CHAPTER ELEVEN
HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES

Stephen M. Marson and Frederick H. Stephens

Robeson County has gained fifteen new companies since 1996 and existing companies have had twelve major expansions. In the last seven years, Robeson County has created an average of 3,861 new jobs. Although the unemployment rate is higher than the state average, the county continues find ways to assist its residents. With the challenge of high unemployment rate, residents of the county must rely on the available resources (Robeson County Office of Economic Development). The Robeson County social service network includes a number of different human service agencies and settings that can be placed into four categories: Public Sector, Private Non Profit Sector, Associations (Self-Help Groups), and Private for Profit Sector.

Public Sector

The public sector of human service comprises the largest section in the county, and includes the Department of Social Services, Health Department, Mental Health Department, Agricultural Extension Service, and Juvenile Court Counseling.

Department of Social Services

Robeson County Department of Social Services (DSS) provides citizens with resources and services to maximize their well-being and self-determination. Families depend on Robeson County (DSS) for direct services that range from the time of birth to time of death and include issues of poverty, family violence and exploitation. The mission of DSS is to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable citizens such as the poor, the children, the aged, the disabled, and the sick as well as to promote self-reliance and self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Robeson County Department of Social Services provides a wide variety of social work and economic services, as shown in Table 11.1. Additional services include overseeing Veterans Services, Fraud Investigation, and Work Permits for youth.

Community Mental Health

Community Mental Health was the brainchild of President John Kennedy, who expressed great distress upon his visit to the impoverished regions of West Virginia. The experience was an epiphany for candidate Kennedy. Within his lifetime, mental health problems had been addressed by private practitioners at the expense of wealthy Bostonian families. When he visited West Virginia, he learned that citizens without wealth were denied desperately needed social and psychological services. This realization led Kennedy to a commitment of delivering comprehensive mental health services whereby no one would be denied such services. Kennedy's original vision has not been altered until recent events.
Table 11.1 Social Work Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child and Family Services</th>
<th>Adult Social Work Services</th>
<th>Economic Service Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protective Services (abuse and neglect)</td>
<td>Protective Services (abuse and neglect)</td>
<td>Medical Coverage (Medicaid)</td>
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<td>Family Preservation and Support Services</td>
<td>Guardianship Services</td>
<td>NC Health Choice for Children</td>
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<td>Foster Care Placement</td>
<td>Adult Foster Care Services</td>
<td>Work First Family Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adolescent Parenting Program</td>
<td>Counseling and Arranging for Services</td>
<td>Work First Employment Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adoption Services</td>
<td>for Disabled Adults</td>
<td>Emergency Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Licensing of Foster Homes</td>
<td>Adult Day Care</td>
<td>Child Day Care Subsidies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Services for the Blind</td>
<td>Electronic Benefit Card (EBT) Food Stamps</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In-Home Aide Services</td>
<td>Low Income Energy Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult Care Home Recruitment and Evaluation</td>
<td>Child Support Enforcement</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special Assistance to Elderly and Disabled Adults</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transportation Services</td>
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</table>

The original vision of community mental health services of the Kennedy Administration included the concept of sliding fees at a comprehensive agency in which services would be housed under one roof. The intent was to offer mental health services that were the same quality and appearance as the services offered by private practitioners (usually psychiatrists) to the upper class. Currently, the vision of community mental health services has changed. A case management model has replaced comprehensive services under one roof. Mental health case managers are required to have an intimate understanding of services (private, public and nonprofit) throughout Robeson County. Clients who need mental health services (i.e., clinical depression) are referred to a local practitioner (i.e., a psychiatrist who specializes in depression). The revised system appears to more closely embrace Kennedy’s original vision. Troubled clients are not only receiving quality mental health services; they are also receiving these services from the same practitioners who are serving the wealthy.

The new role of mental health case managers has changed how community mental health centers function. Unlike the early days, where the primary role of the community mental health worker was to provide psychotherapy, the current mental health case manager functions more like a clearinghouse of social and psychological needs. It is common for Robeson County mental health case managers to coordinate housing for successfully discharged psychiatric patients in conjunction with follow-up medical maintenance. They coordinate referrals for job training and/or rehabilitation. This requires case managers to be experts in Robeson County transportation logistics. In addition, they must address basic needs of their clients such as food. With a typical caseload of 200, diligent case managers also provide short term counseling services for their clients. This occurs when the environmental stress factors of the client do not warrant a referral to a private practitioner.

Cooperative Extension Service (Formerly: Agriculture Extension Service)

The Cooperative Extension Service of Robeson County is one of 101 agencies of its kind in North Carolina. An Extension Service is located in every county and on the Cherokee Indian Reservation. The professional staff at the Robeson County office provides the best source of unbiased and research based
information critical to rural lifestyles. The agency is divided into four service areas. These include: Agricultural Services, Family and Consumer Sciences, Community and Rural Development and 4-H and Youth Services. Its official mission statement is:

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service helps people improve the quality of their lives by providing scientifically-based information and informal educational opportunities focused on issues and needs.

For nearly 100 years, the Cooperative Extension Service of Robeson County has provided a wide-range of high quality practical services and information to the citizens of Robeson County. Its reputation is unparalleled in the county. For example, within the rural community, residents will know the name of their county agent. Although the presentation of the quirky Mr. Kimbel (from the TV show Green Acres) is well known as a grossly false portrayal of the importance of the county agent in the rural community, the agents and the rural community accept the portrayal of Mr. Kimbel with good humor.

The 4-H organization is the most successful and prominent youth organization in Robeson County. Youth participation in 4-H outnumbers the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and church youth groups combined. The table below (Table 11.2) illustrates the last five years of participation in the Robeson County 4-H organization.

The Department of Social Services, Community Mental Health and Cooperative Extension Service are located in one convenient and physically attractive location (Fig. 11.1). The concept of having these agencies in one location saves the taxpayers a significant amount of money. In addition, the logistics offers needy citizens better case management.

Figure 11.1. Social Services, Community Mental Health and Cooperative Extension Services Buildings at junction of NC 711 and NC 72.
Human Services Agencies/Stephen M. Marson and Frederick H. Stephens

Table 11.2 Youth Participation: 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts.

![Bar Chart]

**Juvenile Justice and Delinquency**

The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s (DJJDP) mission is to protect the citizens of North Carolina from juvenile crime. The Department utilizes four approaches to accomplish its mission: (1) It works to build innovative prevention programs for all youth; (2) It provides services to develop juvenile delinquents into law-abiding citizens; (3) It partners with Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils in each county to galvanize community leaders, locally and statewide, to reduce and prevent juvenile crime; and (4) It provides both secure and alternative detention options for delinquent/undisciplined youth committed to the state’s care.

Under the Intervention/Prevention Division, DJJDP works to provide the State of North Carolina with a comprehensive strategy that helps prevent and reduce juvenile crime and delinquency. Five community-based initiatives directly report to DJJDP, while at the same time, it helps fund many other initiatives in North Carolina. One such service is Court Counseling, which is provided through district court counselor offices with staff serving juveniles in Robeson County. The accompanying flow chart explains the juvenile justice process in a visual form (Fig. 13.2). At intake, court counselors receive and evaluate all delinquent and undisciplined complaints which law enforcement or citizens refer for possible court action.

If the intake counselor determines there is no need for court action and there is no need for referral to a resource, the court counselor may close the case. If there is no need for court action but the juvenile may benefit from a referral to a community resource, the counselor may retain the case and divert it. Then the counselor would make a diversion plan or entering into a diversion contract with the juvenile and the juvenile’s parents. If a juvenile who is involved in a diversion plan or contract does not follow through as expected, the court counselor may approve the complaint for a hearing in court.
Figure 11.2. Flow Chart: NC Juvenile Justice Process
Juveniles who are determined by the court to have committed serious delinquent offenses and who have a high delinquency history are committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for placement in a youth development center.

More specialized services such as Alternative to Detention and the Transportation programs augment the primary work of court counselors. Alternative to Detention Counselors provide daily contact, supervision, and monitoring of an extremely small caseload of individuals who would otherwise need to be in secure detention.

The Private Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofit is a word that might cause confusion in many circles. It is important to define this word in order to better understand this section. Nonprofit status represents tax-exempt status and indicates that any excess resources or profit may not directly benefit or be distributed to the staff, board, or others in the same manner as a dividend distribution in a for-profit corporation. It is easy to assume that nonprofits should break even at the end of the fiscal year in the interest of providing effective service to its clientele. It is important to note that in nonprofit organizations, any profit (excess of revenue over expenses) must remain within the organization, to benefit those it exists to serve.

Nonprofit organizations deal with a number of different groups, such as its board, clients, a network of other service providers, government officials, law enforcement, the educational system, private donors, taxpayers, and possibly others. Each of the above groups may have differing, or even conflicting expectations of the nonprofit organization. At the same time, each group in its own way may be important to the organization’s financial survival.

An important source of income for at least fifteen nonprofit organizations in our local community is United Way. United Way distributes more than a half million dollars annually to several nonprofit agencies in Robeson County. A few of these organizations include Hospice of Robeson County, Lumberton Christian Care Center, Rape Crisis Center, and Southeastern Family Violence Center. Other nonprofit agencies located in our local community include the Center for Community Action and Family Alternative Services. The most up-to-date listing of private nonprofits can be found at the United Way office.

The Private for Profit Sector

Prior to the administration of President Ronald Reagan, the delivery of social services within a for-profit enterprise was rare across the United States and a totally foreign concept in Robeson County. The Reagan Administration embraced and nurtured the development of for-profit social services. Within Robeson County, the for-profit framework caught on in the delivery of health care services. We see the proliferation of for-profit nursing homes, medical rehabilitation, and educational services. However, we see very little entrepreneurial interest within a traditional social services for-profit framework. At the time of this writing, we could find only one social service agency that operated within a for-profit framework—Evergreen Behavioral Services. Because for-profit social services
agencies must depend on contracts and fees for services and are prohibited from acquiring grants, it is unlikely that additional for-profit agencies will be established in Robeson County.

Self-Help Groups

A self-help group is generally defined as a voluntary association of individuals who share a common problematic life experience or personal/family trauma. The unique aspect of self-help groups includes a goal to exclude services or intervention by professional human service workers. The most renowned self-help group is Alcoholic Anonymous (AA). In Robeson County, AA can be found in an inconspicuous building on the south-bound I-95 service road. Other self-help groups in Robeson County include:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Alanon</th>
<th>Narcotics Anonymous</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alateen</td>
<td>Parents Anonymous</td>
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Self-help groups generally do not advertise and oftentimes members make a concerted effort to hide the meeting location for the confidentiality of its membership. Such self-help groups are, therefore, difficult to locate.

Internet technology has made self-help groups available in rural areas. In addition, the Internet offers greater anonymity than self-help groups that meet in a physical location. Nearly a thousand such self-help groups can be through Microsoft Outlook, Netscape's mailer and www.yahoo.com. These self-help groups include topics such as breast cancer (a group for each type), depression, sexual orientation, smoking addiction, etc. As with most self-help groups, the Internet membership generally resents the participation of professional human service workers.

Summary

Robeson County's unique system of human service agencies has been presented in the traditional typology of organizing social service agencies. However, this presentation format may not assist the reader in finding appropriate services when the need arises. Three volumes published in the county provide helpful sources for identifying the wide-range of social services available to the citizens of Robeson. They are:

1. *Lumber River Resource Guide* is the most comprehensive directory of human services in the county. It is published by Lumber River Council of Governments.
2. *ElderHelp* is an impressive guide for services available to elderly citizens. It is published by Southeastern Regional Medical Center.
3. *Field Placement Directory* is an alphabetical listing of social service agencies that offer volunteer experiences for college students. It is published by the Social Work Program at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke and can be found at [http://www.uncp.edu/sw/protocol.html](http://www.uncp.edu/sw/protocol.html).