

Community Capacity Building

Summary of Significant Trends:

There are few insulators from the pervasiveness of today's rapid change. Rural and urban areas alike are affected by changing economies, demographics, social norms, family structures, and societal emphases. These rapid changes require North Carolina's local institutions, organizations, services, and resources to make rapid adjustments. However, even with the changes that have been made, existing community agencies and organizations are inadequate to keep up with the continually changing community needs. Collaboration is the key.

Community capacity building efforts bring together community members and organizations to work together to identify and address complex community issues. Communities can optimize the timeliness of the identification, development and utilization of their local resources through community capacity building collaborative efforts.

Emerging Trends and Issues:

With the downward trends in formal associations and engagement, there is growing concern about how to address current complex problems. Local issues range from crime rates, to local job opportunities, to school dropout rates. Local problems are also exacerbated by national concerns such as the economy, education fund-

ing, terrorism, disease, war, and violence. Without concerted attention, these problems will only grow. To prevent these problems from growing, these issues must be addressed through the collaborative effort of involved and engaged community members.

A recent study in North Carolina has shown that community collaboration can be an important component in prevention of disease. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service project: *Southern Appalachia Leadership on Initiative Cancer* (SALIC) formed community-based coalitions in Appalachian counties in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia which sought to increase the mammography rate among women age 50 and above and thereby lower the mortality rate for breast cancer among this population. Community members in participating counties showed a 20.1 % increase in mammography rates while increases in the comparison counties averaged 3.6%. (Garland, B., SALIC Final Report, 2000). Clearly community capacity building efforts, in this case developing community-based coalitions, can be an effective force in addressing community needs and facilitating solutions to community problems.

Relevance of Trends to County Programs:

Community capacity building efforts bring together community members and help them

work together to identify and address community issues. Communities can optimize the timeliness of the identification, development and utilization of their local resources through community capacity building and collaboration efforts.

Solving community problems requires the talents and resources of all community members. Experiences in leadership development and community capacity building have been unavailable to or underutilized by all community members. Both leadership development and community capacity building are key factors in the development and sustainability of communities that support families. While community collaborations become increasingly important to address complex community problems, participation and buy-in become more difficult to obtain.

Programs that teach organizations how to mobilize members and effectively partner with diverse populations will be more successful in their collaborative efforts.

Investing in improving community collaborative efforts will not only reduce redundancy in community organizations' efforts, but will increase the diversity of solutions and the resources available to address complex problems.

Sources of Supporting Data:

Kids Count:

<http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/census/>

North Carolina Child Trends

<http://www.ncchild.org>

CYFERnet: <http://www.cyfernet.org/>

U.S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/>

Sustainable Measures

<http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/>

Office of State Planning:

<http://www.ospl.state.nc.us/>

Pew Partnership

<http://www.pew-partnership.org>

National Issues Forum <http://www.nifi.org/>

Kettering Foundation <Http://www.kettering.org>

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