Improving Access to Mainstream Services for People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness
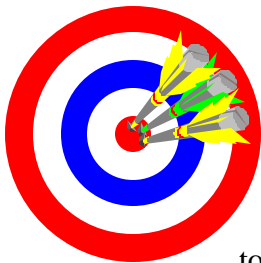
Hilton Miami Airport
Miami, Florida
December 9-11, 2003

TIPS FOR TEAMS

One of the key objectives of the Policy Academy is to create and reinforce relationships between Federal, State, and private sector organizations. The Policy Academy is for you to share your stories, build upon your successes and discern the lessons from your mistakes as you increase access to mainstream services for people experiencing chronic homelessness. The format is designed to promote team learning. We have encouraged each State to form a team of key policymakers and stakeholders, who together, will make a difference. Our hope is that state teams will use their time- before, during, and after the Academy- to push and probe for answers to tough questions, challenge their own assumptions and return home eager to move ahead.

These worksheets are intended to help teams get the most out of this project. We have developed these materials as assistance tools, and you are free to use them or to follow your own path.

GETTING READY

Before you arrive at the Policy Academy, take a few moments to consider your own personal goals for improving access to mainstream services for chronically homeless persons. The following questions might help you focus:

- What is the "better future" I envision for "chronically" homeless persons with regards to accessing mainstream services?

- Which part of this future am I totally committed to?

- What enables me to build or prevents me from building this future?

- How confident am I that others share my image?

- How much do I know about the actual experiences of the homeless in regards to accessing mainstream services? How do I learn about their experiences?

- How well do I understand our state's policies and programs that influence homeless persons with serious Mental Health and Substance Abuse problems?

- What would I like to learn from my teammates?

- What would I like to contribute to the team?

- What do I want to gain from this project?

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TEAM STRUCTURE
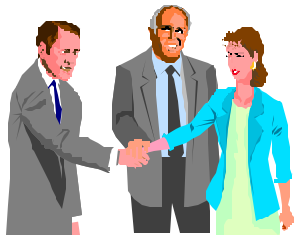
You have time to work together but no time to waste. These practices might enhance your team's efficiency.

- **Choose A Leader.** The leader's role is to enable, not direct. Teamwork is like a jazz ensemble. The leader sets the key and the tempo, and the team makes the music. The leader is responsible for ensuring that the team defines its tasks and stays on focus. You might want to rotate leadership in order to share the responsibility among team members.

- **Establish Tasks, Timetable and Timekeeper.** Determine how you want to use your time blocks each day. Set time limits on tasks. Appoint a timekeeper who will be firm and persistent.

- **Select A Scribe.** The scribe captures the pearls of wisdom from the team. The scribe enables the team to record and reflect upon what members have said and put ideas aside without losing them.

- **Develop Team Ground Rules.** Teams function best when they develop and commit to their own process rules. We've included some popular ground rules in this packet.

- **Determine Decision-Making Process.** Do you want unanimous consent, simple majority or consensus? We've included some tips on building consensus for you to consider.

- **Check In and Check Out.** Begin and end meetings with a **quick** barometer reading. Here's an approach that really works: Ask each member to state, in two words, (absolutely enforce the two word rule) how they are doing. The leader should model the response at first to reinforce the two-word rule. You'll be amazed by how much information you can gather from each other . . . Skeptical/willing. Impatient/frustrated. Eager/optimistic. . .

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POPULAR GROUND RULES

Here are some examples of ground rules that teams find useful.

Everyone participates

All ideas are encouraged

We will strive for facts and understand opinions

We will test assumptions

We encourage thoughtful disagreement

We will stay focused on tasks and discourage distractions
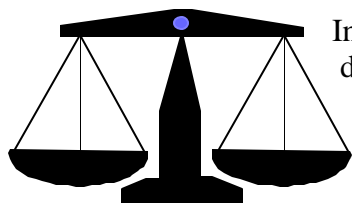
All critical decisions will be made by consensus

The leader has the team's permission to keep us on task and on time

Each of us takes responsibility for our collective success

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TEAM DECISIONS

In Quaker circles a member stands aside when he or she can abide by a decision but not agree with it. The member is comfortable enough with the decision to not work against it.

Consensus is a decision that most team members support and all members can live with. Teams who use a consensus process find that they are more able to deal with tension and disagreement as constructive elements of decision-making.

Here is a handy approach to consensus decision making for you to consider.

Calling For A Vote.
A member can make a motion and call for a vote at any time during the team's deliberations. This is a quick way to get a reading on points of agreement and disagreement.

The Vote. A consensus vote offers three choices:

- Yes, I'm For It
- No, I'm Against It
- OK, I Can Live With It

The Dialogue. The No voters are encouraged to explain why they object. The object is to explore differences, not mask them. Team members focus on the core issues raised by these objections and the strengths of the initial proposal. Members attempt to find a solution that addresses the issues without compromising the strengths. It helps if the group agrees to a time limit for discussion enforced by the timekeeper. Once the group reaches a solution, they vote again. If there are mostly *OK, I can live with* it votes, the proposal needs more work.