

## CALIFORNIA OUTCOMES SYMPOSIUM

October 16 and 17, 1998

Sponsored by

**Department of Community Services and Development**  
**Corte Madera, California**

### PRESENT:

#### Consultant Panel

**Michelle Cammers Goodwin** - consultant in the areas of evaluation and diversity issues, Kentucky; **Bruce Wade** - professor of sociology at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia; **Charles Bruner** - Child and Family Policy Center, Des Moines, IA; **Peter Kettner** - professor of Social Work, Arizona State University, and co-author of *Measuring the Performance of Human Services Programs*

**Scales Committee of the OCS Monitoring and Assessment Task Force Eleanor Hunnemann**, Chair of Scales Committee; **Jack Burch**, Executive Director, Community Action Council, Lexington, Kentucky; **Lorraine Daniels**, Deputy Director, DeKalb Economic Opportunity Authority, Decatur, GA; **Bill Hamilton**, Deputy Director, Community Action Marin, San Rafael, CA; **Julie Jakopic**, National Association of State Community Services Programs, Washington, DC; **Dan Van Otten**, Director, Oregon Housing and Community Services Department, Salem, Oregon; **Buckey Boone**, People, Inc., Abingdon, VA.

**Other Participants Glenn Kamber**, Office of Community Services; Jerry Endres, Institute for Community Collaborative Studies, California State University, Monterey Bay; **Michael Micciche**, California Department of Community Services and Development; Irv Busbee, California Department of Community Services and Development; **Sally Brown**, Philliber Research Associates; **Sandra Vinson**, California Department of Community Services and Development; **Barbara Devinney**, Planner, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission; **Sherry Wilson**, Planner, Riverside Department of Community Action; **Azlina Harun**, California Department of Community Services and Development; **Lillian Judd**, Planner, Economic Opportunity Commission of San Luis Obispo County; **Ted Edlich**, Total Action Against Poverty, Roanoke, VA; **Barbara Marquez**, California Department of Health; **David Miltzer**, Bay Area Partnerships, San Francisco; **Jim Masters**, Center for Community Futures, Berkeley; **Jonathan Wilson**, MIS Director, Community Action Marin, San Rafael, CA.

Recorder: Marianne Torres, Marin Continuum of Housing and Services, San Rafael, CA

Welcoming remarks by Michael Micciche, Director of the Department of Community Services and Development.

- acknowledges the unique process for developing scales to measure outcomes developed in California.
- good to move beyond raw numbers, to develop a system that will provide analysis and impact information.

Bill Hamilton, Community Action Marin and facilitator of the symposium, indicated that this symposium was intended to be a conversation the first day, with the second day bringing conclusions about next steps.

COMMENTS ARE LARGELY, BUT NOT COMPLETELY, PARAPHRASED. SOME OF THE MORE COMPLEX DISCUSSIONS AND/OR COMMENTS ARE REPORTED VERBATIM. NOT ALL COMMENTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED. IN TRANSCRIBING THE SYMPOSIUM, THE RECORDER EXERCISED EDITORIAL LICENSE IN ORDER TO KEEP A SHARP FOCUS ON THE ISSUES AT HAND.

#### HAMILTON

reviewed background, starting with California example:

- When reviewing outcome measures being proposed by the Monitoring and Assessment Task Force of the Office of Community Services, the IS Committee in California determined that there would be great value in developing a tool that accommodated the Community Action Agency value of local flexibility and was more than a single set of scales to be used by every agency.
- encouraged by Mid-Iowa Community Action Agency's three-level Family Development Matrix, the California IS committee developed a five level scale, which would allow families and communities to measure successes earlier than in a three-level scale.
- this scale was designed as a template, with each agency expected to develop criteria based on the recommended scaling guidelines, thereby preserving a reasonable level of consistency while allowing for the desired flexibility.
- at time of development, the committee believed they needed information that was aggregable, as aggregation was a high priority for monitoring and assessment task force - that may no longer be the case.

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- tool was distributed to agencies within the state, implemented in three stages. By third year all Community Action Agencies in California were using system.
- It is not clear the total flexibility was the best strategy.
  - there was more variation from agency to agency than was expected or than might be appropriate.
  - there has been some discussion about developing some standard outcomes that would be somewhat generic, allowing agencies to tailor them to local conditions.
- tool(s) remain a work in progress, evolving as necessary.

## **PART I - A DISCUSSION ABOUT CONSISTENCY AND FLEXIBILITY THROUGHOUT THE SCALES.**

**BUSBEE**

- we are now using individual identifiers for our Mentoring Programs.
- this is a key element that makes the tool more relevant, and allows more precision.
- for our mentoring program, we are also using a unique identifier for the mentor, enabling us to determine what type of mentor is more effective with what kind of mentee.

**MICCICHE**

We are now using individual identifiers for our Mentoring Programs.

Four major objectives of mentoring program

- reduce school drop-out
- reduce drug use
- gang intervention
- pregnancy prevention

**HARUN**

- we have congregated data at this point for the mentoring program, working towards individual data.

**WADE**

- Do you track types or intensity of encounters, or the relationship between the two?

**BUSBEE**

- haven't done that, but need it at some point

**HAMILTON**

- this raises importance of reporting format. Very complicated if not automated. Very difficult to do by hand if you have significant number of clients.
- might be easier for some agencies to send raw data to the state if aggregation is a problem.

**DANIELS**

- we need to find similar way to report safety net issues, and to determine units of services in coherent way.

**BURCH**

- what will prevent state of California from ultimately developing a single, or universal indicator for "success", homogenizing results from the various counties?

**BUSBEE**

- as long as you keep it in "best practice" perspective, it stays "safe". The problem will come with a managed care perspective: you have to have a way of saying you will provide this service for this cost. It is already happening with child care in San Bernardino County.

**JUDD**

- you run the risk of making correlations, where you attribute success to a change in one or another dimension, and this is dangerous. It is a challenge to use the form effectively without writing volumes, and stay away from correlations, as that is social science, not the work of case managers. I like having indicators, but it is now hard to write an objective and it is hard to do the reporting based on whether you have written specific indicator language into your objective, which I don't do.

#### HAMILTON

- there is always the risk of "homogenizing", and this points to the importance of developing a partnership with the state, to ensure commitment to local determination and local flexibility. That may be the only protection against the imposition of unfair or universal standards.

#### BURCH

- depending on these relationships could be problematic, as every election changes the faces in the capital.

#### MICCICHE

- as you progress with this you can begin to bureaucratize the process, thus offering the process some protection. The more you institutionalize it, the harder it is to dismantle it.

#### HUNNEMANN - looking at national picture:

- we have to acknowledge the differences between the states.

Look in report (in your packet) from MATF (Monitoring Assessment Task Force) Scales Committee handout page 3 -Introductory Table.

- if you take the word "scale" out of this table and substitute "outcome", you have a summary overview of what we are calling ROMA.
- at federal level, the Office of Community Services put together a task force in 1994 to look at how the CSBG paperwork was going to be able to comply with the outcome aspects of the law and put together a three year plan for having the transition among agencies and among states. They called this initiative ROMA (Results Oriented Management and Accountability) and came up with six national goals, five of which are derived directly from the CSBG legislation, and a sixth which encompasses a lot of the work agencies do with vulnerable populations.
- On table: Goals #1 and #6 are family oriented goals, #2 and #3 are community oriented goals, #4 and #5 are agency level goals, one focusing on partnership, the other on agencies' internal capacity.
- from these 6 national goals, a list of measures was developed.
- MATF - (Monitoring Assessment Task Force) was made up of about 30 people, some local agency people, some from state, some from national agencies, and this group developed a plan for helping agencies to make the transition.
- we used an assessment tool that looked at nine different areas of agency functioning and capacity, such as organizational culture and capacity and asked questions such as: is language used consistently throughout the program? Does the Board know what is going on, is Board leadership involved, do internal documents reflect change happening in the agency Oob descriptions, ), etc.
- we looked at about 12 states, and for some of the agencies in those states, we have three years of assessments, determining the capacity needs of the network to move 950 diverse agencies into an environment where they can produce outcomes and can continually improve their own programs and operations.
- this table gives you an idea, in summary fashion, of the dimensions of change we are looking at at the family level, versus the kinds of areas for capacity and performance change inside the agency and at the community level.
- in each state the implementation model is different. Many states put together a ROMA Task Force. Everyone in the state agrees on particular measures and reports on their provision of those measures (e.g. they may agree to report on child care - if an agency does not provide child care services, their report would reflect a 0).
- scales are one of the techniques proposed - a survey subcommittee also put together a set of survey questions.
- A new committee called the Return on Investment Committee is working at the national level, and an electronic network has developed.
- a Web site is also being developed - [www.roma.gov](http://www.roma.gov). The Web site will have a page for each state.
- an annual national report is produced, with nine areas of service defined, and a defined set of demographics collected across the country.

#### JAKOPIC

- idea was to make data useful to the agencies.
- created a system that said "tell us what you are doing - tell us what the measure, who you are applying that measure to, what is the unit of measure, etc.
- at same time we are finding some trends in selection of measures that would allow for a collapsing of the measures.
- one of my concerns is that it might be driven by what people are most comfortable thinking about, rather than what might be most useful to the agency, or driven by the funding source.
  - funding sources are time limited, progress is not
- new authorizing language may exert some pressure to create something more nationally aggregable.

JUDD

- Calling all clients "low income people" muddies the water - migrant workers have different needs than single moms or seniors, etc.

HUNNEMANN

- this is good example of how you need to collect the information for your own organization, not for outside sources.

JUDD

- but Washington (D.C.) also needs to know *who* needs *what*.

KAMBER

- doesn't all this work reflect back to the case work done in the home? Why can't the client-based information that is required separately across programs be aggregated at the federal level?

JAKOPIC

- that is beginning to happen.

DANIELS

- our community is not only looking at client demographics, but also at clients in the context of the community. We need information about whether the work we have done with our clients has had an effect on the community.

HAMILTON

- when we first thought about the local option in the scaling process, we thought that local agencies could build into the tool just about anything their funding sources required. You can also build into it the realities of the local community condition and situations. The idea was to make it a flexible tool to gather necessary data and to accommodate funding sources.

KAMBER

- to what extent does the State interface with the other agencies working with low-income clients? Are you sharing objectives, etc?

MICCICHE

- very little on the State level, but we are one of 12 states that have a county-based welfare system, which somewhat eases the situation. However, in State programs such as the lead abatement and teen pregnancy prevention, we are coordinating in some ways.

BROWN

- A California Interagency Data Collaboration group has been meeting for the past five years to discuss how to set up data collection standards, outcome measures, to coordinate questions, etc. The Family Development Matrix was adopted as part of CIDC standards. That's why the statewide evaluations have incorporated those measures, to ensure consistency across the state.

MILLITZER

- we need to work locally in order to effect change.
- agreed-upon outcomes as a way of changing conditions is a founding principle of the Bay Area Partnership.
- there are a number of initiatives, coming from a wide variety of groups in California, the Bay Area, and across the country that talk about goals and outcomes as a way of achieving consistency.
- we have been aware for some time that it is not enough to establish goals for employment - that type of goal doesn't help a CBO, for that CBO cannot be responsible for the economic health of a community.
- how can we connect our broader goals with the work that needs to be done on a provider level to make the changes? How do we build the connections between the two? The work being done here is very encouraging in that area.

VAN OTTEN

- our use of term "self-sufficiency" concerns me when we speak about it in just economic terms. I think it is a much broader term.
- in Oregon, for the past year, by creating work groups in seven subject areas, we have attempted to break down at the state level barriers that effect how resources are used.
- focus is to analyze work of state agencies, ensure minimum overlap of resources at local level, and ensure that barriers to using resources are not baffle iers being imposed by the state.

- we have realized that dialogues at a local level generally include a squabble over resources - the squabble at state level is about policy. Looking for ways to get around this.

## END OF FIRST GENERAL DISCUSSION

### SCALES DISCUSSION

#### Issues for discussion:

1. tensions between:
  - consistency and local flexibility
  - objectivity and subjectivity
  - scientific accuracy and practicality
  - expectations and capabilities
  - cost and benefit
  - art and science of service delivery
  - scale as standard and scale as model
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of scaling approach to outcome measurement (why should an agency choose scales?);
3. Keeping implementation and use of scales manageable, understandable;
4. Do we need additional review of each scale dimension by experts in that specific field?;
5. Can scales outcome be meaningfully aggregated?;
6. How do we ensure that scales are useful in the field, not just a reporting tool?;
7. What should be included in guidance for use of tool?;
8. How do we assure cultural appropriateness of scales?;
9. How do we know and document that theories assumptions reflected in scales are true?;
10. What values should these measures reflect?;
11. How do we "market" our scale based outcome result?;
12. What is the next step after outcome-based measurement?

#### HAMILTON:

The primary tension: the tension between scientific accuracy and practicality. Raises question of whether validity is our target, given the resources of local agencies. Is it realistic? Is there some other approach to verifying accuracy? It is also an ethical issue. How to solidify outcome evaluation.

### CONSULTANTS

Preliminary reactions about background materials, discussion etc. from our consultants:

#### KETTNER:

Background:

He and colleague Larry Martin were asked several years ago to write a history of accountability as re purchase-of-service-contract.

Saw three eras:

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 1969-79 | focus on fiscal accountability - track the money, both at macro (state) and micro(contractor) levels.                             |
| 1980's  | focus on program accountability, looking at program services: programs required to submit plans, begin to incorporate objectives. |
| 1990's  | demands we are talking about now began to emerge: performance contracting and accountability in measurement.                      |

Interest also sparked by 1973 article by Joel Fisher of the University of Wisconsin, published in the *Social Work Journal* that asked "is case work effective"? He looked at nine research studies, and the answer was "no" in every instance; there was no difference in any way between people who received services and people who did not receive services. Kettner believed that people were indeed being helped, but that rather the real question was "how can we demonstrate effectiveness?" There appeared to be no methods to effectively measure that effectiveness.

Opinion of this new system:

- "outstanding"
- cutting edge

impressed with structure or architecture, with all the dimensions it can measure  
Level-of-Functioning Scale ("the real strength")

likes the flexibility

likes the ability to establish baselines and build from that

likes the five levels and the way they have been defined

most scales have very good, good, etc. - "thriving" and "in crisis" have more meaning, and are adaptable across systems.

#### CONCERNS:

- Accountability systems now use program as unit of analysis, including the Government Performance and Results Act, and the Service Efforts and Accomplishments Initiative of the Government Accounting Standards Board. Accountants doing audits after 2000 will be using outcomes and output data for audits, and they will use program as unit of analysis.

#### COMMENTS:

Program is so important:

- when you look at outcomes it is easy to lose sight of the fact that outcomes are only part of a larger framework in which you do a systems analysis.
- you can become so enamored of outcomes, you forget the other part of the system.
- you can't put all the inputs, through-puts and outcomes together at the client, agency or community level - you can only do it in terms of program.
- key to success of organizations and major corporations is their research and development capabilities.
- until we had these tools here, we did not have the opportunity to determine what works and what doesn't work
- allows us to actually do "live" research.
- you want to look at "what types of clients with what kinds of problems, receiving what kinds and volume of services over what period of time get what results at what cost"
- if you build this tool around that concept you will be able to answer each of those questions.
- you cannot discover what keeps a person in poverty until you aggregate data.

If I were a director of a CAP agency:

- I would want the Family Scales as the backbone of system
- would use every variable for every family
- it would give me a profile of each family, and in the aggregate, I could look at the whole client population and determine the most serious problems, where I needed to invest most resources.
- based on that profile I would ask my case managers to write a prescription for change/improvement.
- I would design the data system so the information from caseworkers (units of service, where clients are at a particular points in time) is captured in a way that takes the place of case reporting (ten minutes at the end of each day)
- record when the client services were completed
- do a followup for the intermediate outcome, and, if you have the resources, determine the ultimate outcome to see if there is persistence and tenacity over time.
- As re program, you have the potential in this system to do that. Just take what I just described and aggregate it up to the program level.
- Funders want to know that when they vote for a program, the money has a good chance of achieving the objective - if you don't aggregate at a program level, you can't answer that question.

COMMENTS specifically on Community and Agency Scales Community:

- I would have Community Scales mirror the Family Scales.
- looking at family profiles alone really blames the victim (this person is unemployed, etc).
- do profile in the community to get reading about availability of services, amenities, affordability, availability, etc.
- then you can look at the Agency Profile compared to the Community Profile. exciting dimension.

Again, to be able to look at agency profile as compared to community profile is an exciting dimension and a tremendous strength of your system. The architecture of your system allows for that with sub scales and policy variables.

Agency Scale:

- your agency scale is an enigma.
- not sure I understand how it fits into your system.
- one measure of agency effectiveness is its aggregation of program effectiveness.
- are you confident that if an agency performs the agency variables, they will be operating at an excellent level?

- you want to know what factors contribute to agency success - you can obtain that information from the many studies done, and/or from accrediting agencies.
- I did not see a lot of the kinds of indicators of agency excellence in the scale that are reflected in the research.
- I would do everything I could to make this system worker friendly.
  - reduce the amount of data collection
  - be sure staff and family can see progress

#### CAMMERS GOODWIN

##### Background:

Has investigated auditing and assessment tools at universities and government agencies, looking at diversity and racism on campuses, looking at how money is spent in programs and agencies, recruitment efforts, retention efforts. Did sensitivity training and monitored their effectiveness. Did Affirmative Action consulting with own firm. Worked with refugees in Europe and UN High Commissioner on Refugees.

##### COMMENTS on the evaluation tool:

- has seen improvement from the February/March iteration.
- What is important? That tools reflect the organization, and to some degree these tools do reflect the organization

#### CONCERNS

- troubled by some of the things I heard earlier - there are some differences among you, and these things need to be worked out before you can do this.
- you need to get buy-in by staff, clients and boards.
- has to be proper and appropriate explanation to stakeholders about the purpose of the evaluation, expectations, goals, responsibilities, mutual definitions.
- accountability: what happens if success is not achieved?
  - who is accountable?
  - what happens when a family is in vulnerable stage, and there is not much movement?
  - what happens when a family is in constant crisis?
- have you all investigated preventative measures for when clients are vulnerable, unsafe or in crisis?
- also concerned that scales don't become something by which to simply define yourself (if no movement - we're in crisis, or vulnerable ... )
- good tool if you begin everything with a healthy start, but if you begin with a crisis situation, how do you show that you are making efforts in that direction?

##### Re culturally appropriate language:

- the use of the term "low income people" is general enough to include poor people of color and whites, but hard to define anyone else.
- "minority: - is this just people of color, or does it include white women?"

#### WADE

##### Background:

Teacher, program evaluator of substance abuse prevention, youth, adult communities, Self-Sufficiency Grant, teaches young people the importance of evaluation.

##### COMMENTS:

- like the approach in the Scales, as it lends itself to moving toward a quantitative analysis.
- don't see much about individual as unit of analysis - a shortcoming, as some agencies work with individuals, not families.
- we need to be sure the information is useful to staff as they do their work, and this format can do that.
- reliability is an issue for me. Think we need to talk more about coming up with consistent data.
- as an evaluator, I think this kind of approach makes reporting easier.
- training of staff will be important, and there will be linguistic issues, as Michelle pointed out ("minority", "low income")

#### CONCERNS

- see difficulties when we start with a problem-based approach.
- on agency scale, we do not see much about staff issues.

- client selection - we need to discuss ways clients come into the pipeline - what are the criteria?

**CHARLESBRUNER**  
(did not address background)

**COMMENTS:**

- likes the use of scales, and the way we are learning by doing.
- questions arise - are how can we put these tools to use? What other tools do we need?
- we don't have a lot of answers right now but these scales can better organize the questions.
- Peter indicated we might need a program scale, Bruce suggested an individual scale. I suggest we need a crossprogram scale to measure effectiveness of collaboration, etc. We need to place in these scales some work about agency mission, clarity of focus,
- what I did not see reflected well is service delivery strategy itself. Unanswered questions: Did you do it? Did it produce results?
- you need a way of measuring the degree to which services are incorporating your principles of practice.
- the Family Scale is useful, holistic
- helps identify some hot spots we need to address.
- when aggregated can identify what needs to be worked on and can give you a sense of progress.

**CONCERNS:**

- less sure if it tells us how we are working with families.
- the apparent crisis may be more effectively addressed through the child's strength (child with behavior issues likes music. Child's conduct may be effected if you can find a neighborhood resource for music).
- a strength of this tool is that it is field-based and this can lead to ownership
- we are moving toward community-based program delivery, and people at the community level have to have ownership over this work.
- all wisdom does not reside at the grassroots level - there is also wisdom at the state and federal levels.

**COMMUNITY SCALE**

- believes this is a good start.
- can be a source of real community dialogue.

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS**

**KAMBER**

- initial skepticism about ability of Community Action Agencies to evaluate success/self-sufficiency at a national level, as community action agencies do not have all the resources or linkages with services that families in crisis need. Question how you could achieve success, let alone record it.
- now sees an opportunity to do just that, using these scales. You can use the scales as a way to change the way you approach other programs and your own services.
- the strong focus on services and lack of same allows a realistic if politically unpopular assessment of possibilities.
- it is not just a reporting tool - with scales and ladders you can have the guts to say that some families are never going to move to self-sufficiency. You can say "we can only move them from #1 to #3."

*Request from floor to Kettner and Wade to expand on the agency scale, and how the key to success is your staff.*

**KETTNER**

- has spent much time studying what it takes to achieve excellence in agencies.
- much of the literature addresses need to challenge staff, then giving them freedom so they love their jobs. It is more than wages, hours and working conditions.

**WADE**

- the "feedback loop" is important to enable staff has to hear back about the work they are doing, both to encourage them and to help them do their work.

**BRUNER**

- after having structured a bureaucratic system, we are now asking workers to exercise a lot of discretion and problemsolving. We have to determine what workers in this role need in order to be productive, and to feel valued.

#### KETTNER

- if I were redesigning these I would make "Work Force Environment" (draft #6) more detailed, make it into a number of different variables, and collapse some others.
- Workforce environment is so critical - it is everything from job design to recruitment, hiring, orientation, job evaluation, even termination, and these should be expanded.

#### WADE

- also address resolution of staff conflicts - is there negotiation, collegiality, privacy?

#### JUDD

- Likes link in this conversation between scales and program delivery, family and case manager, etc., for when feds ask us to tell them what we are accomplishing, they are really saying "what is the matter with those families"?
- maybe we need to blend some family and community matrices.
- perhaps include a "community norm" box in order to illuminate problems over which family, case manager and agency have no power.
- Family scale does not take into account the values of the individual. The person/family may not *value* a job, or *value* independence.
- Are we compartmentalizing too much?

#### ENDRES

- most of the people I work with complain that the matrix doesn't deal with short-term clients, like homeless people.
- Why can't we begin to address short term services instead of developing another matrix?

#### KAMBER

- isn't the cutting question for Community Action Agencies, in moving from maintenance kinds of efforts to self-sufficiency, the extent to which resources should be put toward emergency intervention, versus some sort of structured response that moves toward self-sufficiency?

#### ENDRES

- brings in theory that our services are not alone in providing outcomes to families. Short-term services have a role in ten-n of boosting, stimulating, etc. But to my mind the value of the matrix is to measure family progress, regardless the cause.
- it's a progression tool for families, and we've found that families get a boost out of using the matrix themselves.

#### HAMILTON

- maybe our question is whether short-term emergency services be used not only for those who will move ahead, but for those who will not move ahead - we acknowledge that for them, what are other-wise considered short-term services will remain a maintenance level service for those families.

#### MASTERS

- this system is a big step forward because it lets that very discussion happen. It doesn't give you the answer, but encourages that discussion.

#### HAMILTON

- I don't think these scales are meant to be used as a program development tool. The action plan is something else - that is where you use and build on strengths.

#### EDLICH

- we need to recognize that one of the main reasons we have poor people is because society *needs* poor people - they keep labor costs down, allows/requires society to build prisons because we need employment, etc.
- From a practical point of view, we are looking at a system that assesses weaknesses, not strengths. This produces confusion among staff.

#### JUDD

- I think this scale does not bring those strengths out - it doesn't show a worker where to begin working on strengths.

**BRUNER**

- That constitutes a real challenge in practice. We need a further paradigm shift (like that from recipients to participants in services) in order to build upon strengths.

**JAKOPIC**

- I'm not sure how to construct a definition of "in crisis" that is around strength.

**CAMMERS GOODWIN**

- perhaps you could call it "progress" side and "strength" side.
- we need most of the tracking at levels 1, 2 3, if we believe some will never make it to 5.

**BROWN**

- I've been using the California matrix for three years
- the instrument doesn't stand alone, but works with a Family Service Plan, and gets done at time of intake.
- reassess on this larger scale every six months, but smaller steps can be measured weekly.
- there are challenges for using this in the field - many of the staff using it are not necessarily trained in using a good assessment. They view it as paperwork, not a tool, and try to get it done as quickly as possible. An opening assessment is often superficial.
- training issue - get staff to understand its importance.

**KETTNER**

- I believe this is a system design issue, not training. Maybe you need consequences for bad assessments.

**TORRES**

- believe there is a resource issue here as well. I've seen programs with complex assessment requirements, but such a high caseload count that good assessments simply couldn't be done in the time allowed.

**HUNNEMANN**

- agree it is not a training issue. The second assessment always goes down. Thus her agency does not use the first assessment.

**BUSBEE**

- recently visited a home-based program where case managers discussed assessments at staff meetings, looked for questions that best elicited the information they needed, and made changes in the instrument as they learned.

**BROWN**

- the challenge there is that if you customize the form at every site, you lose the ability to aggregate at a state level. Need to talk about this tomorrow.

**BOONE**

- there is an finite number of inputs you can insert, and an infinite number of outputs.
- you have to provide information for your funding sources
- your managers has to get what they need for program design
- your workers have to have tools they can use

**HUNNEMANN**

- we're really talking about baselines.
- worked for an agency whose clients came in to receive a service and left, telling as little as possible
- the outcomes process forced us to develop a long-ten-n relationship, and create a culture and environment that made people want to stay in touch with us and share their results.

**END, DAY ONE**

Day opens with consultants reviewing yesterday's discussion and thoughts about **credibility** and **utility**.

**KETTNER**

- believe symposium was designed to give people an opportunity to talk about their issues, but to move it forward now we need to focus and prioritize.
- my biggest concern is that it is just not possible to do everything that is on the plate now, and all at once.
- I would begin with the Family Scale, build a system around it and move to the others.
- the Community scales are excellent conceptually, but I'm not sold on Agency scales, although I do believe we need to determine what makes for good organizations.
- I still see this as more of an agency tool. If you need to monitor for compliance, that is a different issue.
- I worry about it caving in from its own weight when it comes to staff implementing it.
- pick something small and implement it, get good at it, then move to next level.

**HAMILTON**

- given that we have launched more than that already, do you have suggestions for bringing more order to this? For example, in California we have begun using all three scales at once.

**KETTNER**

- you could take the position that you are trying to de-bug systems, then after feedback say we will try to implement Family Scales meaningfully, and meantime use feedback from agency around Community scales and use whatever you get back on Agency and Community scales to inform yourselves.
- Agency scales are designed to measure one or more of the national goals, but scales not the only way to deal with this. I am in tune with issue of excellence at organizational level, and there is so much literature about this.
- there is no reason to re-invent the issue - e.g. the Likkert Scale that measures "company" effectiveness.
- as for emphasizing the work force, I believe it is more an internal management issue. The real question is, how effective are you in producing results?

**BURCH**

- there is a feeling we are not excellent in what we do because there are a lot of organizations that are *not* excellent in how they do it. We need to begin to talk honestly about ourselves - we cannot always achieve those goals.

**BRUNER**

- some of the issues raised in the literature to which Peter referred are reflected in the Agency scale, some not. It is a good start.
- looking at the two overarching goals: partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low income people, and increasing agency capacity to achieve results.

As for Partnerships:

- we see that there is partnership in the governance of the agency reflected in the Board and that is something CAP agencies have by definition, and it can be done for better or worse.
- another partnership is consumer partnerships in designing their own services according to their own needs.
- and as agency create space for people and opportunity to develop leadership, consumers can also be partners in designing needs statements for the community.
- I only saw one of those in the scale.

As to Agency Capacity:

- this is a *very* important area.
- management evaluation and an information management plan are ways to increase capacity to *think about* outcomes. That's different from increasing capacity to *achieve results*.
- agencies don't have management information systems in place, they are busy doing day-to-day management.
- this [scale] seems to be more "how agencies can be evaluative", than "how agencies can do service delivery".
- 90 % of what an organization is about is collapsed in that one scale
- scale is sort of limited in how to get results, engaging consumers.
- a lot of the things were structural rather than functional.

HAMILTON

- taking for granted we need to make adjustments in the focus of the Agency sale, I saw the Family scale as an informational tool as well as a tracking tool.
- to some degree, that is what we had in mind with the Agency sale.
- regardless how it's used, what do you think about its use as a self-assessment/self-improvement tool for an agency?

KETTNER

- if this represents the best thinking of what local organizations need to use to move toward excellence, it makes a good checklist.
- If they find an agency is not effective in some areas in terms of achieving program objectives, they can use that self-assessment and discover their deficits.

VINSON

- I think those evaluations should stay in the agency, not go to "big brother", or an agency that funds you.

BUSBEE

- liked the parallel process
- if the community says "we don't care about homelessness", that gets transmitted to agencies, and then to clients.
- if we don't have clear expectation about how they will report data, we get back garbled data.
- maybe you could match community as a mirror to family, and drop out agency.

KETTNER

- yes, if you don't use Community scales, staff takes family failure personally. If they see community measurement of, say unemployment or housing, they can understand why a family has such difficulty becoming employed or housed.

CAMMERS GOODWIN

- Agency scales are very important - they are, with Family scales the most important.
- it's important for staff to be able to see how they are doing, and you can methodically monitor and improve.
- am still concerned about your partnerships (on scale), about unit of measure, how to implement national goals four and five. I am confused by it.
- why not measure change in the kinds of partnerships you're able to develop? I wouldn't mind sitting down to go through it.

EDLICH

- there is an attempt to be worker-friendly in the Family scale, but the Agency model reflects more cynicism. Think it would strengthen process if some of the more positive assumptions were applied to the Agency scale.

BRUNER

- two dimensions that seem only partially there - agency mission and vision.

BOONE

- many organizations are operating today as they did in the 80's, because there was not a process inside the system that prompted change.
- the scale is partly an effort to regenerate capacity to operate effectively.
- most CAA's manage program about as well as PIC'S, senior centers, etc.
- the challenge is that many CAA's are strong culture, effective management, but the activities in which they are engaged don't make a bit of difference in the communities in which they work.

BRUNER

- yes, and are there ways to move people from that to effective strategies?
- some strategic planning is not based on deep thinking.
- you might be able to use this scale as a tool to move toward that re-visioning.

CAMMERS GOODWIN

- how do you quantify a partnership?

JUDD

- you can say "I got Mental Health to step up to the plate and deal with their clients, whom they refer to us rather than using their own resources."
- think some of the agency references needs to be stronger in the service system components of the Community matrix.

VAN OTTEN

- believe none of the scales should be used as reporting tools, to develop work plans or for states to evaluate a CAP operation.
- there is a difference between the scales we are working with here and the scales developed in PA and Illinois. Those are quantified scales. These are more qualifiers, descriptive scales.
- when you talk about some sort of results, in some sort objective format, it is a different process.
- with scales, what you can do is self assessment, assess community and consumer groups, set standards.

HAMILTON

- in California, we do use the scales for reporting. I'm not sure I agree that it is inappropriate, but maybe we need to sort out that issue.

VAN OTTEN

- I don't think we as a task force have been working on a set of documents whereby a state comes in to evaluate agencies.

KAMBER

- No, but California is a laboratory. Is it too early to ask the question "are your votes all in yet?"

HAMILTON

- what we learn from California's experience depends of the questions we ask.
- not sure if scales have improved practice, but they have identified efficiencies and inefficiencies in my own agency.
- perhaps it is too early to determine whether it has made a difference in level of activity, outcome, practice, but it has been meaningful to us for self-assessment.

JAKOPIC

- one way of looking at this is "what will it take to get everyone to do their best"? Or, if you move the bar on the leading edge, does the trailing edge move up too?
- by having the conversation, change takes place.
- perhaps the measure should be how much change is taking place.
- Lorraine (DANIELS) spoke of a way of measuring effectiveness of our partnerships.

DANIELS

- think this discussion was inevitable.
- there is still a missing piece in terms of not only the partnerships, but also the way we track and report them.
- I believe future of community actions rests in our ability to connect with the rest of the community, or we will become outdated.
- we need to look at how we initiate partnerships, engage people, engage ourselves, sustain those partnerships.

MASTERS

- states don't have tools to "drag the bottom up" using compliance machinery.
- state collection of this information is one thing. How they use it is another (concern that self-reporting using the agency scale would provide states with ways to pit agencies against one another, or when they try to use these reports as a compliance tool.

KETTNER

- I like use of scale as diagnostic, but I still come back to "how do you know if you have a problem". The tool doesn't do that.

VAN OTTEN

- one of the more uplifting concepts we had as a group was the Drop Dead Point for agencies.
- we talked about having, for instance, a point on the scale, say compliance, where if an agency were below the Drop Dead Point on the scale, they would need to shut down and take a look at itself. I think we decided not to use that concept. Consultants -reactions?

KETTNER

- you have to set the bar high enough, and you can't do that till you have defined outcomes.

- let's assume you could define a high standard for performance effectiveness, and programs are achieving that, then if you find they are in crisis on certain dimensions, you have to re-examine the dimensions, for how can they be "in crisis" and be doing a good job?
- this becomes a diagnostic tool at that point.
- however, I don't know who has the authority to shut an agency down.

#### BRUNER

- the manner in which you conduct your assessment tells you something about the agency.
- recommends *How Are We Doing* by the Family Resource Coalition of America
  - contains an actual agency assessment that has been pre-tested - you may want to look at that.

#### COMMUNITY SCALE

##### JUDD

- it makes sense to me to be looking at the issues on the (California) community development matrix [public health, public economic development, public housing, social service systems, child care, transportation, mobility, income ratio, etc.]. National model of community dimensions is different [public policy, equity, civic capital, service support system, opportunity].
- California's dimension relates directly to families lives. I have serious reservations about the national model. How can you quantify those kinds of things? Some of the things listed in civic capital seem more like family issues. How can we have meaningful impact on a community by dealing with things like Civic Capital.

##### MASTERS

- I have the opposite reaction - I love the national stuff. The California scale looks like services to me, the national scale finally puts on agenda some of the issues we need to be talking about now.
- Is it there? absolutely not - but it's a long way along.

##### EDLICH

- I don't think civic capital is just the accumulation of family participation.
- Civic capital begins to endorse and embrace some of the strategies we did well at the beginning - redressing a balance of power in the community.
- if there is anything I fear in the self-sufficiency concept (I disagree with the concept - believe there is no such thing as self-sufficiency, as we are all connected) it is that it has been so individualized, and has not expanded to issues of economic equity and access to other networks of power.
- I champion what the committee did. Now we have to take those categories and give them some tangibility.

##### HAMILTON

- this scale was not intended to be the end of the process of assessment. It was designed to have subscales. Ted's agency, Total Action Against Poverty, is a good example of that process
- they took one dimension, Civic Capital, and targeted it to their agency, and broke out all the detail that would underlay effort in that dimension
- maybe it was not clear enough in the material, but the committee never thought any agency would change the whole face of equity in a community or of civic capital, but that each agency would work within that range.

##### EDLICH

- you can also begin to think about where your niche is.
- we were successful in creating coalitions within the city to make an ordinance that required that all housing within the city had to meet code, and would be inspected every two years to ensure habitability.

##### CAMMERS GOODWIN

- you are helping to empower people who have been disempowered.
- the equity dimension is fundamental to the organization.
- while it is difficult to define, we know it is being achieved through the "look in a person's eyes" - when they trust you.

##### KAMBER

- Lillian's (Judd) reaction may represent hundreds of Community Action Agencies. Let's learn from that. How can we present this information?

BRUNER

- some of these dimensions may be somewhat costly to gather, but I think that all these dimensions are subject to some level of measurement.
- question is, are we really serious about this type of level of intense involvement and engagement of clients in community life?
- for those who are out of the mainstream, we can provide the services and support give them the tools and support to enter the mainstream, and the mainstream is only ready to openly embrace them if they can cut the mustard.
- the community organizing perspective is that there is a reason for the mal-distribution of resources, and that is that those who have them do not want to give them up.
- when Community Action Agencies work with people, they begin to experience some level of growth, offer natural networks of mutual support.
- when people get together and ask what needs to change and recognize that some things are internal and some external, then they can go to the school board to demand restoration of classes, end to bussing ...

EDLICH

- also, new models of community organizing have developed since the 60's that develop instruments of influence and selfsupport.

BURCH

- we assume people will distill these down.
- if you will look at the document you will see two examples, I will talk about one because it involved my CAP.
  - under the Support Services dimension, we wrote a new dimension on sufficiency of housing for low-income working families that came out of a process of trying to develop housing.
  - in course of that work, questions arose about why some parts of town got the zoning they wanted, others could not.
  - we wrote two new dimensions under Equity - one in ten-ns of racial issues surrounding the zoning process.
  - we kept creating new sub-scales and never had to deal with huge scale of Equity. We know you can't work at the larger levels and keep your sanity.

JUDD

- I know we already do this because we have parent participation councils, and cultural enrichment programs where we take parents to City Council meetings, etc.
- I wrote into our plan that part of our civic involvement was to open our meeting rooms to organizations that fit under our umbrella of values and principles - the rooms are in use all the time now.

BURCH -

- yes! You have one of best the community organization and program development CAAs in the county, but didn't connect immediately that you are already doing the work. The CAPs just don't see how what they are doing already connects to these scales.

DANIELS

- I especially like the Civic Capital and Equity scales - they touch upon much of what Michele said.
- until we developed the scale, I did not know how to define what we've been doing in community leadership.
- we recognized the need to continue to build the capacity of the community to take ownership of their own issues and the process for solution, so 16 years later we have about 400 grassroots community folks who serve on boards in the community, they write their own grants, manage the grants. This is Civic Capital, and we've been doing it without a way of defining or measuring it. How what did we record in the past? How many came, how many graduated. But never got to the impact of the work they did, or we did.

JUDD

- we do citizenship classes.

BRUNER

- we've heard some real-world examples.
- so, when agencies look at the scales in the abstract and try to figure out "how do we look at issues of race and class?" it's daunting. But when they read what maybe five or six agencies have done in this area, it's clear. That's our guidance.

HAMILTON

- we are beginning to answer one of our questions - what should be included in the guidance?

#### HUNNEMANN

- our web site will have much of this information on it. Each state has a page, the community scaling tool will be there, and the site has a search engine. Address is www.roma.gov - but it isn't up yet.

#### WADE

- I just keep thinking about some of the problems that come up in some of the groups I work with - violence, political corruption, etc. I don't know those things are reflected in the scales.

#### DANIELS

- where I am we do a lot of community to identify risk factors - substance abuse prevention, cancer, etc.
- it has moved us from being focused on individuals to a focus on changing conditions.
- those are the things that drive our decision making, rather than units of service
- our work has more to do with inclusion, creating new environments.
- we think prevention. We feel we're on the right track to influencing the community.
- because our focus is not on service delivery, improvement among families is largely self-reporting.
- this causes us to have more intense involvement with our clients in order to discover change.

#### BURCH

- you may be an example of what's next!

#### HAMILTON

- the Scales Committee did begin with something more like the California Scale, and we came around to exactly what Lorraine (DANIELS) spoke about - that is, that Community Action Agencies are less likely to be about changing statistics or quantifiable items, but to effect change in environments and systems.
- this scale gives us a method of measuring that.

#### ENDRES

- I'll be using this model non-profit that works with 57 neighborhood groups in Santa Clara County. I will be using this Community matrix, taking each dimension and creating an empowen-ment model.
- their interest is in how folks build capacity to deal with the infrastructure, and how people advocate for themselves, etc.
- whenever we design matrix dimensions, we bring in the clients to design them, so that it has more meaning to the people affected by it.
- we will put together the indicators for the scaling tool.
- this will be made available on Web site when it is completed.

#### HAMILTON

##### **moving to the questions/issues:**

Due to time constraints, we winnowed our long list of discussion items to six crucial issues/questions for discussion in this final 1 1/2 hour:

1. Ensuring scales are useful in the field, not just as a reporting tool;
2. Can scales be meaningfully aggregated;
3. Asset-based versus problem-based measures

and from the list of tensions:

4. Scientific accuracy versus practicality
5. Expectations of those to whom report versus capacity of the agency
6. Scales as standards, or as models?

Beginning with the issue that received the most prioritization votes earlier:

1. Scientific accuracy versus practicality

- this one raises two issues:
  - credibility - what is the appropriate way to document the credibility of scaling
  - and validity - can the issue we are trying to measure actually meet that test? Are there other ways to document this sort of academic notion of credibility?

We will ask our consultants first, then we can all contribute:

#### WADE

- says the question "What can we get away with without being laughed at" as Bucky (Boone) put it earlier, is, seriously, a form of validation: looking at how indicators line up and what sort of supporting data is out there.

#### KETTNER

- recommends erring on side of practicality.
- make sure it is useful, de-bug it in the process, then bring in people ("experts") to deal with questions of validity and reliability over time.
- if you spend too much time on the science of this, you may never get to where it is being used.

#### HAMILTON

- assuming we achieve that, is validity our target in order to be credible, or are there other ways of achieving credibility?
- Irv (BUSBEE) showed some part of the scale to a Legislator at one point, and the legislator did not like it.

#### BUSBEE

- in truth we had not done our homework [did not provide enough information].

#### BRUNER

- we need to present a tool by which we can show that families are better off, or by which we can measure whether they are better off. If that is our goal, and we're not doing it, should we be funded?
- at some point we have to say "we can be accountable for showing the impact of our work".
- legislators want to see those gains.
- also, we don't really have any other choice.

#### VAN OTTEN

- the validity measure should remain *what we are doing*.

#### BURCH

- there is no magic bullet yet - CCDP programs are an example of looking for that, but "millions of dollars later, no measurable change"
- people [legislators?] look at that and just think we're incompetent because we/they put all this money into and we can't make it work.
- but we all know that social investment has value,
- Charles (BRUNER), would you put your legislator's hat on and talk about the issue of validity within that environment?

#### BRUNER

- Molly Ivins said "If Congress did not have its share of fools, it would not be a truly representative body".
- legislators need political cover - every two years they have to show people how what they are doing has value.
- you have to find the people in legislatures who are willing to look seriously at these issues.
- use the committee structures, where they actually gather information.

#### KETTNER

- you have to be selective about which of these documents you share with legislators.
- for example, you don't share your data collection tools, but would be useful to develop some dummy tables to show them how, when all of this is processed, this is what the tables will be able to tell you. If they don't like that, let them tell you how they want it configured, what they want to know.

#### WADE

- you know best what California legislators are looking for.
- you have concrete examples of what works with legislators.

#### BRUNER

- legislators, governors' wives, etc. often go to individual programs, talk to people there - clients, board members, staff -who are members of their constituency, and become champions of programs on the basis of having visited it, seen something going on in practice, and feeling "this really works". They become champions of that program.

#### BURCH

- think we're acknowledging that the work that we are doing here today is still pretty much uncoupled with the public policy process.
- there are people from a certain ideological perspective who will say no, because they believe society shouldn't be worrying about these issues, and others who, no matter how unsuccessful we are, will give us what we want even if we're not doing anything.
- CCDP is an example of that - even though the evaluation showed no success, they built Early Head Start based on CCDP!

#### KAMBER

- we have to develop charts and make sophisticated choices about what information we use for legislators, the public, etc.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ENSUED ALONG THOSE LINES, WITH AN AGREEMENT THAT SOPHISTICATED USE OF INFORMATION IS THE WAY TO GO.

#### JUDD

- agree with Dan (Van Otten), we have to be able to validate what we do.
- but we have to be able to fight ideology with something more than "our truths".

#### EDLICH

- history is somewhat instructive in terms of legislative impact.
- what works is CAPs working with their legislators.
- everyone elected to high office wants a new program with which they can be identified.
- while accumulating data to send a national message is important, the real work of building national support is each CAP working with their own legislators.

#### HAMILTON

- to capture the sense of the day: we should focus on practicality and usability, and validity and credibility should come later.
- this may depend to a large degree on how we describe what we have done, how we use it to advocate.
- create it, put it in place, de-bug it as you go. Don't keep theorizing about design - do it.

#### KETTNER

- on a practical level, you want to be able to tell someone that 40% of our families at safe level. If they ask what do you mean by "safe", you have your descriptors. If they then say "is that valid and reliable?", you have to deal with each of these questions as they arise.
- question is, are they willing to fund a study to ensure that it becomes valid and reliable.

#### HAMILTON

- we haven't settled the issue yet, but we need to stop for lunch.

#### ASSESSMENT/ASSET/PURPOSE

#### ENDRES

- at national conference on Family Resource Centers in Chicago one of the workshop was on Promotional Indicators.
- they tied evaluation to this concept by identifying indicators that were trying to promote the kind of outcomes or
- example - instead of saying "the neighborhood unsafe", the promotional variation moves to a more positive level, and reads something like "safety conditions in neighborhood need improvement" They use language that would promote the activity that could result in the behavior you are looking for.
- speaking with people using matrix, heard "It prejudices me to see the status levels on the left" so they don't use them -use only indicators.
- if they do that, why can't we do it on a gradation or continuum model, from start to desired end point? Have you considered this?

#### BUSBEE

- we considered this. We worked with a consultant with the University of Nevada who assessed with parents of abused children, who assessed by positive assets only.

JUDD

- but does that diagnose the severity or magnitude of the problem for the people who consider it for funding and for setting policy?

BUSBEE

- no, it was designed to help the parents to see that even in these dire circumstances, they had some positive assets.

BURCH

- Family scale is counter-intuitive.
- would be interested in asking someone who is facile in strength-based assessment/planning process to look at the methodology of scaling and designing a scale. Wonder what they would come up with?

HAMILTON

- do we have a problem in that the two lower levels of most of our scales are deficit model?

CAMMERS GOODWIN

- also concerned.
- agrees with Jack, would like to see new approach.

KETTNER

- seeing a different problem - we don't advance the solution by ignoring that there is a real problem.
- Lorraine Daniels spoke about family visioning, where you let a family talk about their own hopes and dreams.
  - you create a positive environment, and they want to be part of solving their own problems.
  - a different chemistry develops when you do this instead of approaching situation as a number of negatives that have to be dealt with.
- as Dan VAN OTTEN said yesterday, there is no way you can put all of families' hopes and dreams of families in a scale. The Family scale just doesn't capture that.

HAMILTON

- does that argue for some accompanying document to guide the family through the next step beyond the initial assessment?
- then next step in this process is identifying positives

JUDD maybe we need another column.

HUNNEMANN

- when we were working on the Family scale at a local level, we went through this process somewhat.
- we shifted somethings, for example: "no job", "no work history" changed into something like "work history in job absent". A values change reflected on the Housing scale changed "owns own home" to "lives in housing of choice".

BRUNER

- a scale is a continuum and you can construct a scale so that people can say where they are on that scale.
- we have a societal sense that when one drops below a certain level, one cannot achieve.
- if you cannot draw or make music, is the absence of those skills a deficit, or is their presence a gift? Those are two very different ways of looking at it.
- possession of talents does not necessarily change one's life, one may derive pleasure from them (social interaction, listening ability, other supports).
- this kind of asset scaling is not often on our screen.
- concept of prevention? Promotion is better than prevention. Prevention addresses stopping something bad from happening, but promotion encourages the positive.

BURCH

- still confused by this. My case managers will acknowledge a low functional reading level, but in the asset-based approach, they will document a "strong desire to get GED" or "strong desire to improve child's education". How, in the Family scale, do you capture that asset?

#### BRUNER

- you ask family "what are the resources and assets you can bring to bear to help your kid do well in school?"
- it's a tool for working with families and it's a challenge to say "what are the assets", but it may get us a focus on families who are in trouble or in crisis.
- some of these dimensions don't have an "in trouble" or "in crisis" component to them.

#### MASTERS

- the University of Iowa School of Social Work had a contract with the Children's Bureau to develop a methodology for professional social workers to reduce foster care placements.
- they used the prevention approach to move back upstream into family functioning, to get at causal factors that precipitated foster placement - e.g. substance abuse, physical abuse, mental illness, etc.
- there was created in the system a deficit analysis to use therapeutic interventions in the family intended to enhance family function, prevent family disintegration and reduce foster care placement.
- So Stokes puts this model into an anti-poverty universe and says "let's use this as a model for family self-sufficiency, and add in the household income dimension".
- problem with that is that of the 40 million people with a diagnosable mental illness, 25 million are working full time. Of 10 million substance abusers, 6 million are working full time. Of 33 million alcoholics, about 25 million work full time, 13 million people working full time who are below the poverty level.
- it is correct that these issues have to be dealt with in order to reduce foster care placement, but they don't necessarily relate to one's ability to get or keep a job.
- so what works on one axis does not work as powerfully on another axis.

#### ENDRES

- this is probably the crux of the issues with the whole matrix, from the perspective of the practitioner.
- there is real difficulty in implementing say, the family matrix, because the reasons do not correlate with one another in a way that is useful and practical to the practitioner.

#### JUDD

##### Suggestion:

- on every matrix at bottom it says "Tools for Progress: family's skills and motivations for improvement and agency guidance and support for the family's efforts".
- that is the essence. The family is the key worker, and we are there to support and guide.
- there needs to be a place to acknowledge that the family has the ability to solve their problems themselves, with a little bit of help.
- this does not diminish the magnitude or severity of the situation.

#### VAN OTTEN

- I have no difficulty with "in crisis" and "vulnerable" as descriptors
- and the asset inventory is part of the assessment process, but the scales are aggregates of indicators, not meant to be an action plan.

#### HAMILTON

- isn't the heart of the issue not so much whether we have descriptors, but how do we best ensure that our process includes this analysis of assets?
- this is not the end of this process. Every use of this needs also to be accompanied by the development of an asset inventory.

#### KAMBER

- still concerned that we are mixing apples and oranges
- we are looking at building on competencies to help families use what it has more effectively.
- if you use family based skills and ladders as a clinical document and case manager tool, then maybe it needs to contain some significant assets.
- I would question whether we want to use an evaluation tool which will be used for a variety of other purposes to do an assessment with a family.
- I want to start with blank sheet when working with family and create from scratch.
- also, you don't show this scale to the family - this sheaf of papers is intimidating. I want to build incrementally.

- Sometimes just showing up for a second appointment is the beginning of the competency.
- I'm concerned that we might be trying to accomplish too much with scales and ladders.
- it is "too much" to use as a case manager's tool.

#### JUDD

- but my experience with families is that they *want* to get to higher ground, and they *want* acknowledgment that they are treading water, or drowning.
- you want some of the negative language because it acknowledges their own concerns.

#### BURCH

- Glen (Kamber) takes me back to my own questions: what are your goals, why are you here, what are you bringing to the process to achieve your goals, what are the problems you think I can help you with?
- having said all that, it is a blank sheet of paper but ultimately you have to punch paper into a computer
- So why would I also ask them to fill out family scales instead/continue (point lost) of using data points in the computer already to do an analysis of how individual families are progressing??

#### HAMILTON

- we will not resolve this issue today.

#### HUNNEMANN

- I thought I heard there was a difference between what people were sensing on family level, and the agency and community piece.
- I understand the questions about the Agency piece pretty clearly but I'm wondering about the Community piece - what are the problems with it?

#### HAMILTON

- I believe that was a reference only to the Community piece.
- believe the underlying assumption was that the Agency scale involved negative expectations. The other two scales did not.

#### ENDRES

- Now, there is no agreement on the language to be used, even within the different dimensions.
- I like use of "competencies." I understand what they are.
- we are talking about standards - if competencies become the indicators for reaching the higher levels of this standard, should we be using that competency language in the development of these scales? Do you get my question?

#### KETTNER

- re Lillian J-UDD's statement about the statement on the bottom of the matrix that spoke of family motivation, I thought about the concept of family motivation and opportunities - that concept adds another dimension and has some power.
- it is not up to the family to just have the motivation, they also have to have the capacity or competence for growth.
- if the issue is capacity, your agencies have something to offer in terms of capacity- or competency-building.
- if the issue is opportunity, it belongs on a community level where someone has to create opportunity for people to move in.
- there is this mix of factors that must be part of the picture.

#### WILSON

- a lot of what we are doing is apples and oranges.
- I look at this form as a subjective report. I compile data, check a box, make a determination where I fit on scales and ladders.
- there is nothing hard core or etched in stone.
- as re competency, not sure it works. Don't know whether a politician could determine whether or not a Community Action Agency has an impact, based on this, but I like it.
- but I think we will learn from this symposium, and I believe you (the Committee) is headed in the right direction.
- I think we will be able to prove that we are in fact helping families.

#### MASTERS

- there is a theory taking off like wildfire in Community Development field, inspired by Kretzmanman and McKnight.

- they say don't waste time on whether glass is half empty or half full - forget the half-empty part, you can't get anything done spending time with that.
- concentrate on the half-full part: what do you want for your community and how do you accomplish it? Alinsky is being reborn in the national Community Building Network in the asset-based community development of the Kretzmanman and McKnight theory.
- we have to pay attention to that change, if for no other reason than that they are saying "We think you have all failed miserably, your systems don't work, and we don't want you in this community".
- a social movement is contained under this rubric. We cannot ignore this, maybe want to be involved it.
- in Organizational Development field it is called Affirmative Inquiry. There is something ideological happening here that is germane to this discussion.
- it should not cause us to stop and rewrite sections on the boxes, but we need to pay attention.

#### VAN OTTEN

- when McKnight talks about asset-based community development he talks about work in a community. The scales talk about communities. No reason why we cannot incorporate asset-based strategies, analyses and action plans into community work~, -and still use the kind of analysis we have here.

#### HAMILTON

- yes, what we seem to agree on is that whatever the scale looks like ultimately we have to be sure there is room in our strategies for asset assessment.

#### BRUNER

- The work of the scale does -de-medicalize it, to some extent.
- a lot of families feel overwhelmed by their circumstances, under such stress they cannot take time or space to develop goals, etc.
- we often pathologize their reactions, but Jim MASTERS points out that so many work and still have alcohol problems, etc. and we don't see that as a problem, unless they are poor.
- the asset-based work comes from a different framework, also says there are some things to build upon.
- asset mapping is good, however, I haven't seen communities use McKnight and Kretzman's work.
- how do you use those assets to build community?

#### KAMBER

- there is a danger of oversimplifying the negativeness of the medical model.
- we may have 23 million people with mental illness in the work force, for instance, but if that mental health problem interferes with someone's ability to become functional in other areas of their life, it has to be addressed.
- not sure you were suggesting that all of these areas should be completely eliminated (review, assessment, intervention), were you?

#### MASTERS

- I am only interested in these barriers only to the extent that they effect a person's ability to achieve what they want to achieve.

#### JAKOPIC

- not sure I buy that income or lack of a job is the only measure of poverty and am uncomfortable with idea that we should ignore the rest.

#### HAMILTON

- this is beyond the scope of our work here today. Agencies will decide a local level what they will address.

#### BOONE

- we like this scale because we thought it reflected a holistic approach.

#### HAMILTON

- only have time for one of the two issues we haven't addressed (from yesterday's prioritization)

Group chose:

## AGGREGATION

### ENDRES

- we're concerned about reliability issues. Could we have some general guidelines?

### WADE

- given our discussion about the ftizziness of descriptors, that's a built-in problem.
- how it is addressed is another question.
- levels/strata of the scale and the operational definitions are problems we need to talk about.

### KETTNER

- in situations where we have used level of functioning scales, we've dealt with inter-rater reliability problems with some simulated cases and had a number of people use the rating scales. We've found it rare that people have significant differences of opinion.
- you do the same thing over time, and it is a fairly simple low cost way of dealing with some reliability issues.

### WADE

- yes, or you could have focus groups to get that feedback.

### HAMILTON

- when agencies tailor their scales to their own circumstances, does that dramatically diminish the value as aggregated data?

### WADE

- yes, but brings us back to question the purpose of the tool in the first place.

### VAN OTTEN

- right now the national network is reporting on outcome, not scales. California may be working with scales, and if we as a national system are going to work on scales, we have time to work through some of the problems.
- we are talking about developing a methodology that not a whole lot of states are working on.

### BURCH

- actually the message that was sent out was that "in each of these six goals, you may use surveys, data or scales". Aggregation problems.
- what we ought to do is simply make this a useful tool.

### WADE

- perhaps you can aggregate around the things you have agreement on, but not everything.
- some things will depend on state criteria and state definitions, so that cannot be included in this table.

### BRUNER

- on the Family Scale, aggregability will be dependent on the worker's ability to work with the family and the amount of time spent.
- there would be a pretty good level of interrelated reliability, but will depend on amount of time spent working with the family.
- on community level, with multiple people doing this within an agency will generate dialogue within the agency and community about what you are trying to accomplish.

### KAMBER

- getting aggregable data from caseworkers will take training.
- at state level, it would be useful if, rather than dictate assumptions, you do what Peter KETTNER suggests
  - circulate some cases and have people score them.
  - see how close everyone is, or how far off people's practices are, or whether the instrument is workable.

### JAKOPIC

- question about the *structure* of the scale. With levels on one side and dimensions across, agencies would define what it meant to be "thriving" in Housing for their particular area was, assumption that you could aggregate "thriving" in Housing.

HAMILTON

- that was the theory at the beginning. We thought we would have sufficient consistency to aggregate.
- Maybe that's the heart of our question - is it worth trying to get at the answer given that it will only tell us a small part of what we want to know.

KETTNER

- NO - one agency's "safe" can be another agency's "thriving". Your audience can say "what does safe mean"?
- For me the question is at what level do you aggregate.
- I would use this as a comparative basis for agencies and counties for a period of time, and allow people to look at their own report card.
- over time agencies and communities might be able to come to their own common definitions. If not, live with that.

WADE

- I agree with Peter (KETTNER). Move forward incrementally.

VAN OTTEN

- it's one thing if someone in an office has come up with the definition of "thriving" and "in crisis".
- if the community itself has come up with those definitions, that's another thing altogether.
- This is important for decision-makers.

EDLICH

- if we start selling this as something we can aggregate in the next decade and use to promote programs, there will be some disappointment.
- I hear that people are feeling pushed to do this already

BURCH

- yes, who better can determine a community's needs?

WADE

- I'm saying you may not have to aggregate the information - let each community have its own benchmarks.
- you could say that "65% of communities in this country achieved their goals" or "65% of families improved their lives".

HAMILTON

- so you are talking about aggregating *change*, not *levels*.

EDLICH

- aggregate those things that actually make a difference on national level. You have to play into the predominant values? New administrations what their name on new initiatives.

MASTERS

- believe this is a mistake - this allows agencies to write all the "mispractice" and uninformed activity into the system and pretend that it is good. There is no learning here.
- If you have a national set of definitions that reflect the state of the art as you, the experts and practitioners understand it, you say "here are the definitions we will use unless you can tell us why we shouldn't".
- that way, you have a core against which you can test best practices. People can test what they are doing against a national norm or standard and they can improve their own work.
- if you allow standards to be written individually, you will get standards that reflect the work that people and agencies are now doing, removing the pressure to grow and improve.
- you are going to get status quo forever.
- this system has the promise of stimulating and promoting learning, but only if you put it out there as a place to start and allow *some* variation.
- biggest mistake the National Task Force made was letting people write any indicator in that they wanted to.

JAKOPIC

- No - the measures people wrote were better than the ones the Task Force developed
- and list grew and grew, were non-specific and could not be used as they were written.

- then the Task Force let people write what they wanted to stop the discussion .

#### BURCH

- taking exception with Jim (MASTERS).
- look at the language of the Community Scale. It is difficult to distort those definitions.
- if people use system honestly, you don't distort.

#### HAMILTON

- in California, our original proposal was a blank scale with general guidelines.
- even those were not sufficiently specific
- we have been considering some statewide standards, that are general enough that local agencies can tailor them to some degree, but that tighten up just what is concerning you.
- they reduce the chance that one agency's "safe" is another agency's "vulnerable" by giving a definition to every cell on the scale instead of five very generic definitions of the scale.
- we told people they could tweak the statewide scale if they needed to.

HAMILTON need to wind up, and hear some last thoughts Some very specific questions for our consultants:

#### **ARE WE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?**

#### **SHOULD WE KEEP WORKING ON THIS?**

#### **IF SO, WHAT SHOULD BE OUR HIGHEST PRIORITIES?**

#### CAMMERS GOODWIN

- definitely heading in right direction. I like the Family model and Community model, but think the Agency model needs work.
- as re aggregating data, and consistency, training issues come up.
- don't limit yourselves to scales - use focus groups, surveys, visitor cards, etc.
- make sure you keep the people in the process - be sure the people you serve are involved at every step.

#### WADE

- also think you are going in the right direction.
- recommendation: start that feedback loop, make adaptations as you go forward, before you go to the next level.
- you may want to give everyone, particularly the consultants, a way to respond in greater detail to this symposium, perhaps with a questionnaire or some other follow-up mechanism.

#### KETTNER

- I am boggled! My expertise is in area of program planning, design, outcome evaluation. When I look at all the dimensions you have to deal with, I see it goes way beyond that.
- when I saw the community dimension, I wondered how that could improve organizational performance and I see you are looking at something a little different.
- you added the political dimension, and I ask how you can satisfy funders, legislators, with information from one instrument.
- I am not sure if one system can be useful to the client, to case managers, and to politicians.
- the most useful perspective is that we want clean honest data about our clients and what is happening with them, learn from them, then use that information to inform your system based on what we know about outcomes.
- hopefully that info is useful to higher level administrators and politicians, but if its not, at least you are trying to reach a level of excellence.
- I see importance of looking at what is happening in the community in terms of the inter-relationship with what is happening to families.
- someone needs to do a community profile: what are the slots in this community for child care, jobs, housing, etc., and how many people need those slots - quantify resources and need), so that workers don't assume they or the family is to blame when family fails to thrive.
- address those kinds of issues with a Community Profile. But that is a different community profile from what you are doing with this scale.
- Lillian (Judd) and Jim's (Masters) exchange today clarified that in my mind because I was thinking the California scale did a better job of mirroring family scales, then in a conversation at lunch, I learned you have different units of workers

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who do community work. In the same way family advocates need to measure their success, so do community workers doing macro-level interventions need to be able to measure their success.

- so those are really scales that fit into two different parts of the organization - both workable.
- the architecture is sound - don't change it.
- work toward uniform dimensions over time.
- I fear that the weight of system can sink it at worker level. It has to be simplified to be user friendly.
- based on what I have seen and on the discussion yesterday and today, you probably have all the expertise you need to come up with the right system.
- look at the Omni Planning system from Oregon. Talk to Jack's (BURCH) staff to learn about the Positive Planning Model.

#### BRUNER

- this is an adventure in innovation
- in these early stages we are proto-typing. You will learn how to use these, and where they are successful.
- field work and feedback are very important.
- we have to create structures to guide practice.
- scales are useful, multi-dimensional nature of scales is critical when dealing with human beings.
- make sure you know about similar efforts in other fields.

#### HAMILTON

Thanks all for participating

END