

Enhancing Family Advocacy Networks: An Analysis of the Roles of Sponsoring Organizations

Harold E. Briggs, Ph.D.

Nancy M. Koroloff, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT: Family participation in shaping system reforms in children's mental health has increased over the past ten years. In 1990 the National Institute of Mental Health funded the development and enhancement of 15 statewide advocacy organizations that were to be controlled and staffed by families of children who have serious emotional disorders. These family advocacy organizations had three major goals: to establish support networks, to advocate for service system reforms, and to develop statewide family advocacy networks. Seven family advocacy networks worked with sponsoring organizations because they needed assistance and/or could not receive funding directly. State and local chapters of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and the National Mental Health Association served in this capacity. Because there were no guidelines to educate sponsoring organizations about their interorganizational roles and responsibilities, staff of some sponsoring organizations used approaches that were supportive and effective, while staff in other organizations used methods that were counterproductive. The information and recommendations discussed in this paper are based on evaluation data and observations of the relationships between seven sponsoring organizations and family advocacy groups over a three-year period. This paper proposes a conceptual framework that includes: (1) a clear definition of the sponsoring organization's roles, and (2) an analysis of the advantages, limitations, and critical issues for the sponsoring organization.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, advocacy organizations run by family members have made significant contributions to the development of legislation and policies that promote support to families of children with serious

emotional disorders (Briggs, Koroloff, Richards & Friesen, 1993). Mandated as a requirement of the Child and Adolescent Service Systems Program (CASSP), family participation is a critical aspect of a responsive children's mental health service system. Many family members who wish to have an impact on the way services are planned and delivered focus their activities through the collective efforts of a statewide family advocacy network. These newly developing family advocacy networks are often organized under the auspices of a sponsoring organization.

While family advocacy networks are fast becoming a major support system for families of children with serious emotional, behavioral, and mental disorders, little is known about their development. Since 1987, more than 25 statewide family advocacy networks have received funding, first from the National Institute of Mental Health and more recently from the Center for Mental Health Services. Family advocacy networks are funded to pursue three goals: (1) establish support services; (2) participate in system of care reforms; and (3) further develop a statewide advocacy capacity. Each of these family organizations received funding with the understanding that the families of children with serious emotional disorders would make decisions and govern network programs.

A sponsoring organization, on the other hand, is a tax-exempt independent organizational entity that serves in a support capacity to a newly emerging organization. The roles of the sponsoring organization can be as discrete as check writing and bookkeeping or more extensive, such as teaching family members how to develop policy and methods of governance. The sponsoring organization is most often called on to serve as the fiscal liaison between the funding source and the fledgling organization. Sometimes referred to as mentoring organizations, sponsoring organizations vary in their primary mission; some provide direct social services, others provide information and referral services, and some serve as trade associations or multipurpose advocacy organizations. Common sponsoring organizations in children's mental health include state chapters of the National Mental Health Associations and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and federally funded Parent Training Institutes.

Sponsoring organizations are important to the development of family advocacy networks, although the relationship may sometimes be conflictual. In this paper, we will describe the common roles and responsibilities assumed by sponsoring organizations with regard to family advocacy networks. Because association with a sponsoring organization is becoming an increasingly popular strategy for fledgling family networks, understanding the pitfalls and advantages within the relationship is paramount. This paper is an initial effort to explicate the issues and roles important to the collaborative relationship formed when sponsoring organizations and family advocacy networks work together.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the relevant literature was conducted to examine the nature of interorganizational relationships and the state of research in this area. In general, the interorganizational literature assumes that the relationship under examination occurs between professionally run organizations. Little literature is available that clarifies the variables that are important to grassroots, consumer or family-run organizations as partners in interorganizational relationships. This lack of direction allows both entities flexibility in defining their roles and responsibilities, although minimal guidelines can be extracted from literature on the relationship between formal organizations. Whetten (1981) offers a useful perspective on the conditions that promote cooperation within an organizational dyad. He poses five preconditions to establishing successful voluntary interorganizational relationships (pp. 16-17) “(1) a belief in coordination; (2) analysis of need for coordination; (3) knowledge of potential partners; (4) assessment of compatibility and desirability; and (5) maintenance capacity.” Examination of these preconditions might lead each organization to determine its respective agendas, expectations, skills and readiness to participate in interorganizational relationships.

To further ensure successful interorganizational coordination, Whetten (1981) also recommends a five-step problem-solving approach (pp. 18-20). This includes, “(1) analyze present situation; (2) manage organizational decisions; (3) manage interorganizational decisions; (4) take action; and (5) measure impact on objectives.” If applied in relationships between sponsoring organizations and family advocacy networks, this problem-solving approach provides a set of checks and balances for the relationship. This mechanism allows each organization to monitor its individual and collective progress on interorganizational goals and objectives. Whetten's approach also provides opportunities for the detection and correction of problem areas.

Interorganizational arrangements between sponsoring organizations and family advocacy networks are more likely to prosper under clear definitions. To achieve some degree of accountability, it is necessary to specify the purpose of the relationship and the roles and functions each organization is expected to perform. These specifications might include factors studied by Warren (1967) such as goals, decision making, authority, division of labor, commitment to leadership and orientation. Akinbode and Clark (1976) recommend that partners of interorganizational relationships consider variables such as conflict, competition, cooperation, merger and the environmental conditions needed to promote the relationship. Clearly, defining the purpose of the interorganizational relationship and the roles and responsibilities provides the opportunity for each organization to lay out its expectations.

APPROACH

Since 1987, the staff of the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health have worked with developing statewide family advocacy organizations, providing both technical assistance to the developing networks and evaluating their progress. The focus of this paper is on the 15 statewide family advocacy networks that received funding from 1990 to 1993. Of these 15 statewide organizations, seven were affiliated with sponsoring organizations. Five of the sponsoring organizations were chapters of the Mental Health Association, and two were associated with the Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

Information-Gathering Process

Information from these seven organizational dyads form the basis for the ideas presented in this paper. As part of the evaluation, the 15 statewide family organizations were required to provide information through three established mechanisms: (1) on-site interviews; (2) quarterly reports; and (3) telephone contacts.

On-Site Interviews. Each statewide family organization received at least one on-site visit from Research and Training Center staff. The site visits were conducted during the summer of 1991. A structured interview was developed and the parent coordinator, sponsoring organization's executive, advisory board members, state mental health staff and parent participants were interviewed to document progress, barriers, dilemmas, and challenges to developing a statewide advocacy and support network for families of children with serious emotional disorders. In addition to tracking the seven objectives defined by the grant, several questions were included in the interview schedule that addressed the relationship between the statewide family advocacy network and the sponsoring organization. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed; the information was then analyzed by Research and Training Center staff.

Quarterly Reports. Over the three-year period, each family organization submitted quarterly reports describing progress on each of the seven objectives. Structured questions were posed to elicit a narrative description of the progress, obstacles, and future plans of each statewide family advocacy network.

Regular Telephone Contact. Telephone contact was maintained with each family advocacy network

to provide information, support and assistance in problem solving. Information on critical incidents that occurred during the process of developing a partnership between the family network and the sponsoring organization was often collected from these calls.

As context for the conceptual framework that follows, the relationships between several sponsoring organizations and family advocacy networks are described.

Relationship #1:

In this organizational dyad, the sponsoring organization serves as the fiscal agent, but has no other formal connection with the statewide family advocacy network. The family network has separate office space, maintains its own staff, and organizes the day-to-day office routine without consultation or administrative support by the sponsoring organization. The organizations are on friendly terms. They share information and sponsor joint legislative activities. The staff of the sponsoring organization are helpful and supportive when approached by the parent coordinator.

Relationship #2:

In this situation, the sponsoring organization provides bookkeeping and accounting services, shares a receptionist, underwrites low cost office space and makes expensive office equipment and support services available for a minimal charge. Although the statewide family network makes its own decisions and functions independently, the resources and expertise of the sponsoring organization staff are always available. The statewide family network has its own 501 (c) 3 status, but chooses to maintain an interdependent and collaborative relationship with the sponsoring organization.

Relationship #3:

In the beginning of the relationship, this organizational dyad had different ideas and expectations about roles in areas such as governance, reporting relationships, flow of communication, and support. The statewide family network thought the sponsoring organization would provide bookkeeping and accounting services only, but shortly realized they were being viewed as a department within the sponsoring organization. The relationship experienced a great deal of conflict, which provided the impetus for the statewide family network to accelerate a series of family directed planning and organizational development activities. The statewide family network is now an independent

organization, performs its own fiscal functions, and is located in separate office space. Staff maintain an informal relationship with their former sponsoring organization.

Relationship #4:

As an example of a less supportive situation, this statewide family network was established as an autonomously functioning department of the sponsoring organization with the understanding that its work would not be interfered with by the sponsoring organization. The executive director of the sponsoring organization developed a collegial relationship with the parent coordinator and only provided technical assistance and support when requested. Although officially defined in superior/subordinate organizational terms, the operational relationship between the two entities was participatory and non-hierarchical in nature. This arrangement changed after the executive director of the sponsoring organization left and the board of directors hired a new executive director with a different style of leadership. The flexibility and autonomy were eliminated and the parent coordinator was expected to adhere to the policies and practices of the sponsoring organization and be supervised by the new executive director. The collegial relationship between the parent coordinator and the executive director deteriorated to the point that the families involved in running the network began to lose interests and many of the members resigned. The parent coordinator left shortly after the new executive director was hired.

Although most sponsoring organizations and statewide family advocacy groups entered the relationship with the expectation that issues would be addressed as they occurred, a number of problems persisted and have created barriers to promoting healthy collaboration for some groups. Specific issues that occurred in limited situations include: (1) parent coordinator had no say about how grant funds were spent; (2) the parent coordinator could not conduct grant activities without permission from staff of the sponsoring organization; (3) family members had little or no influence over planning the activities of the grant; (4) family members were excluded from board meetings; (5) information was not shared with parent coordinator; and (6) fund raising was conducted without consulting the family members involved in the organization.

Most of the relationships between sponsoring organizations and family advocacy networks experienced conflict and misunderstandings at some point in the relationship's development. In many of the relationships, the definition of "parent-control" had to be clarified. In some situations immediate on-site training in family-centered principles and parent-professional collaboration resolved the misunderstanding. In other cases, interpersonal conflicts, power struggles, and job stress exacerbated the

problems until the parent coordinator left the grant.

It is quite possible that many of these issues could have been handled with less stress and pain if both organizations understood the nature and scope of interorganizational collaboration. Several factors that show promise for improving collaboration include: (1) knowledge of the advantages and challenges of interorganizational relationships; (2) clearly defined interorganizational roles and responsibilities; (3) initial training to guide each member of the organizational dyad in selecting and performing roles and responsibilities; (4) agreement on using a collaborative/partnership approach rather than a superior/subordinate one; and (5) an established capability to resolve disputes (Briggs, et al, 1993).

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The sponsoring organization roles and responsibilities defined below are synthesized from the information provided to us by the statewide family advocacy networks and through our interaction with them. The primary role that the sponsoring organization plays is determined by the goal of the relationship. These goals can include: (1) to get the family advocacy group started; (2) to account and document use of funds; (3) to provide support to organizational development; and/or (4) to support emerging independence. These roles may be combined and new roles may be negotiated over time. Table 1 presents the potential roles of the sponsoring organization.

Initial Facilitator

As initial facilitators, the sponsoring organization is at least partially responsible for getting the family organization started, bringing family members together, and helping to prepare the proposal that results in a contract or grant. Early on in the relationship, the sponsoring organization's primary activities usually include identifying and mobilizing family members and professionals with common interests and providing oversight and direction to the leadership of family organizations.

As the relationship evolves over time, the sponsoring organization orchestrates planning activities such as training aimed at increasing the number of families and professionals interested in enhancing and further developing the family advocacy organization. As the family members begin to assume leadership and responsibility for the management of the organization and as the sponsoring organization develops a clear and enhanced family-centered orientation, efforts to target system deficiencies and modify public policy to provide more support to families emerge.

Advantages. Advantages to the sponsoring organization that assumes the initial facilitator's role include the satisfaction of knowing that they assisted in empowering families to make system changes on behalf

of families of children and adolescents with disabilities. The degree of satisfaction varies depending upon the frame of reference and particular preferences of the sponsoring organization. Those sponsoring organizations seeking to include families in the planning, implementation, evaluation, and advocacy of social welfare policies will experience satisfaction as the system produces more opportunities for families and children.

A second advantage to the initial facilitator is the expansion of their vision and understanding about family participation in service delivery. Sponsoring organizations that adopt this principle and ensure its implementation will enhance their degree of accountability to children and families. Having an appreciation and understanding of the consumer may create good public relations, additional visibility, and organizational development opportunities reserved primarily for professional organizations seeking to enhance the capacities of all consumers.

A third advantage to the sponsoring organization is the education and experience staff members receive as an outgrowth of working with families of children with serious emotional disorders. As partners in the helping process, family members offer insights into how to balance the demands of family, work, and personal issues based in their own real life experiences. Learning by watching family members handle the diverse and complex challenges of dealing with other families and managing their own situations produces a valuable reservoir of practice wisdom. These experiences provide lessons that members of the sponsoring organization can share and transfer in their work with other families.

Limitations. Although the sponsoring organization may have an investment in the development of the organization and family leadership, it will encounter limits in the role of initial facilitator. One limitation to the sponsoring organization is the time and effort needed to locate families. Encouraging families to discuss their personal situations with strangers and volunteering to promote system change may not be easy because there is little reinforcement or compensation. Except for humanitarian and mutual support reasons, there are few benefits that sponsoring organizations can offer families for becoming advocates. Clearly, sponsoring organizations cannot promise or guarantee that any change will be forthcoming, nor can sponsoring organizations ensure a reduction in the stress or plight of family members as a result of becoming involved. It takes a great deal of time to conduct outreach activities and canvass communities to identify potential or eligible family members, in part because confidentiality laws prohibit the disclosure of their identities by the professionals serving them. Outreach to families may be supportive during a crisis or may increase knowledge about children's

TABLE 1. An Analysis of the Roles of Sponsoring Organizations

| | ADVANTAGES TO SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS | LIMITATIONS OF SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS | CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE RELATIONSHIP |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| Initial Facilitator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower families to make system change • Expand understanding of family participation • Learn about challenges facing families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment of time to locate families • Risk of increased expectation for Support • Risk of conflict with and among family members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining mission and direction of family organization • Expanding number of families involved and leadership • Developing governance structure for family organization • Anticipate limits of relationship |
| Fiscal Agent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires limited time and expense • Receive administrative overhead • Develop capacity to serve as fiscal agent for others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and professional liability for funds • Family organization may need loans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include family members In fiscal decision-making • Teach family members to develop and manage financial systems |
| Organizational Mentor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of a family advocacy organization to network • Sense of accomplishment and satisfaction for role in system change • Enhancement of consulting skills resulting in additional requests | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive need for time and support • Conflict over choice and actions of family leadership • Risk of conflict over issues of autonomy and governance • Risk of competition for some resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of life cycle of family organization • Timing of move from support to system advocacy • Developing family leadership skills • Development of family organization infrastructure |
| Independence Consultant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to family advocacy and system change • Collaborative relationship with new peer organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict over emerging independence • Competition over volunteers, resources, and influence • Experience role strain due to changing relationship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement about future directions and plans • Development of a peer relationships and mutual respect |

mental health; however, outreach activities may not directly result in high numbers of families interested in becoming advocates for change.

The second limitation for the sponsoring organizations may be the risk of increased expectations for resources and support. Clearly, as the sponsoring organization assists the family organization in getting started and completing preliminary tasks and activities, family members may turn to the sponsoring organization and expect it to support other activities. These additional tasks may not have been clearly agreed upon and may be burdensome in competition with other priorities of the sponsoring organization. These additional requests may involve resources that the sponsoring organization does not have available. If the sponsoring organization does not adequately address this expectation its credibility may be attacked.

A third limitation to the sponsoring organization may be the internal conflicts between family members that strain relationships with other groups. Disagreements are sure to arise as new organizations begin to emerge. There will always be differences of opinion that require time to resolve, and such conflicts may take resources away from other tasks and responsibilities. If these problems spill over into working relationships outside of the family organization, they may present additional problem solving and public relations responsibilities to the sponsoring organization. These additional tasks may far exceed the initial commitments of the sponsoring organization.

Critical Issues. To effectively perform the role of initial facilitator, the sponsoring organization may need to: (1) assist parents in defining a clear and feasible mission; (2) assist the family organization in developing parent leadership; (3) reach consensus and agreement with family members in areas such as governance, and preliminary organizational policies and practices; and (4) specify those areas and resources that present constraints to and conflict with the sponsoring organization. These factors need to be articulated and negotiated between both organizations as soon as practical so that there is clarity and agreement about roles and responsibilities.

Fiscal Agent

As the fiscal agent, the sponsoring organization accounts for and documents the use of grant funds. In this role the sponsoring organization typically has check writing responsibilities and is assigned the task of reporting the financial condition of the family organization. Clearly, the sponsoring organization must have a solid financial history and capability, adequate reporting systems, and experience in fiscal management. The role of fiscal agent is often assumed in combination with other roles.

Advantages. There are advantages to the sponsoring organization as the fiscal agent. The fiscal agent has a brief, but intensive responsibility that requires a predictable amount of time and resources. Often, the family organization wishes to perform all other management tasks with the exception of the fiscal function. This acknowledges that both the family organization and fiscal agent are capable of performing a set of well defined tasks without much interference from the other. The sponsoring organization may accrue additional unrestricted income for assisting the family organization. These funds may be used by the fiscal agent to defray costs of core services they provide or to acquire resources that they otherwise would not be able to afford. As issues of family participation and accountability continue throughout social service practice, the need for sponsoring organizations with experience in working with family organizations will become an attractive commodity to funding sources.

Limitations. Limitations to the sponsoring organizations as fiscal agents include several factors; the first is legal and professional liability for funds. The sponsoring organization must ensure the validity and reliability of documentation that accounts for how funds are used. This responsibility is cumbersome because there are few unobtrusive ways to guarantee that what is documented has actually occurred. Secondly, the sponsoring organization is the first place the family organization may come for a loan when payment of grant funds are slow and payroll and other accounts payables need to be satisfied. This additional request for support may cause financial strain for the sponsoring organization.

Critical Issues. The role of fiscal agent does not have to be an extremely difficult one if safeguards are used to address challenges that threaten the effectiveness of the sponsoring organization. In the role of fiscal agent, the sponsoring organization needs to encourage family member participation in addressing and resolving fiscal issues. The leadership of the family organization knows best what needs to be allocated and prioritized to meet specific needs; sponsoring organizations have expertise in developing cash flow and spending plans. Combining the selective relevant experiences of both groups provides a useful vehicle for planning the best use of limited financial resources.

As the family organization matures, the sponsoring organization may need to learn different ways of behaving to encourage additional growth and improved independent functioning of the family organization. Making joint resource decisions provides opportunities to model decision making and collaborative behaviors. Because some organizations pursue tax exempt status, it is important that the fiscal agent teach parent leaders how to build reporting systems and how to use financial information to

make decisions.

Organizational Mentor

In the organizational mentor role, the sponsoring organization provides technical assistance and consultation to enhance the infrastructure and operations of the family organization. This role is often combined with the roles of initial facilitator and fiscal agent. The goal of the organizational mentor is to assist in building a stronger family organization. The organizational mentor provides training and teaching to family members on ways to plan, implement, and evaluate services. The organizational mentor may also provide technical assistance to family organizations on ways to build family and system advocacy. Training and consultation needed by family organizations may also include: (1) methods and procedures to expand services to underserved families with special needs; (2) procedures to monitor the process and outcomes of service delivery; (3) mechanisms to supervise staff; (4) procedures to plan, implement, and reconcile the organization's finances; and (5) a recruitment, training, and retention program for prospective and current board members.

Advantages. The organizational mentor's role accrues similar advantages as those reported for the initial facilitator and fiscal agent, depending upon the way the role develops. The staff of sponsoring organizations who believe in family empowerment may find it very satisfying to know that they participated in system reform activities. The positive image of the sponsoring organization is enhanced as more people learn of the work they perform on behalf of the family organization. The addition of a strong family advocacy group to the network of the sponsoring organization broadens the service communities' capacity for advocacy.

Working with family organizations provides the organizational mentor opportunities to enhance its consultation skills. As the family organization increases the ability to function independently, a reduction in the amount of consultation and dependence should occur. The organizational mentor receives high marks for assisting the family organization and may experience additional requests from other groups with similar needs. Having experience as a sponsoring organization may create additional contracts from state and federal entities who are interested in reaching particular underserved groups.

Limitations. During the early stages of the family organization, the limitations to the organizational mentor may be similar to those reported for the initial facilitator and fiscal agent roles. Clearly, the needs of the family organization may far exceed the capacity of the organizational mentor. The organizational mentor may not have the resources or time to spend with the family organization.

There may be conflict over the choice and actions of family leadership. Dissatisfaction with parent

leadership may result in the organizational mentor either decreasing its respect or interest in the family organization or may create the need for the organizational mentor to assume some of the responsibilities that the parent leadership should assume. Tension created by conflict within the family organization may lead to coalition building which can cause friction among staff of the sponsoring organization. As the family organization grows, the probability of conflict is increased as more people with diverse opinions and agendas are added. The organizational mentor may have to meet more frequently, with more parents to mediate the conflict.

The sponsoring organization may experience conflict with the family organization over issues of governance and autonomy. The sponsoring organization may want to approve decisions and expenditures prior to any actions of the family organization. This policy decision may not rest well with family members who feel capable of following grant guidelines and making decisions about using grant funds.

The sponsoring and family organizations may compete for limited resources. The sponsoring organization may feel that it should make the final decision as to which funds or resources the family organization may pursue. If competition occurs, the sponsoring organization may be inclined to veto the family organization fundraising plan, thereby causing conflict and bad feelings between the two organizations.

Critical Issues. The organizational mentor needs to focus on the life cycle of the family organization and study those issues that are natural to organizations at different stages of development (See Koroloff & Briggs, unpublished). During the early stages of the family organization's life cycle, the organizational mentor may have to spend more time analyzing the group's way of working. Family leadership at the board and executive levels is crucial and may need to be identified and nurtured by the organizational mentor with the assistance of other family advocates. Because inadequate leadership may interfere with the growth and development of the family organization, care needs to be taken to identify those qualities, skills, and experiences that family leadership must possess and help family members to develop them. Care must be taken not to impede the natural tendencies of family-controlled organizations related to governance, decision making and capacity building.

The organizational mentor needs to assist the family organization in infrastructure development including assistance with board development, strategic planning and fund raising. Family organizations may not recognize the critical nature of these topics to their survival. The organizational mentor can be helpful by providing consultation in these key areas but avoid the temptation of taking over the responsibility.

Independence Consultant

The goal of the independence consultant is to assist the family organization in becoming an independent organization with legal, tax, and incorporation status. The sponsoring organization in this context provides supportive technical assistance as needed to help realize this major outcome. This particular goal may not be identified early in the relationship between the two organizations but may surface as the needs and interests of family leadership focuses on independence as an organizational imperative.

For example, in one state the statewide organization had no intention of pursuing independent status initially; however, the interest of the parent leadership and the need to further advance the specific aims and control of the family organization dictated such a move. In another state, the statewide family organization had always been interested in independent status but lacked the direction and capacity to move from a mutual support group to an advocacy organization. In both instances, the sponsoring organizations assisted the family organizations in becoming independent through working closely with the advisory board and family leadership to develop their organizational capacity.

Advantages. In the area of children's mental health, the independence consultant contributes to the advocacy movement by encouraging autonomy of families seeking improved service delivery. This sponsoring organization role helps family organizations develop a vision for the future and frame a viable parent-controlled institution. Another advantage to the independence consultant is the strengthening of its experience as a collaborator with families and system advocates, enhancing the interdependence, growth, and learning of both families and professionals. This particular form of collaboration educates the independence consultant about the viability of families in the planning and implementation of mental health policy and services. Lastly, the independence consultant also learns effective ways to receive support and resources from families.

Limitations. Conflict and competition between organizations may occur if roles and domain are not respected. As the family organization enhances its decision-making and planning capabilities, the independence consultant needs to be careful not to act for the family organization without consent. Failure to secure permission to act may result in a perception that the independence consultant does not respect the authority of the family organization or that the independence consultant is not trustworthy.

A second limitation to the sponsoring organization may be conflict with the family organization over issues of management and autonomy. The sponsoring organization may provide support and assistance

to the parent leadership who perceive this support as a lack of trust in its capability to manage. This conflict may result in power struggles as well as a decrease in joint resource sharing.

The independence consultant may lose status as a result of the family organization becoming independent. The sponsoring organization may not have the capacity or resources to address the new and different challenges of the independently functioning family organization. The sponsoring organization may suffer role strain and have difficulty relinquishing control over the family organization. On the other hand, the independence consultant may have the capacity to let go, but the family organization cannot, thereby continuing to be overly dependent on the sponsoring organization.

Critical Issues. To avoid the possibility of interference by or ineffectiveness of the independence consultant, agreement about future direction and plans of the family organization is essential. At minimum, milestones that signal the readiness of the family organization to become independent are important so that growth and enhancement are planned as much as possible. Agreement about the resources and capability that need to be in place is important to guide the work of independence consultants as they assist the family organization in pursuing autonomy and independence.

The independence consultant will need to change the way it interacts with the family organization as the latter emerges into independence. This means that the sponsoring organization may have to surrender control and responsibility for the delivery of services and the tasks associated with advocating system change, although it may retain some of these responsibilities through an agreement with the family organization. To maintain healthy relations, both independently functioning organizations need to adopt new codes of behavior so that the family organization may function as a peer to the independence consultant.

DISCUSSION

Sponsoring organizations perform an important function as families of children with serious emotional disorders pursue reform. The roles and issues discussed above provide preliminary guidelines to implement the functions of the sponsoring organization. Research is needed to empirically validate them. The study of the relationship between the sponsoring organization and the family advocacy group will provide important data on how to foster productive and nurturing interorganizational relationships. Future research needs to examine the effects of training and technical assistance on the capacity of sponsoring organizations to effectively collaborate with family advocacy groups.

The generalizability of this framework to other interorganizational relationships such as the

relationship between adult consumer groups and sponsoring organizations needs to be examined. In addition, the context of the sponsoring organization has not been studied. For example a sponsoring organization managed by consumers or their family members may create different relationship issues than a sponsoring organization managed by professionals. Research that provides guidelines for deciding how to select a sponsoring organization is important to the survival of fledgling organizations. Because the relationship with the sponsoring organization can either impede or enhance the effectiveness of the family advocacy group, more research is needed to assess the conditions that lead to and maintain effective interorganizational relationships. Perhaps the preconditions and problem-solving approach recommended by Whetten (1981) can serve as a prototype. Further, research is needed to evaluate outcomes for families and the incentives for sponsoring organizations. More interorganizational research is needed so that all participants will better understand some of the challenges to family member participation in planning and evaluating children's mental health services and policy.

REFERENCES

- Akinbode, I.A., & Clark, R.C. (1976). A framework for analyzing inter-organizational relationships, *Human Relations*, 29, 101-114.
- Briggs, H., Koroloff, N., Richards, K., & Friesen, B. (1993). *Family advocacy Organizations: Advances in support and reform. Interim report of the progress of 15 statewide family organizational arrangements*. Regional Research Institute, Research and Training. Center on Children's Mental Health and Family Support, School of Social Work, Portland State University: Portland, Oregon.
- Koroloff, N., & Briggs, H. (unpublished), The life cycle of family organizations.
- Warren, R.L. (1967). The interorganizational field as a focus of investigation, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 10, 396-419.
- Whetten, D. (1981). Inter-organizational relations: A review of the field, *Journal of Higher Education*, 52, 14-28.

NOTES: This article was developed with funding from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, United States Department of Education, and the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (NIDRR grant number HI33B90007-92). The content of this article does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funding agencies.

The authors are affiliated with the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health at the Graduate School of Social Work, Portland State University. Address correspondence to Harold E. Briggs, Ph.D., Portland State University, School of Social Work, P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751.

This manuscript was published in the *Community Mental Health Journal*, 31(4), 317-333, in 1995. The original publication is available at www.springerlink.com.