

# For the Common Good

## 2000 Fact Sheet: Local Linkage Team Case Studies

### Collaboration: Lessons from the Field

For the Common Good is a statewide project with the goal of facilitating the formation of local interagency linkage teams throughout Ohio. The local teams focus on improving services to at-risk youth and adults through the development of collaborative interagency linkages. Initiated in 1990 as a result of the Family Support Act of 1988, the project has now expanded its focus to all workforce development efforts and operates under the direction of a team composed of state-level staff.

Of the 47 Common Good Local Linkage Teams (LLTs) formed since the project's inception in 1990, approximately half have remained active and many have made remarkable progress in developing integrated services with a customer-centered focus.

Three follow-up surveys of the LLTs have provided some information about what factors have contributed to their success. However, the amount and kind of information that can be collected through a follow-up survey is limited. During the summer of 1999, a case study of five Common Good LLTs was conducted to more fully understand what factors lead to successful collaboration at the local level. This Fact Sheet will provide an overview of

- Procedures used to conduct the study
- The five cases
- Common elements that lead to successful interagency collaboration
- Recommendations

### Study Procedures

The study was designed to identify the essence of successful teams that can be adapted by others seeking to establish or strengthen interagency linkages at the local level. In addition, this study also sought to examine the LLT's function and the extent to which policies and decisions are effectively implemented at the local levels. The studies also highlight features that appear to facilitate systemic change. In conjunction with the State Team, the following LLTs were selected for inclusion in the study: Montgomery County, Portage County, Scioto County, Washington County, and Wayne County. The five LLTs were selected because of their diversity in



terms of location and methods of operation. Sources of information included, but were not limited to: LLT member interviews; personal observation of project team; published documents (newsletter articles, media releases, brochures, meeting agendas, etc.); and the 1992, 1994, and 1997 follow-up surveys.

### The Five Cases

#### Montgomery County

In existence for approximately 10 years, members of the Montgomery County/Dayton City Team (originally known as the Montgomery County Common Good Team) have over time, seen their team evolve and add new members. In 1993, adopting their current name (Montgomery County/Dayton City At-Risk Linkage Team), the team formulated a list of objectives that included

- To increase staff awareness and identification of community services to enhance referral process.
- To provide for child care in unique and occasional situations specifically during GED testing.
- To develop a plan for ongoing contact of key players.

Outside of regular team meetings, the Montgomery County Common Good Team has conducted only one major activity: a cross-agency training for the staff of the agencies involved with the Common Good LLT to provide information about the services provided.

#### Value of the Common Good LLT

- Meetings provide a means for developing strong communication links, the facilitation of work within and between agencies and the reduction of turf issues.
- Collaboration creates a bond that does not happen automatically and that serves as a means for developing and sustaining the linkages.

#### Portage County

Also in existence for approximately 10 years, members of the Portage County LLT had as their original goal to improve transportation for adults in their county. Members of the LLT worked with their local representative to the Ohio House of Representatives, and a law was passed allowing adults over the age of 18 to ride on public school buses. Shortly thereafter, the team disbanded. Resurrected in May of 1995, the current Portage County Common Good Linkage Team is committed to improving services and delivering performance to the community through the development of collaborative interagency linkages. In addition, the team seeks to have all agency staff better informed about the work of all the agencies represented on the team. To achieve this goal, members of the team sponsored an interagency orientation session, during which staff members from agencies represented on the team provided brief overviews about their work. Members of the Portage County team also conduct regular monthly meetings, and monthly breakfast meetings on the last Friday during the school year. Information sharing is the primary purpose of these meetings, as speakers from community agencies and organizations provide information about their programs. The Portage linkage team has also sponsored job fairs, and each Monday, the team circulates a faxed listing of full- and part-time job openings for Portage and Geauga Counties.

#### Value of the Common Good LLT

- Facilitates communication with and about the local one-stop center, as well as the many changes taking place at the state level.

Common goals...  
Common customers...  
Common needs...  
Common challenges...

## Scioto County

The current One-Stop for the Common Good Local Linkage Team represents the second team for Scioto County; the first team disbanded, and this new team was formed in 1997. With 24 agencies on its original mailing list, that list has already grown to more than 55 agencies, civic organizations, churches, and businesses. The local linkage team has also merged with the local One-Stop project (as reflected in their name), recognizing the mutual aims of the two groups. Members of the Scioto County team have worked on issues as far-reaching as a community clothes closet, reliable transportation, and accessible dental care for all in Scioto County. In addition, their "Be A Voice" forum brought together for the first time in one place, 16 public service agencies with community residents to promote dialogue and enhance service delivery.

### Value of the Common Good LLT

- Provides an arena where group members are respected and can speak openly; when assistance is requested, requests are carefully considered and not refused outright.

## Washington County

Formed in 1993, the Washington County Partners drew membership from previous networking groups such as JobNet and monthly agency lunches. In recent years, the Washington County Partners organization has shifted its focus from primarily a case management approach to a broader community approach. Activities of the Washington County team have included sponsoring of semi-annual legislative forums which are typically attended by the Washington County state senator and representatives, and an aide from the U.S. senator's office. In addition, the Washington county team has developed a new program called "JUMP Ahead in the Workplace," a job readiness workshop.

### Value of the Common Good LLT

- Shared knowledge and services help to expand services offered to clients.
- Collaboration fosters greater agency efficiency and a reduction in frustration of clients and staff.
- Ongoing communication results in client referrals and sharing of resources between meetings as well as reduction in turf issues.

## Wayne County

In existence since May of 1995, members of the Wayne County Common Good Team strive toward objectives that include

- To build a public and private employment service linkage through planning, coordination, and collaboration.

- To create a linkage organization of public employment assistance and ancillary support programs.
- To reduce barriers to employment for shared and chronically unemployed or underemployed clients.

Since its inception in May 1995, the Wayne County Common Good Team has never failed to convene for its monthly meeting. One of the results of the team, is the creation of a common, customer information sharing form and agreement for use by its members. The team's design for an automated customer information entry and sharing system was later adopted by the five county one-stop proposal. In addition, the team has developed a motivational workshop, and conducts a series of cross-systems training on member organizations, grant development and innovative service projects. Through the creation of a private nonprofit corporation, For the Common Good, separate from the linkage, the team has been able to secure grants and other resources to conduct linked services. The corporation is used for marketing both the program and the linkages to accounts interested in welfare reform and for other fruitful linkage activities.

### Value of the Common Good LLT

- Provides a collaborative environment where strong relationships benefit the clients in the sense that they are directed to the right person and service.

## Common Elements

The following common elements were identified as important factors in the Common Good teams studied. Although each team did not share every element, the elements discussed have contributed to success in developing and sustaining successful interagency linkages.

- **Regular Communication** – Regular and frequent communication sets the stage for successful collaboration. Members of more than one team commented that it is not unusual to be in daily contact with one or more Common Good team member.
- **Customer-centered Focus** – Working jointly to provide better service for common customers is perceived to be the primary purpose of Common Good teams.
- **Shared Leadership** – In terms of leadership, most teams resemble a jazz ensemble as opposed to an orchestra. Leadership emerges based upon individual talent and interest.
- **Structure and Focus** – A plan provides structure and focus for team activities. For most teams studied,

projects and activities are an important part of the plan.

- **Esprit de Corps** – Respect for one another and commitment to the Common Good team is evident.
- **Relationship to One-Stop System** – Teams expressed varying relationships to the one-stop center in their areas. The most successful teams perceive their mission as transcending the one-stop system. Others are struggling to develop a niche for Common Good in light of one-stop implementation.
- **Support from the Common Good State Team** – Initial and continuing support from the State Team is important to all teams studied. Many appreciated the benefit of uninterrupted time provided by the project-sponsored workshops that allowed them to develop action plans.
- **Lack of Time** – Although not an element for success, the most frequently mentioned challenge to the work of a Common Good team is the lack of time.

## Recommendations

Based on findings from the study, the following recommendations are designed to provide guidance for the next stage of the For the Common Good project

- The Common Good State Team should continue to provide leadership for the development and support of interagency linkage teams at the local level.
- The relationship of the Common Good project to the one-stop system should continue to be studied.
- A meeting for the purpose of "learning from one another" should be held for local Common Good teams.
- The Common Good State Team should support the continuing study of local collaborative linkage activities in Ohio.

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*For the Common Good is supported by funds from the Ohio Department of Education, Office of Career-Technical and Adult Education. For further information, contact Susan Imel, Center on Education and Training for Employment, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090: (614) 292-8606, or (800) 848-4815, extension 2-8606; E-mail: imel.1@osu.edu. To review the full text of this case study or to review prior Common Good publications, check the project web site at the following URL: <http://literacy.kent.edu/CommonGood> David Cofer developed this Fact Sheet.*



