultaneously. No greater opportunity exists for this to occur than during planning and placement team meetings. When a YSB strongly advocates for on behalf of a student, (in order to procure needed services which requires a response from the school system), The school system might be more reluctant and resistant to participate with the YSB when it advocates for some systems change (which also requires a response from the school). In this illustration, the individual advocacy may undermine the ability of the YSB to conduct system advocacy. This potential for conflict requires a delicate balance and recognizes that you may win a small victory when you conduct intensive individual advocacy but may lose the larger system's advocacy effectiveness.

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