Organizational Survival Beyond Federal Funding
For Children’s Crisis Care and Planned Respite Programs

Background
In response to a growing national need for effective temporary care to help preserve and support families, Congress passed the Temporary Child Care for Children with Disabilities and Crisis Nurseries Act of 1986 (as amended) (TCCA). The Act directed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau, to provide funding for demonstration projects through competitive grants to states and U.S. territories to develop temporary, non-medical child care (respite) services for children with disabilities, or chronic, or terminal illnesses, and to develop crisis nurseries for children at risk of abuse or neglect. Beginning with the initial funding of $4.8 million in FY 1988, these grants have been funded at approximately $12 million per year since FY 1991.

Since federal funds became available in 1988, a total of 189 crisis nursery and respite care grants, and one resource center grant, have been awarded to 47 states and one U.S. territory. In 1991 and 1992 alone, approximately 20,000 families were served by respite and crisis care programs.

Grantee programs are funded for 36 months. In order to ensure the continuation of services beyond the duration of the grant, programs must build in plans for a solid funding base.

Purpose
By the end of this fiscal year, some TCCA grantees will come to the end of their grant cycles. Many others have already completed the grant cycle and moved on to other sources of funding. Other programs are just starting up. Regardless of where a program is in the cycle, it is important to plan strategies for surviving after the federal funds close.

Program Considerations

Timing
Timing is crucial to the creation of a stable funding base for respite and crisis care programs. Programs that have continued to operate after TCCA money ended began to think about alternative funding immediately after their programs began. Had they waited until immediately before the TCCA money ran out, they would probably have had to close their doors, or close and then reopen in some other form.

Cultivate Relationships
Get to know the local "movers and shakers." Hold and attend meetings. Prepare fact sheets, brochures, and newsletters, and give them out to everyone. Take advantage of the contacts you and your staff have already established. Work together with local groups of parents, advocates, and politically concerned citizens. Ask yourself, "who do I know, and who do they know?" Make the most of these relationships.

Do Your Homework
If you plan to approach private foundations, check your local library first. Most public and university libraries will have information on foundations and philanthropic organizations in their business or reference sections. It is important to have a clear sense of the foundation’s mission statement and its guidelines for giving. Much of this information is also available through the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Be as knowledgeable as possible about the foundation and the foundation staff will take you seriously. Also, remember to tailor the grant application to the foundation you are applying to for funds. It is a good idea to have a basic template grant application on hand to work with, but it should be open enough so that each application can be made unique. Do not send out carbon copies of the same proposal to many funders—cookie cutter fund raising does not work.

**Teamwork**

Work together with larger organizations, other local respite and crisis care programs, parent groups, state agencies—whomever you can. A chorus of voices singing in harmony is usually louder and more effective than a single voice. It may be easier to convince funders to support a system of respite and crisis care options, of which your program is an integral part, than it is to get them to fund a solitary respite program.

Several programs initiated with TCCA funds continue operations today with non-federal funds. These programs are profiled below.

**St. Louis Crisis Nursery**

Well before their TCCA grant funds ran out, representatives of the St. Louis Crisis Nursery program, together with contacts they had made at the Missouri Division of Family Services, began to approach the Missouri State Legislature for additional funding.

The program launched a campaign to rally the state legislature to support program services throughout the entire state. The St. Louis Crisis Nursery invited representatives and senators to open houses at its facility, and at other crisis care programs around the state; took State legislators on "impromptu" visits to local programs; and otherwise made the programs as visible as possible to the policy makers. They arranged for families who had been helped by the programs to talk to legislators. These legislators were duly impressed, and began talking to other legislators.

Eventually, the Missouri State Legislature appropriated state monies to fund the St. Louis Crisis Nursery as well as ten other programs all over Missouri. These efforts have resulted in a Missouri state coalition of crisis care programs funded statewide.

**Volunteers of America Oregon Family Nursery**

*Oregon Children and Family Services Division*

Volunteers of America of Oregon (VAO), Inc., recognizing that funding was limited in time and scope, initiated fund development strategies right at the start of the Oregon Family Nursery program. The organization also began discussions with the Oregon Children’s Services Division about continuing funding after the grant period ended.

Because of its early start, the Family Nursery was able to incorporate several important steps in its quest for funding. First, an Advisory Board was developed early on for several reasons. It was important to focus sharply on the task at hand, in this case, fund raising. Also, having a Board consisting of a wide variety of community members allowed the Family Nursery to take advantage of their combined expertise. Each Board member also came to the table with valuable contacts for potential funding sources.

Next, the staff at the Family Nursery did extensive research to determine which funding methods would work best for them, and to identify potential funders. They developed a proposal bank, which included templates of proposals which could be tailored to fit each funding source, cycles, amount requested, etc.

To assist in promoting the Family Nursery through public awareness, the Board developed a short slide and video presentation which was shown at every opportunity. They also began publication of a newsletter that was distributed throughout the community. A "Speaker’s Bureau" is currently being developed for the express purpose of presenting the benefits of respite and crisis care services to local groups who may be interested in supporting the program.

It should be noted that the VOA Family Nursery was fortunate enough to be a replication of an existing and popular crisis care program, Lane County Relief Nursery. The success of the Lane County program was well known in the philanthropic community. Many of the
funders approached by the VOA Family Nursery had previously funded the Lane County program.

The Family Nursery applied for, and received funding from, the national VOA Endowment Fund. In addition, VOA received funding from the Oregon Children’s Trust Fund, the Oregon Community Foundation, US West Foundation, and the Collins Foundation. Funds were also received from individuals and several corporations, including Smith’s Home Furnishings and Willamette Industries.

The State of Oregon Children’s Services Division agreed to continue funding the Family Nursery after the three-year demonstration grant period ended. With that commitment, VOA worked with the Multnomah County Commission on Children and Families, and designated funds from the Family Preservation and Family Support Block Grant and the Social Services Block Grant to maintain the original funding level.

Despite this initial success, the next few years will be difficult financially. While the program has been successful at matching the initial government funding level, it has been difficult to maintain funding from other sources because foundations are hesitant to fund beyond a two- or three-year funding cycle.

Utah State Division of Family Services

Family Support Center of Washington County

Box Elder Family Support Center

Family Support Center of Southwestern Utah

Similar to Oregon’s Volunteers of America, Utah’s local respite programs, in conjunction with the state Division of Family Services, began to consider alternate funding sources as soon as they received federal grant monies.

Because the Utah State Legislature had funded eight respite programs in previous years, the newly funded respite programs (listed above) decided to make the legislature their primary target for continuation funding.

The directors of the local programs planned educational activities for their legislators to promote the concept of respite and the value of their particular programs. The director of the Division of Family Services and the state's Fiscal Analyst, among others, were invited to meet the staff of the family support centers, and to visit the centers themselves. It is important to note that a relationship was forged early on with the legislative analyst so he didn't need to have the concept of respite explained to him or be convinced that it was a valuable service.

The directors launched a major public relations push which focused on the importance of respite as a prevention measure. They commissioned a study to demonstrate conclusively what services are provided, what they cost, and how much money is saved. A copy of this study was widely distributed. They also solicited the help of a local legislative advocacy group for children’s issues which comprised several community leaders. The directors also spent the entire legislative session at Capitol Hill, equipped with literature, brochures, and pins, talking to everyone, including the policy makers, about the importance of continued funding. They compiled a bank of letters of support, and sent one per day to the state legislature as a means to secure funding.

Funding for the program is now a permanent part of the State Department of Family Services budget. Funding will begin the minute TCCA lapses.

West Virginia Division of Developmental Disabilities

Family Support Program

Initially, the program looked to the state of West Virginia for funds to keep them operating after the end of the grant cycle. The Family Support Program emphasized the cost effectiveness of respite services, as opposed to the costs of institutional care. Its program provides a broad array of services, including the purchase of equipment, transportation, case management, health expenses, home modification, and trainings, which, when combined, were still more cost effective than institutional care. Respite has been the most requested service provided under this program.

The West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council immediately established a task force to examine the issue of family support services. The task force had a strong component of parents and family members. Parents lobbied the local legislatures with the support of the planning council. Legislation was passed for family support services with a relatively small budget of $200,000. That amount has
increased each year, until in 1996, it reached one million dollars.

Six years after the start of the process, the Family Support Program is now looking at private sources of funding to supplement the money allocated for respite services. A foundation has been established to create funding options for respite. The program is now working to establish an endowment for the foundation so that it will become a stable force for funding in the future.

**Easter Seals of North Carolina**

The Easter Seals program took a different approach to long-term funding. This program worked on establishing relationships with several county disability programs funded through Medicaid waivers (CAP, Community Alternative Program). After the TCCA grant lapsed, Easter Seals contracted with several county agencies to continue providing program services. The Easter Seals respite program continued to operate, the CAP program provided more effective services, and families in the counties served received more broad-based services.

Easter Seals is now looking to expand by establishing contracts with two large counties in North Carolina. A drawback to contracting with the county is that it limits the range of people the program can serve. Consumers must be on the county waiver program, for example. But as long as the program remains in operation, it is still "in the running" and can search for other funding sources which will allow it to expand its services.

**Conclusion**

Respite and crisis care services are critical for the health and survival of many families. Program administrators understand that there are unique challenges to be met in keeping programs up and running, even with steady funding. Finding and obtaining funding for continued dispensation of services makes this task more demanding. However, it is important that programs understand that funding is available from both private and public sources, and that it is possible to get. The key is collaborating with others to find the right funding sources, and then going after it.

**References**

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**Resources**


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