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To Sandy, MacBeth, and MacGregor



FOREWORD

For much of the recent history of human services managers, government officials, the press, and the public have called for information to demonstrate the effectiveness, the efficiency, or the lack thereof of human services programs.

Although gross data have long been collected and disseminated on cash assistance programs, food stamps, medical care, and measurable social services such as day care, homemaker services, and foster care, information on the actual performances of services programs and their impact on clients has only recently begun to be defined, collected, evaluated, and disseminated.

Dr. Reginald Carter of the Michigan Department of Social Services is a pioneer in the field of public accountability. He is one of a handful of people always sought by the state and federal governments for ideas on how to best understand and evaluate the services provided to people in need of help through public social services programs.

He has been a leading developer of a series of national meetings on research demonstration and evaluation in the human services. He has written extensively on evaluation and accountability. He is a popular speaker on those subjects throughout the United States and Canada.

Now, in this major contribution to the human services literature, Dr. Carter has organized and made his wisdom available for sharing with a broader public.

In this practical, well-written, and well-documented book, information on how agencies may intelligently evaluate the efficiency and

effectiveness of their programs through accountability data, client outcome studies, and studies of satisfaction with services is attractively provided.

Dr. Carter includes a number of examples of accountability studies. He is candid about the limitation of accountability data and he is equally candid about the resistance many program managers exhibit to seeking answers to questions that responsible administrators should clearly want.

Managers of programs, services, workers, the press, government officials, and the public at large would do well to read and assimilate the ideas Dr. Carter presents. In a time when human services are under attack for being ineffective and at a time when resources are stretched more and more by the needs of disadvantaged people, knowing the truth about human services programs — as well as caring about the needs of people — becomes more important than ever.

The instructive lessons of Dr. Carter's book can help everyone involved deal more effectively with the crucial problems of understanding the real costs and the real consequences of the multi-billion-dollar human services industry, which is an important factor in the U.S. economy and a major factor in the lives of millions of U.S. citizens.

— *Leon H. Ginsberg*
Commissioner
West Virginia Department of Human Services
Charleston, West Virginia

PREFACE

I have spent over eight years assessing the effectiveness of public programs. Throughout this period there has been an absence of complete accountability within public agencies. This is changing as a result of difficult economic conditions, which are forcing administrators and legislators to ask the right question: What is happening to clients as a result of the programs which are funded by tax dollars.

This book is written to inform, motivate, inspire, and demand that public employees provide the best services possible. Without such a commitment there is no legitimate reason to continue to spend tax dollars on these programs.

This book details the “silent revolution” in public accountability that is taking place in a small number of human service agencies across the country. It is written for several audiences:

- for state agency administrators who care about clients but who realize that caring is not enough — you also must be able to document the results;
- for the program manager who wants to know whether workers are making a significant contribution or just filling out forms;
- for the professors of social work and public administration who want to keep abreast of the best practices within the human services field and to better prepare their students for the management of these agencies;
- for the public employees who work hard to provide quality services but are robbed of the chance to know how well they do their jobs;
- for the students who are preparing for an occupation in the field of human services or public administration;
- for the clients who want assurance that the help being offered is the best available.

The first chapter discusses accountability in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of public agencies. There is generally little effectiveness information regularly collected to justify the continued funding of most programs. Special program evaluations are completed periodically. They do not provide the on-going monitoring that is needed to determine adequately the success of public programs. This aspect of accountability must be institutionalized in order to ensure that the taxpayer gets the most from the use of tax dollars. Without it there is only incomplete accountability.

The second chapter describes the seven key questions encompassing 90 percent of all elements of complete accountability for public programs: Who do you serve? What are the programs like? What do you give them? What does it cost? What does it cost per service delivered? What happens as a result? What does it cost per result? Most of these elements are systematically gathered by public organizations. Information on the sixth question, the impact of services, has not been systematically gathered. Instead, it has been relegated as a topic for numerous research and demonstration projects. The chapter ends with an overview of a number of recent state initiatives to develop and implement the collection of answers to this question as a regular part of the operations of an agency.

The third chapter includes three examples of monitoring effectiveness: the Michigan Training Schools and Camps with emphasis on measuring outcomes three and twelve months after delinquents have been released; the Milwaukee Department of Social Services client satisfaction studies of purchase of service providers; the accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), which requires client follow-up as part of the requirements for accreditation. The intent here is to illustrate that accountability does take place in some human service programs and could take place for all programs.

Chapter 4 isolates the key factors necessary to create an external environment that is conducive to implementing client impact accountability. The factors include laws with specific outcomes, focused legislative appropriation process, deregulation of federal and state process requirements, regulation of outcome requirements, and consistency between confidentiality laws and outcome regulations.

Chapter 5 identifies the key elements necessary to create an internal environment to promote client impact accountability. These factors include establishing expected outcomes, announcing outcomes publically, assuring managers that they will be held accountable, and educating workers to the benefits of monitoring outcomes.

The sixth chapter discusses the state of the art of accountability within the private sector and compares it with the state of the art in the public sector as reflected in the previous five chapters. Of particular interest to the public administrator will be the various examples of expected outcomes from professional sports, private industry, and private service organizations. The theme of the chapter is that there are more similarities than differences between the two sectors. Accountability is difficult but achievable and should be demanded of all public agencies.

The seventh chapter provides a step-by-step process to implement a client-outcome monitoring system into your agency.

The final chapter concludes that complete accountability is no more difficult in the public sector than in the private sector. Each member of society has a role to play:

- Taxpayers must pressure legislators to be accountable.
- Legislators must hold agency administrators accountable.
- Public agency administrators must hold their employees accountable.
- Clients must hold the agency accountable.
- The press must become more persistent and more thorough in their presentation of long-term client outcomes.
- Schools of public administration and social work must prepare their students by educating them in the importance of **accountability**.

At the end of each chapter there is a list of exercises for those who want to expand their understanding of the concepts outlined in the chapter. The exercises are designed for both administrators and students.

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Finally, I am grateful to Armand Lauffer, the editor of this series, for his helpful suggestions toward making the manuscript into a more useful tool for administrators of human service agencies and students preparing for a career in public administration.

The opinions and recommendations expressed in the book are not necessarily shared by either the Michigan Department of Social Services or sponsoring organizations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reginald Carter is the President/CEO of the Health Care Association of Michigan (HCAM) in Lansing, Michigan. He has served in the capacity since 1996. HCAM is a member trade association serving 250 nursing homes and assisted living communities. Previous to his current responsibilities, he was the HCAM Vice President of Reimbursement from 1984 to 1996. His interest in outcome monitoring during this time was focused on publishing the family satisfaction survey results across 30,000 families and relatives in nursing homes. The publication is called The Consumer Guide to Michigan Nursing Homes.

Previously, he was the Director of Planning and Evaluation for the Michigan Department of Social Services from 1974 to 1984. He directed more the 30 program evaluations across a variety of social services with a focus on outcomes. This experience is detailed in The Accountable Agency.

He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Michigan State University 1975, and has taught at a number of universities and colleges, including Michigan State University, University of Wisconsin—Parkside, Western Michigan University and Albion College.

He has also published various articles and was a contributor to the Urban Institute study titled, Developing Client Outcome Monitoring Systems: A Guide for State and Local Services Agencies (1981).

The Accountable Agency helped to inspire Frederick Richmond, President of The Center for Applied Management Practices, to create the © Carter-Richmond Methodology™, which was mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for over \$2.2 billion in grants in 2006.