

Bridging the Gap between Church and Community

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The Case Study

Findings

- *What Both Want in Collaboration*
- *What Social Service Agencies Need for Collaboration with Churches*
- *What Churches Need for Collaboration with Social Service Agencies*

What Both Want in Collaboration

Communication of Needs and Services

“You’ve got lots of silo mentality. You have everybody starting from the ground up and not sharing history and experience...I think dialogue and communication is how you make yourself relevant.”

[Community Member]

Suggestions for Fostering Communication

- *A City-Wide Forum Built Around Social Issues*
“A way where congregations could say, ‘Our missions committee at church has been talking about hunger lately and we are looking for ways to connect to hunger issues,’ and nonprofits could say on there, ‘You know we’ve been talking about how we could get more community adults in our afterschool programs leading things like music’ ...Like a Facebook for organizations built around social issues.”
- *A Uniform Community Resource Book*
- *Waco’s Urban Church Coalition*

What Both Want in Collaboration



Mutually Beneficial Partnerships

“It’s just good to know that there are churches... that we can just call and say, ‘We have an elderly woman who needs \$237 for her electric bill,’ and they say ‘We’ll put a check in the mail.’ That’s huge.” [Agency Leader]

Suggestions for Fostering Mutually Beneficial Partnerships

- *Build Personal Relationships*

“If you want to end up in a black hole, just send [all communication to] church@.com.”

- *Invest in Local Partnerships*

“It’s easier to get churches to go to some other town to help than it is to get them to work locally...But it’s cheaper if you stay home and work down the street.”

- *Respect One Another’s Time*

“A lot of times there’s conversations of, ‘It’s Monday and we got a group coming on Friday. What can you do for us?’...It ends up being halfway done on both ends.”

- *Exchange Clear Expectations*

What Both Want in Collaboration



Systemic Change

“Do you think there’s been a lack of stuff that’s been given to poor people? I don’t think there’s been a lack of things that have been given. I think there’s been millions, probably, of hours of work trying to do something, but when you have a large set of poor people and you don’t have anything changing systemically for them... you’re going to continue to have lots more poor people.”
[Community Member]

Suggestions for Engaging in Systemic Change

- *Get Exposure to REAL Needs*

“Get people to come into the community and say, ‘Look at the needs in this community.’”

- *Partner with Experts*

“We have to learn and we have to be able to communicate with each other [including] the population needing service...We tend to ‘do to’ them but not really work in partnership.”

- *Be Culturally Relative*

“I think that we don’t understand situations of poverty...It’s like going to China and being effective with people in China if you don’t know anything about China. Same thing is true with poverty, but we don’t see the need to train ourselves.”

- *Utilize/Implement Evidence-Based Strategies*

What Social Services Need for Collaboration with Churches

Focused Investment

“We’ve got our finger in every pot in town, but not to much effectiveness.” [Pastor of a Local Congregation]



“The shot gun approach, you know one pellet per agency, is hopeful but is not necessarily helpful.”
[Executive Director of Local Nonprofit]

Suggestions for Focusing Investment

- *Take The Size Of Your Congregation into Account*
- *Decide What's Most Important & Worthy of Investment*
- *Consider Quality vs. Quantity*
- *Focus Your Resources*
- *Agencies must Respect Churches' Decisions to Invest in One Cause*
- *Beware of "Monopolies of Support"*

What Social Services Need for Collaboration with Churches

A Contact Person

“Our most successful relationships are where there’s one person in that congregation who takes ownership of [the agency] and is our contact person and who promotes that in the church. That’s the ideal way.”

[Executive Director of a Local Nonprofit]



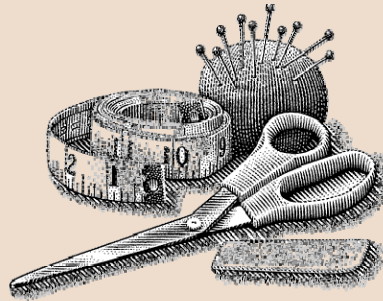
Suggestions for Consideration

- *Choose an Appropriate Contact Person*
- *Choose a Method of Contact*
- *Publicize Your Contact Information*



“It would be helpful to know a list of who to call to get something in a bulletin...nuts and bolts kind of stuff about publicity and PR. I think churches are mysterious for a lot of us social worker type people...”

What Churches Need for Collaboration with Social Service Agencies



Tailored Opportunities to Get Involved

“We found out that the agencies would like for us to straight fund them. And they have the people on their staff who have the expertise to decide how to distribute the money and how to help. We bought into that.”

[Pastor of a Local Congregation]

Suggestions for Creating Tailored Opportunities

- *Consider Church Volunteer Availability & Resources When Planning Programs*
- *Invite Churches to Participate in Tailored Programs*
- *Respect a Church's Right to Say "No"*

"We feel like we're doing what we can, and we're not going to take on more, [because then] instead of giving 500 dollars, we start sending \$50 here [and there]...but the size of the gift is not effective."

The “How To” Overview

- *Decide who you’d like to interview*
- *Develop or acquire relevant interview questions/surveys*
- *Contact, schedule, and conduct interviews*
- *Take good notes or transcribe interviews*
- *Read to discover themes*
- *Share findings with appropriate stakeholders*
- *Determine how the data is useful*

Bridging the Gap between Church and Community