

The Evolution of a Discipline:  
Re-creating Romanian Social Work

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## **Introduction**

This analysis presents the results of organizational assessments conducted for six Romanian social service agencies in May, 2003. The evaluations were performed using Burke's (1994) transformational model of organizational change, and have been presented within the context of the Romanian economic and political environment. The model was adapted for use with the agencies studied (Appendix A) and translated into Romanian (Appendix B).

Assessments were conducted through exploratory interviews with university scholars, government officials, social service agency directors, staff members, and users of social services. Additional information was gathered via observations within agency and foster-home settings. The project's aims were to characterize existing mechanisms for provision of social services; to share knowledge from American models of social service delivery; to outline economic and social policy impacts on agency practice; and, to identify potential areas for research collaboration and training.

Burke's (1994) transformational model was created as a tool to evaluate organizational practices using a strengths-based, appreciative inquiry approach. This method entails characterizing agency resources and strengths while engaging providers in a dialogue about areas for future improvement. The model examines the agency as it exists in an external political and economic context and how organizational practices are influenced by this context. It asks how an agency's mission translates into direct practice and how organizational culture affects interactions between staff members at all levels. The model takes a bi-directional approach by also examining individual workers' motivation and roles within the agency, and how workers' view of their roles impacts the agency's ability to achieve its objectives.

As an assessment tool, the transformational model considers the agency as a system within a system, acknowledging that all components of the organization influence each other and are simultaneously impacted by the external community as well as the political and social environment.

Three agencies were examined in-depth for this study: a community-based school program for children with disabilities, a public-private foster care program for previously institutionalized children, and a community-based program that provides services for children who are HIV+ or have AIDS. Three other agencies were interviewed briefly. These included a community-based mental health center for adults with chronic mental illness, a domestic violence prevention program and women's shelter, and an organization devoted to protecting children's rights.

Before delving into a more thorough discussion of the model's application, it is important to point out several limitations of the study. One of the ways in which application of this model differed from traditional organizational assessments is the timeframe in which the assessments were conducted. Given the number of agencies interviewed in a variety of locations, interviews lasted anywhere from one hour to three days. Typical organizational assessments are conducted over an extended period of time, allowing opportunities for in-depth, comprehensive interaction with interviewees and agency staff at a variety of levels. Additionally, interviews were occasionally conducted through translators, necessitating careful interpretation of the data given the drift in meaning that occurs across languages and cultures.

What we hope to do through the organizational assessments that follow is to present our perceptions, analysis of interview content, and impressions from conversations with academicians and practitioners. Woven into this discussion are thoughts about how to build

upon the existing strengths of the organizations. Much of our report focuses on areas for growth with an eye to societal changes that lie on the horizon for Romanian social services. Throughout our interviews, we became aware that the process of change will be made easier given the high quality of the organizations studied and the strong base from which they have to build.

While the service delivery needs of each organization differed, all of the organizations exist within the common political and economic context of Romania as a developing nation. The features of this shared external environment will be addressed as a whole before turning to an examination of individual agency resources and future areas for intervention.

### **Environmental Context**

The Re-birth of Social Work in Post-Communist Romania. Romania's evolution from Communism to capitalism and the corresponding legal, political, and economic changes have provided unsteady ground for social service agencies that depend on the philanthropy of individuals, the government, and foreign donors for their survival. Global attention was directed toward Romania's foundering economic system with the execution of Nicolae Ceausescu in December, 1989. Ceausescu's goal as the nation's leader was to position Romania as a world military and economic power. To achieve this end, he worked to establish a global image of the nation as a productive, formidable, economically viable entity able to compete in the same financial and military arenas as highly developed nations.

In his efforts to bring Romania into the ranks of dominating world powers, Ceausescu sought to strengthen his military base by increasing the number of people available to join the armed forces and requiring all men to enlist. To further his aim of gaining economic power, Ceausescu mandated that families bear a minimum of four to five children. The dictator also engaged in business deals with foreign investors, requiring that factory production be increased

to full capacity and that workers' salaries be cut. At the height of his desperation, Ceausescu placed Romanian citizens on a "diet" allowing them limited rations of food per day so that more resources could be directed toward military and industrial enterprises.

As his foreign business deals crumbled, Ceausescu ruled through fear rather than his former promises of economic success and military might. Unknown to the global community, Romania's sudden population growth and the government's inability to support it were hidden by the creation of large-scale institutions designed to house orphaned or abandoned children (Kerrigan, 1999). With Romania's borders closed to outsiders, thousands of children were warehoused in institutions until the public execution of Ceausescu and his wife, Elena. With their deaths, world attention became riveted on the plight of institutionalized children who received little more than basic sustenance.

Free of the shadow of Communism, Romania faced the daunting tasks of establishing a new economic system and redeeming itself in the eyes of the world. An influx of foreign donors initiated the establishment of social service agencies with the aim of helping children in institutions. The entrance of foreign donors gave rebirth to the field of Romanian social work, a forgotten concept among firmly established Communist principles. It is within this rapidly evolving political context that our evaluation takes place. While much of our work analyzes strengths and areas for improvement, it stands clear that an amazing transformation has occurred in a very short time, to the credit of many dedicated people.

From Communism to Capitalism: Social Services and Economic Volatility. From an economic perspective, large-scale transformation from a Communist to a capitalist market system is a monolithic effort with far-reaching consequences; this painful transition does not happen overnight. From volatile and unpredictable prices to long lines at grocery stores with empty

shelves, the consequences of economic overhaul at the national level can devastate governments, businesses, social service agencies, and families.

Adding to the complexity of economic transformation is the well-established “black market” that ebbs and flows with the legitimate market, capitalizing on and competing with its failures and successes (Zuesse, 1998; Goldberg, 1995). Controlling the black market is a daunting task as desperate people respond to a new government’s financial instability by obtaining basic resources through underground means.

In the context of our study, what does this financial turmoil mean? Following a review of Romania’s economic outlook, we will address several economic concerns which heavily impact child welfare services. These include taxation rates for non-profit organizations, the adoption black market and bribery, EU membership, and dichotomous goals in the provision of domestic vs. foreign adoption services.

Economic Outlook. With the deposition of the Ceausescu regime, Romania began the transition from a centralized communist government to a privatized market system. Although Romania’s economy was initially progressing at a similar rate to other transitional countries, their slow progress toward privatization in conjunction with an ineffective industrial base impeded the process considerably. Currently, Romania is considered to be a middle-income developing country still in the process of privatizing its economy (Romanian Human Rights Report, 2003).

In addition to the difficulties inherent in moving from the economic policies of the 1980’s, Romania faced an escalating poverty rate and the well-documented problems in the social sector. In 2000, as Romania emerged from a three-year recession, 41% of the population lived beneath the poverty line with unemployment estimated at 9.1%. In the last three years, the

situation has improved somewhat with an estimated 30% below the poverty line and unemployment estimated at 8.1%.

Romania is committed to simplifying governmental structure and privatizing industry-1,200 businesses moved to the private sector in 2001. Inflation continues to decrease, falling from 30.3% in 2001 to an estimated 14% in 2003. Additionally, Romania's economy grew by 4.9% in 2002. This rate far exceeded expectations and was the largest growth rate for countries seeking entrance into the European Union. Part of this development may be attributed to the European Union export markets and internationally funded infrastructure projects (Romania Economy, 2003; The World Factbook 2002: Romania). The budget deficit continues to improve as well, diminishing from 3.3% of the gross domestic product in 2001 to 2.65% in 2002. This economic growth is very encouraging as Romania looks to join the European Union 2007.

European Union Membership. As Romania works to re-establish its national identity, membership in the European Union wields a major influence on child welfare and other national policies. In many ways, EU membership will help to stabilize Romania's economy by linking its currency to that of economically stable nations (Feist, 2001). EU membership will also promote Romania's image in the world, increasing its presence in the global community. On the other hand, Romania will undergo a rocky transition as it moves toward currency conversion and restructures industrial sectors to coexist in the Western European business community. Furthermore, differential impact may be expected for various geographic locations within Romania upon accession. Those areas with larger industrial capacity and proximity to Western members of the EU may experience distinct economic advantage as a result of ease of economic exchange with those nations. Depending on their geographic locations, some cities may experience more tangible benefit from accession than others (Petraikos, 2001).

In order to gain acceptance into the European economic community, Romania must fulfill several requirements placed upon it by the European Union. Among these requirements is the establishment of more progressive child welfare practices (Dickens, 2002). Amidst political pressure to improve its membership position, government officials have engaged in accelerated legal reform to satisfy EU child protection demands; however, the new laws contain few provisions for enforcement and lack financial resources to support their implementation.

Taxation Rates. Governments increase financial viability by creating and maintaining stable tax bases. In the U.S. model, non-profit agencies are exempted from heavy tax burdens. In contrast, Romania has established a 50% tax on all foreign donations received by social service agencies. This heavy tax burden necessitates that agencies aim to collect twice their operating budgets as they plan fundraising efforts. For agencies that struggle for every dollar, generating revenue for the government threatens their long-term financial viability.

On the direct service level, many of the staff members interviewed noted that direct services are sometimes interrupted as agency staff deal with budgetary emergencies. Smaller agencies with little funding do not have the resources to hire full-time fundraisers, so they allocate percentages of clinicians' time to participate in this effort. This is time that is taken away from direct service activities.

The Adoption Black Market. With the opening of Romania's borders came an influx of foreign families who were desperate to adopt children. As rapidly occurs in economically desperate environments, the black market expanded its avenues to include the field of adoption. Under Communist rule, the bribe became a long-standing business practice. Ceausescu himself "openly demanded payment from foreign families in return for permission to adopt" (Dickens, 2002). This practice continued after the Ceausescus were deposed, with potential adoptive parents



paying exorbitant fees to orphanage administrators in return for a child (Groze & Ileana, 1996). As some children were placed with the highest foreign bidder and others were adopted out from under their families, child advocates voiced concern that child welfare was being subjugated to economic desperation.

Subsequently, a moratorium was placed on inter-country adoption and placement practices were re-visited (Dickens, 2002). The consequence of the moratorium is that although it was designed to advance the rights of children, many abandoned children remain suspended in a legal gray area.

Dichotomous Domestic vs. Foreign Adoption Practices. As a corollary to the adoption black market, administrative policy mandates agencies to provide domestic services while simultaneously providing them with financial incentives to promote foreign adoptions. In establishing the “point” system, the Romanian Adoption Committee allocated points to agencies that delivered domestic direct services, such as facilitating Romanian adoptions (which are free of charge) or providing reunification services for biological families (Dickens, 2002). However, agencies receive far greater income from facilitating foreign adoptions than they do under the point system, creating economic motivation to prioritize foreign adoptions. In essence, the financial gain from foreign adoptions allows agencies to cover the cost of providing domestic services (Dickens, 2002); however, it also sends more Romanian adoptees out of country. This competes with the closely held national value of retaining Romanian children within the country. This led to a crisis in 2002 that resulted in suspension of all foreign adoptions. The moratorium is still in place.

Public Awareness and Stigma Associated with Minorities. The Roma officially comprise 1.8% of the Romanian population, but unofficially have been estimated as high as 7.9% (O'Grady &

Tarnovschi, 2001). Thought to have originally come from Northern India, the Roma migrated to what would become Romania by the 11<sup>th</sup> century where many were enslaved. As slavery was abolished worldwide, the Roma were freed, but without the ability to possess land; they were delegated to low-paying occupations that required little to no education, perpetuating their marginalized place in society.

During World War II, they were considered to be an impure race; so the Romanian government officially deported 50,000 Roma to Germany, where an estimated 19,000 died (Nicolae, 2002). After World War II, Romania endeavored to address the Roma problem by assimilating them into the rest of the population. However, their culture was assumed to be defined by poverty and unworthy of recognition. Subsequently, the Communist government tried to destroy their mobile way of life, confiscating artisanal tools in an effort to stamp out all privately owned Roma businesses (O'Grady & Tarnovschi, 2001). The Roma then turned to the agricultural sector for employment, continuing to occupy low-paying jobs.

During Ceausescu's reign, the Roma faced relocation, and many lost their jobs, forcing them into the black market and perpetuating racial stereotypes. Unfortunately, things did not improve for the Roma with the fall of the Ceausescu regime. As Romania transitions to a market economy, the Roma face high unemployment—estimated between 80 and 90%—with escalating discrimination. Violence against the Roma increased during the early 1990's and the police now conduct intermittent raids in Roma communities. Additionally, many Roma children cannot attend school because residency permits are required for admission and their mobile lifestyle prevents them from obtaining the necessary documentation. High unemployment rates and forcible removal from their communities have forced many Roma into extreme poverty. Additionally, health care is a significant issue for the Roma. Many children suffer from

preventable illnesses; there are high rates of premature births and infant mortality; as well as high rates of respiratory and cardiac disease with life expectancy estimated to be 15-20 years below the national average.

Another major factor in the external environment is the lack of public acceptance of those with special needs. For example, although many Romanians have rallied to support children who are released from institutions, strong stigma still surrounds children with disabilities. Disabled children have difficulty integrating into the traditional public school system, motivating many parents to keep them at home. For fortunate families who are able to find school programs for children with disabilities, outcomes for their children have improved. For others who lack transportation or awareness of the capabilities of their disabled children, little is done to enable the children to achieve their fullest potential. According to our interviews, it is not uncommon for some families to keep a developmentally delayed child at home under the assumption that they will never be able to work or learn. Without appropriate interventions, these children are not able to socialize and cultivate valuable work and daily living skills. Education and public awareness efforts are sorely needed to inform parents about the potential of their developmentally delayed children.

Similarly, significant numbers of newborn infants continue to be abandoned in maternity hospitals by mothers who lack the necessary resources to support them. This ongoing abandonment accounts for a large percentage of children who still enter institutions despite the strong national effort to close them. As such, agencies not only cope with large numbers of children who are awaiting foster care placement, but also must provide services for a substantial influx of newborns. It is clear that education directed toward pregnancy prevention and

increased social support for new mothers are of paramount importance in decreasing the institutionalization of children.

## **Organizational Assessments**

Our discussion now turns to a closer examination of the agencies studied, and the specific interactions each has with its internal and external environments.

### **Special Education**

#### ***Casa Minunata***

Casa Minunata is a community-based education program for children with disabilities. It provides an alternative to public schooling for many disabled children who are denied access to regular classroom settings. Started in 1994 by the Swedish Lions' Club, the school has grown from a specialized kindergarten to a therapeutic milieu that includes education, counseling, physical therapy, and job skills training for students. The agency's mission is to enable children to integrate into mainstream society through education and skills-based training. The organization also hopes to dispel social stigma surrounding people with disabilities by increasing their interaction with the local community and creating public awareness about the capabilities of disabled people.

The organizational assessment was based on group and individual interviews with two Assistant Directors, a classroom teacher, and a physical therapist. The Assistant Directors were temporarily assuming the responsibilities of the Director who was on maternity leave at the time of study.

The agency began with ten children and has built its capacity to serve eighty-three children. Seventy children are in the primary school, while thirteen attend kindergarten. Casa Minunata accepts students with a wide range of disabilities, from mild developmental delay and

ADHD to cerebral palsy. The majority of the children have mild to moderate disabilities, while a few exhibit severe impairment in cognitive, emotional, and physical functioning.

A typical day for Casa Minunata students involves engaging in coursework using computers or through classroom-based instruction. Many attend speech and physical therapy sessions. Classroom placement is determined by developmental rather than chronological age, and each child has an individual plan to document and measure progress. Frequent breaks are provided for the children, including lunches outside in peer groups with teachers. Significant effort is devoted to giving the children personalized attention and mealtimes are structured in a family-style format. For young adults aged eighteen to twenty years, teachers conduct vocational training to increase their employability in the job market. The length of the school day matches that of public facilities, beginning at 9:00 am and ending at 3:00 pm. Bus transportation is provided for children who require it.

Extracurricular activities are frequently planned, involving the participation of students, their parents, and their families. Events center around exposure to nature and group socialization, taking the form of weekend camping trips or hiking and fishing outings. Teachers use these opportunities to observe parents and children interacting with one another and to provide supportive feedback and parenting skills coaching to families.

The agency plans to open a day care center for disabled children with working parents, or for older children who aren't able to care for themselves or maintain employment. Active construction of the day care is currently on hold as the agency's financial situation prevents extra expenditures at this time. The agency has stemmed recent financial losses by asking that families pay for services on a sliding fee scale.

Four years ago, Casa Minunata received official accreditation by the Ministry of

Education, a significant accomplishment for the organization and its community reputation. A second review will be conducted within the next year for renewal of the accreditation. The Assistant Directors shared that passing governmental inspection is difficult, as the evaluators maintain an extensive list of requirements the school must satisfy. The Assistant Directors noted that some of the requirements do not account for the agency's financial capability or realistic developmental expectations for their students; however, agency staff does its best to meet the strict criteria.

Several external factors affect not only the daily functioning of Casa Minunata, but the long-term outcome of its students. Despite legal provision that all children have the right to attend school, public schools do not accept students with disabilities. Casa is seen as an alternative to staying home for many disabled children. This presents the agency with a double-bind, in that it only has capacity for eighty-three children and cannot currently meet the demand for a large number of underserved students.

Governmental assistance for the agency is minimal. This aid consists of a small, \$3,000 stipend that does not make a significant dent in operating expenses for the agency. Despite receiving this financial support from the government, the agency is still required to pay the fifty percent tax on all foreign donations. Additionally, staff acknowledged that each worker pays individual income tax, a system that represents double-taxation on the part of the government and reduces agency and staff financial resources. Staff members shared their belief that the system is fraught with inequalities, as the agency shoulders significant government responsibility by providing services to the disabled, yet receives no tax break.

Social stigma continues to surround children and adults who have disabilities. Despite improvement in cognitive and social functioning as well as job skills training, many students are

unable to find employment upon graduation. Some graduates have been hired by the agency as teaching assistants after spending time unemployed in the regular job market.

Of particular concern in our interview were the Roma children who have significant disabilities, yet are underserved by social service agencies. Although overtly stated agency policy endorses extension of services to Roma children, no Roma children have been served in the agency's history. The Assistant Directors explained the lack of Roma students by stating that foster families are reluctant to take disabled Roma children from orphanages and therefore do not seek services for them. They report that they cannot engage Roma families in some locations. It is clear that Casa Minunata needs to have a varied racial composition in the selection of its students.

Referrals come through a variety of avenues, including special education seminars, contact with government officials, media coverage of special school events, and word of mouth by parents at commissions. Commissions are joint meetings with government evaluators and parents to examine the existence of a child's disability and to provide families with subsidized telephone and other services if their children qualify.

Casa Minunata is surrounded on all sides by residential apartment buildings; upon initial construction of the school, residents were angered because the school occupied what had previously been parking space. Over the years, the agency has created the reputation as a positive presence in the community, although there are still a few negative interactions with surrounding residents or businesses. The agency receives little support from the corporate sector except for funds garnered by allowing a local business to use the gym as a lunchroom and meeting area. Romanian law does not help this problem, as there are no tax incentives for corporations to donate funds to NGOs. Additionally, rapid changes in law and public policy



generate a continual state of flux for agency administrators and staff. The physical therapist shared that following the Revolution in 1989, it has been difficult to keep pace with frequent policy changes.

In response to the heavy government tax burden and the loss of their single largest donor, Casa Minunata demonstrated a forward-thinking mindset by delving into earned income ventures. Although non-profit agencies walk a fine line between “earned income” and “profit generation” in the US, no such laws exist to quantify the boundaries between the two for Romanian NGOs. Consequently, agency administrators have taken advantage of this legal loophole in generating income that can be re-invested into facility operations.

A portion of our interview covered stakeholders in the school’s immediate environment. Parents form an important part of this environment, often acting as decision-makers for students. The agency continually welcomes parent participation, and parents were overwhelmingly receptive when the organization initially introduced the fee-for-service structure that replaced the free services previously provided. Some parents offered to pay for additional children other than their own, while others volunteered their time to mow lawns and take care of the facility. The social workers manage a delicate balance with parents, negotiating their continued support of the agency while helping them to frame realistic assumptions about their disabled children. This process can be arduous as parents have pre-conceived ideas and expectations about the achievements their children can make.

In the professional domain, medical collaborators have significant input into the decisions made about children’s treatment. Every child at Casa Minunata has a community-based physician or specialist. In Romanian society, physicians are considered the final authorities regarding the treatment and progress of disabled children. Families and other professionals often

defer to the physicians, despite lack of agreement about the ultimate potential of each child. Currently, physicians tend to believe that disability is a concrete limitation past which most children cannot proceed. Consequently, doctors offer little encouragement for education and therapy for the severely disabled. Agency philosophy, on the other hand, is that no matter how severe a child's disability, his life can be improved. This sets the stage for substantial disagreement with community physicians and the need for a delicate professional stance with families who have been told that their children cannot make developmental gains.

One of the agency's primary missions is to remain self-sufficient and independent of the government. Management devotes substantial effort to maintaining this independence. This year, the agency budget fell short of actual need by approximately thirty percent. The Lions' Club provided financial assistance to bridge this gap; however, Casa Minunata must develop alternate means to establish a stable base of financial support if it is to avoid dependence upon government funds. The Assistant Directors frequently travel to other countries to increase awareness of the school and to attract the support of additional donors.

Although she was not present, the general impression of the Director was that she operated in a friendly, democratic, effective manner. She organized regular weekly staff meetings and facilitated group discussion of administrative issues and clinical cases. For serious clinical issues, all clinical staff meet together to address the concern. Additionally, direct interaction between employees as peers was commonly reported, with the benefit of cross-pollination of professional expertise.

Upon interview with one of the teachers, she described the Director's main functions as liaison with the Swedish donor, facilitating group activities with children, and rotating teachers to ensure effective communication and amelioration of burn-out. The Director is seen as

buffering other staff members against substantial stress, taking many major issues upon herself.

Many staff members had difficulty conceptualizing the entirety of the functions that comprise the Director's job.

Apparent in the agency interview was a healthy reliance on team work with cross-functional interactions. Staff members made significant efforts to know each student and to have a positive personal relationship with all of them. Organizational culture seemed well-defined, with emphasis on teamwork, friendly relations, and informality in meetings with the Director and senior staff. Services were enhanced by the use of an attractive building donated by the Lions' Club. Cheerful pictures and brightly colored interiors provided a vibrant environment for the children and their teachers. The environment was stimulating and interesting, creating an atmosphere conducive to learning.

Casa Minunata exhibits a well-established hierarchy, with the Director at the head followed by the two Assistant Directors. The Director currently shoulders the bulk of the fundraising, followed by the Assistant Directors. One of the Assistant Directors has a social work background, while the other was trained as an educator. Classroom teachers and physical therapists report to them.

Three drivers take responsibility for transporting children to and from school, as well as tending to the gardens and grounds. Each driver was allowed to choose additional tasks that appealed to him and were well-suited to his capabilities. This particular division of labor evolved over time, and was a natural consequence of the drivers' investment in contributing to organizational well-being during their "down time". Two cleaning ladies ensure that the building remains neat and orderly.

Casa Minunata seems to have strong community and professional contacts in terms of

obtaining technical assistance and access to funds from large donor communities. Both of the Assistant Directors demonstrated the knowledge and sophistication to interact effectively with large donors and to market the school. They also exhibited in-depth knowledge about whom to contact for specific needs and where funding sources reside.

The operating budget is determined based on the number of children to be served in a year along with their specific disabilities. A profile of the student population is created at the end of each school year. No annual report was available, and the budget information presented was general. The Assistant Directors appeared to be uncomfortable with requests for financial information.

Staff members were hired via personal interview. Employee attitude was considered an important criterion for the managers. They stated that concrete knowledge is teachable and significant experience is gained from hands-on training. However, a positive attitude is viewed as an intrinsic characteristic of applicants. The administration said that they would rather teach a new trainee concrete skills than attempt to modify a negative attitude or uncommitted work ethic.

The school currently selects new students from its waiting list, which is forty children long this year. They can only provide services for eleven new students this fall. Admission is on a first come, first served basis, and is prioritized chronologically rather than in terms of developmental impairment. Administrators attempt to locate alternative schools for children who cannot be accepted in a given year. Children past the age of fourteen are not eligible for admission and are referred elsewhere. School staff noted that turning applicants away is one of the most difficult aspects of their work. Part of the rationale for maintaining such a small student body is the high teacher to student ratio (1:8).

The gender structure of the teaching staff is predominantly male, given that many of the

children must be lifted frequently. Female teachers are typically assigned to pre-school and elementary classes, in which the children are easier to handle physically.

At the start of each academic year, evaluations are conducted for teachers, teachers' assistants, therapists, administrators, and other staff members. Meetings are conducted during the week prior to the beginning of the semester. Employee job descriptions exist, with structured rules about task responsibilities and expected professional behavior. When the administration encounters difficulties with an employee's job performance, efforts are made to identify the reason behind the problem and to reassign the individual if necessary. Termination is a rare occurrence at Casa Minunata.

As children begin the school year, they are assessed with the Psychological Education Profile, an instrument that assesses their level of cognitive development. Re-assessment is conducted at the end of the school year in order to document progress. Individual student files are kept for every student, each of whom has goals based on his/her developmental abilities. Collaboration with parents is solicited by teachers and administrators in the goal-setting process. Part of the social workers' task is to educate parents about realistic expectations for their children and to address unrealistic expectations. A regular school newsletter is sent to sponsors and families to note ongoing events at the school.

School staff maintains regular progress notes for the children, documenting their progress and difficulties they may encounter. This file is mandated by law to be kept for a minimum of fifty years and is strictly confidential. Only parents, teachers, the students themselves, and their physicians have access to this information. A portable folder travels between teachers and parents to facilitate daily communication. While basic progress notes are required by the school's supporting donor and the government, some staff members create additional notes to

enhance their care of the children.

Physical therapists establish separate therapeutic goals for each child. Physical therapy sessions last from twenty to forty minutes, depending on the physical and emotional endurance of the child. One therapist noted that he was unrealistically ambitious at the start of his career, expecting that with enough effort, every child could walk. He admits that he is more realistic now, and sets goals in smaller steps. He also acknowledges that some children will not walk, but believes that every child can improve his physical capacity. He routinely consults with other colleagues and teachers for children who have multiple disabilities and to provide simple exercises children can do in the classroom.

The administrative managers noted that they take a strengths-based approach for employee and student evaluations and in goal-setting. All levels of management appeared to work well together in an atmosphere of mutual trust and collaboration. One primary school teacher expressed the opinion that the project has “grown nicely” and is a wonderful opportunity for regular school teachers to work with children who have disabilities.

An employee day care program was created to enable employees to be close to their children while at work. This effort was initiated so that employees could feel that their children were safe and so that female workers would not be forced to choose between work and leaving their children with another caregiver during the day.

Significant trust centers around personal time off, with the requirement that employees call in if they are ill and the expectation that someone will cover for them. Originally, they did not ask employees to sign in and out; however, the Ministry of Education subsequently imposed this requirement. The Assistant Directors often teach classes when a teacher is away, including changing diapers and feeding children if necessary. In this respect, job descriptions can be fluid

when needed.

The primary school teacher shared that one of the challenges of her job is the variety of disabilities represented in her classroom; this requires her to seek a wide range of knowledge so that she can structure her interventions accordingly. Although she had worked previously in a school for mildly disabled children, she was not prepared initially for work with children who require substantial physical assistance.

Staff members within the agency must exhibit the ability to communicate with children who have multiple disabilities, including language deficits. They must cultivate an attitude of patience with unrealistic parent expectations regarding their children's development, and must supportively contend with the children's frustration when they reach difficult developmental obstacles. Physical agility and strength are required when dealing with students who are unable to support themselves physically. Additionally, staff must be able to tolerate disruptive behavior when children aren't able to negotiate the stresses of the school day.

Agency staff expressed several direct practice needs for improving current services. These include additional classroom materials, more staff members who can provide one-to-one attention for hyperactive children, and additional training so that teachers may serve children with a wide range of disabilities.

In order to enhance employee education, regular trainings and seminars are conducted at least yearly. New intervention methods are discussed in these seminars, as well as learning via the Internet. Visitors and scholars are frequently invited to present ideas and to become involved in problem-solving.

School staff value self-sufficiency along with open collaboration. Each of them expressed the need to help the children, even if only in small ways. Many staff members

communicated the desire to improve the lives of children in some small measure and to help them get the most out of their lives.

Staff composition has remained relatively stable since the organization's beginning. Employees value personal initiative and the willingness to help in multiple capacities. In order to re-vitalize staff energy, the school invites lectures from the professional association of Social Workers (Social Assistants). Mutual helping is highly valued and the school is considered to be a "team" environment.

The primary teacher we interviewed expressed that the best aspect of her work is the chance to see the children progress in accomplishing their developmental goals. She noted that it is both encouraging and sad when children graduate from the program. One of the Assistant Directors spoke of the satisfaction he derives from witnessing seemingly small achievements, such as a child being able to use the bathroom independently or eat with a fork.

The agency conducts self-initiated performance evaluations. One of the Assistant Directors expressed regret that the community is not more interactive with the school, as they could be important constituents to involve in an overall evaluation of client impact.

The agency appears to be competent in managing financial and technical functions. They prioritized learning new therapeutic techniques, soliciting expertise from visiting professionals and donor contacts. Interestingly, both staff and students were accustomed to receiving foreign visitors and we were immediately greeted as "English people". This is important to remember in the interpretation of our data, as the visit was well-orchestrated and employees seemed polished in their presentation.

Agency-Specific Recommendations. Upon reviewing the interview data, several agency-specific recommendations presented themselves as possibilities for improving service delivery at Casa



Minunata. Foremost on the list involves encouraging administrators to evaluate the strength of current agency culture and its readiness for change. The culture appears to have been stable for a significant period of time; often, staff becomes accustomed to a particular organizational mentality and has difficulty adjusting to new modes of thinking. Only administrators in collaboration with staff members themselves can assess the potential that exists for organizational change at Casa Minunata.

We also recommend that the agency re-evaluate its overhead structure. Significant expense is outlaid for building space and staff salaries. Potential savings may be realized by analyzing the cost in overhead per student served and determining if the high teacher/student ratio is optimal for the agency. While a high teacher to student ratio is helpful for provision of supportive services, making use of volunteers or interns may present the opportunity for substantial savings. Casa Minunata may also consider partnerships with local universities to gain access to volunteers and interns.

Another avenue for training and cost-savings may be collaboration with other agencies which provide similar disability services. Sharing ideas and cost-saving advice may be an important resource for generating ways to optimize the agency's use of limited funds. This would also increase the base of clients in the referral network, allowing more visibility for the agency and a steady stream of clients which improves marketability and concretizes evidence of community need when presenting programming to potential donors.

## Foster Care Agencies

### *Romanian Children's Relief/Fundati Inocenti*

The organizational assessment for Romanian Children's Relief/Fundati Inocenti (RCR/FI) included individual interviews with the president of the board, the agency director, the administrative manager, the agency psychologist, and an infant caregiver/pre-school teacher. Additional information was obtained during a two-day teaching seminar, three home-based interventions with client families, observations of daily activities within the placement center, and participation in the organization's annual review meeting. The annual review meeting was especially informative, as it allowed the team to observe problem-solving and program planning sessions between the agency, its funding representative, and its governmental partner, the Department of Child Protection (DPC).

RCR/FI, housed in a renovated residential institution, holds as its mission the aims of improving the life and health of institutionalized children, the transition of children from institutional care to foster families, and the reintegration of children into their biological families. The unifying factor in all discussions of agency mission was the early identification and integration of abandoned children into foster or biological families, and the provision of educational and developmental mechanisms for them to become productively integrated into society.

RCR/FI is funded in part by the LIFT Foundation, created by Katherine and Richard Miller in 1988 to improve the lives of orphaned children. The Foundation promotes the "basic human right of children to be loved and to live with dignity" (The Foundation, 2003). Through its projects, LIFT endeavors to combat the social conditions that "separate children from their families" (What We Do, 2003).

At this point in the agency's development, it is dependent upon funds from the LIFT Foundation along with donations from individuals. Although support from the US government has made significant renovation and programming possible, the American administrative manager noted that US expectations for progress are based on Western standards and do not fully account for RCR/FI's stage of development as a Romanian social service organization.

The agency is turning more toward solicitation of funds from the Romanian government and local NGO's, as well as grant applications. These avenues of monetary support may provide better developmental links for the agency. This may reduce current limitations on use of funds that are currently restricted for specific purposes.

As RCR/FI endeavors to engage governmental support, state allocation of funds for foster families proves to be a barrier. In Bistrita, foster parents receive stipends from the Mayor's office for taking in children, but the salary is low and parents are often encouraged to take two children for the stipend of one. Since many foster families are struggling financially themselves, this makes it difficult for them to take in more than one child. Intra-governmental allocation of funds to the DPC reflects this same relationship, with the DPC receiving a smaller proportion of funds than other government sectors. Current government support for children in foster care includes a 210,000 lei stipend for the child, and an extra 290,000 lei for the child's expenses if he or she is placed with a family.

To support the progress of children transitioning to life outside the institution, RCR/FI engages in the following projects: 'foster care training, education, and development', 'a childhood literacy program involving foster parents and children', 'a life skills program for older children', 'a developmentally-sensitive infant and pre-school residential program' and, 'an early identification/intervention program for newly abandoned children based at the local maternity

hospital'. The early identification program aims to stem the continual flow of newly abandoned children in hospital, integrating them into developmentally sound care as early as possible. The agency hopes to direct future efforts toward pre-natal counseling for women who are at-risk of abandoning their children. One of the primary reasons for the evolution of the newer, comprehensive array of services is to satisfy all aspects of this mission from infancy to foster care and finally to life skills and literacy training.

RCR/FI is one of the private nonprofit agencies in Romania that is dedicated to increasing access to services for Roma children. Prejudice against the Roma presents a barrier specific to Roma children who require social services. Many Romanians we interviewed viewed them with suspicion, categorizing them as “beggars” and “thieves”. Some suggested that the Roma become wealthy through their begging, allowing them to build enormous houses on ill-gotten gain. During our time in Romania, we witnessed several young Roma children being chased out of restaurants and public spaces when they were caught asking for money. As prejudice against the Roma persists, abandoned Roma children will continue to find it difficult to obtain educational, health, and foster care services. Currently, three-quarters of the children participating in RCR/FI programs are of Roma descent.

One RCR/FI staff member believes that it will take several generations and strong advocacy for Roma and Romanian children to co-exist and have equal access to services. Additional strategies are needed to deal with the mobility of Roma communities that makes providing social services difficult.

RCR/FI is continuously in flux with the intake of newly abandoned infants, children released due to institutional closings, and the movement of children into new foster families. Additionally, new foster families are recruited on an ongoing basis, necessitating regular

orientation and training seminars for new foster parents.

Simultaneously, the DPC is altering its organizational structure to reflect a more comprehensive array of services, including a kinship identification and recruitment program and additional life skills services for older children. RCR/FI will assist with the reunification service segment, providing support for children and families as they re-unite.

Under the current system of foster care, the DPC recruits foster families, usually through newspaper advertisements. Interested families complete applications and progress through further interviews if they meet DPC criteria. Once families are selected to receive a foster child, they receive support from the RCR/FI psychologist. There is an upper limit of two children per family.

A strength of RCR/FI is its initiation of the cooperative relationship with the DPC. The quality of this relationship was evident not only in the spirit with which the meetings were conducted, but also in the atmosphere surrounding an informal meeting between our team, the DPC leader, and RCR/FI's director. Observations suggest that communication and cooperation are foundational qualities of the relationship between the agency and government directors; subsequent interactions between the DPC head and RCR/FI staff provided additional support for this observation.

As RCR/FI and the DPC evolve together, they are forced to fulfill the service demands created by rapid influxes of children released from institutions. In response to global and EU pressures, institutions close with as little as two weeks' notice, stretching RCR/FI's resources as it attempts to serve the large number of children who are released. Despite extensive renovations resulting from a World Bank donation to the DPC, the facility is stretched to capacity by the number of programs needed by its children. When seminars, meetings, or trainings are held,

programming must be cancelled because there is no other suitable location in the building to conduct the children's groups.

During the annual review meeting, DPC and RCR/FI staff discussed necessary changes that will be required by the impending expansion of services for both agencies. Corresponding to these changes will be an agency self-evaluation to determine whether RCR/FI resources are being used efficiently, or if additional cost-savings can be found as services are reorganized.

The staff unanimously agreed that the ratio of children to social workers is high, impinging on their ability to provide quality care for the children. A continual theme throughout our discussions was the need for strategic planning to structure the rate of service growth needed to satisfy the needs of the child welfare system, while limiting the potential negative impact rapid expansion could have on the organization.

In an effort to further its comprehensive goals, RCR/FI specifically recruits and welcomes training with experts from other countries. These seminars are used to bridge gaps that may exist between agency vision and its implementation of progressive practice methods. For example, significant work is being done on smoothing the reunification process based on the agency's earlier difficulties with transition between long-term foster care and reintegration with biological families. Training is viewed as a foundational step for enhancing the structure of this difficult process.

Although its director believes the agency is making progress in developing its child welfare expertise, the fact remains that most of the staff learns by doing. Many staff members were educated or employed in other sectors such as economics or elementary teaching; while these skills are being maximized for use by the agency, staff members often struggle in dealing with challenges such as substance abuse, maternal depression, or debilitating childhood illnesses.

Without educational backgrounds in these areas, staff members are concerned that progress in learning is slow, and that they are reliant on training by outside experts to help them in their practice.

A common theme endorsed by staff members was the need for additional expertise to manage the upcoming expansion of services. Topics of interest included childhood physical and emotional disorders, family systems and counseling interventions, school-based interventions, and improved communication with children. Staff members were interested in interventions that carry substantial practical impact, since caseloads are high and visits are sometimes infrequent.

Although lacking formal instruction, agency workers add value to the organization by remaining extraordinarily enthusiastic to learn and open to others' expertise. New trainings have been deemed essential by staff members as they prepare to implement a host program that facilitates transition of children from long-term foster care into their biological families. Workers expect this process to be difficult, as children will have developed strong attachments to their foster parents while being relatively unfamiliar with their biological parents.

Much of the agency's efforts are directed toward foster care development; however, this does nothing to stem the continual flow of newly abandoned children into the child welfare system. Currently, staff believes that the government devotes few resources to prevention, evidence by a lack of focus on pre-natal counseling or identification of women at risk for abandoning their newborns. Maternity hospitals are the sites where the majority of abandonment occurs – it is not uncommon for a mother to enter the ward under a false identity, give birth, then leave the hospital without her infant. The continued high level of infant abandonment ensures a long-term role for RCR/FI in the child welfare system – however, it also necessitates that substantial resources eventually be directed toward pre-natal counseling and development of

methods to identify women at-risk for abandoning their infants.

To this end, the agency will focus on reproductive planning for couples and counseling for pregnant women who may be at risk for abandoning their infants. An initial target for these counseling services will be the population of pregnant women who already have children in the child welfare system. To facilitate outreach, the agency is researching acquisition of educational tapes from Planned Parenthood for viewing and discussion with women in group sessions. Of particular concern for the DPC and RCR/FI is the compatibility of Planned Parenthood philosophy and birth control with the Romanian cultural expectations of women and corresponding designation of females as childbearers. A second target for the program will be community physicians who can advocate contraception and provide education for couples who may be reluctant to initiate birth control.

A final factor in the external environment is the length of time it takes for an abandoned child to come under the DPC's protection. According to the DPC, child welfare would be better served if abandoned children could be identified early, perhaps even before birth, rather than allowing children to languish in institutions for several months until abandonment is certain. Identifying at-risk mothers and providing counseling may bridge this gap and promote faster transition to foster care for children.

RCR/FI is currently guided by a US-based board of directors consisting of an Executive Director, President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Each RCR/FI employee sends a weekly report to the board for evaluation of service delivery in a specific component of the program. The Executive Director and RCR/FI's Director correspond daily via the Internet, engaging in problem-solving and brainstorming sessions. The Board of Directors controls funding and budgeting, visiting Romania twice yearly to evaluate the results of its monetary



strategy. Part of the Annual Review Meeting involves ensuring the continued link between funding strategy and the agency mission.

Eileen McHenry is the agency's Executive Director, and is based in the Boston office. Mike Carroll, a photojournalist by profession, planted the seed for the organization when he came to document the AIDS epidemic in Romanian institutions in 1989. He currently serves as Board President, taking responsibility for fundraising efforts. In Bistrita, the agency Director is Laura Huzmezan. She provides oversight for all local agency functions and acts as liaison between the agency and the US Board of Directors. An American administrative manager has provided ongoing support for Laura's directorial functions, and will transition out of this role in mid-May. Alexandra Samartean is next in the chain of command as the agency's primary infant/pre-school teacher and family counselor.

Leadership at RCR/FI is poised on the brink of an important transition. For the previous year, the administrative manager, an American, has brought significant expertise to the agency based on her experience in social service provision in the US. As her time with RCR/FI comes to a close, administrative functions will fall solely upon the director, who has spent significant time shadowing her American counterpart. The administrative manager expressed strong confidence in the director's ability to promote the organization's growth and mission and complimented her unfailing dedication to agency goals. The Romanian director, however, expressed substantial fear that the transition may not go smoothly, and questions her ability to guide the agency effectively. Despite her doubts, however, it seemed evident that agency staff value the director's commitment and trust her to stand as an effective leader.

As leader, the Director tries to set a professional example for the staff members while creating a comfortable and collegial atmosphere. Part of her role involves acknowledging and

discussing the fear inherent in extensive organizational change. A significant task involves encouraging staff to recognize their strengths rather than become discouraged by their limitations in expertise. Additionally, the Director tries to add stability and structure to staff roles by having written job descriptions, codified agency rules, and standard policies.

Comments from the Director indicate that she places a high level of importance on personal responsibility and that she often experiences reluctance to delegate tasks to others. Part of her own professional development has been to recognize and acknowledge the strengths of others so that she feels better equipped to assign responsibilities to them.

Currently, the Director attempts to put each staff member in charge of a project while watching from a distance and providing expertise, if necessary. With the rapid organizational expansion, having satellite operations at the hospital makes it impossible for her to personally oversee every function. As a result, she reports learning to trust her employees and expect that they will perform well. To increase her comfort level as the organization grows, she conducts thorough assessments of employee abilities, basing work assignments on her two-way conversations with staff about structuring the functions they serve.

The agency director conducts these bi-directional employee assessments at six-month intervals. During these open-ended evaluations, she not only conducts performance reviews, but also solicits feedback from employees about what they like and dislike about their roles in the organization. She requests employee evaluations of her leadership and methods, stressing honesty in service of the mission and the value of constructive criticism. As director, she takes this employee input very seriously, and uses it to improve her own job performance. She prompts staff to provide insight into what they envision themselves doing in their future with the agency. She solicits and appreciates creativity and allows employees to create individual

atmospheres in which they feel confident and useful.

She spends a significant amount of time on paperwork, filling out reports for government offices and RCR/FI's US donor. She pointed out that although the stipend from the Mayor's office is low, the paperwork required to obtain it is extensive. As such, she looks to strike a balance between satisfying the reporting requirements of government offices and becoming more efficient so that she can spend more of her time evaluating, planning, and delivering services.

While much of her role involves staff organization and function, the Director also makes an effort to promote group cohesion and relaxation. To this end, she established monthly social outings so that staff members can become familiar with one another outside of the workplace. These outings all involve activities entirely separate from agency functions, such as shopping, cooking special meals, or going to a restaurant.

As local agency leader, the Director found it difficult to discuss her strengths, but when pressed, acknowledged that she has good interpersonal and diplomacy skills, and is able to meet needs without using force or anger. She considers herself to be a team player, able to work comfortably with individuals at all levels of the organization. She focuses on being direct with constructive criticism as an area for future improvement.

As with the agency structure, the dual role of American and Romanian culture is evident in RCR/FI's management practices. The American administrative manager necessarily played a large part in establishing management practice within the organization; however, she reports actively attempting to adopt a background role so that transfer of managerial functions to the Director will flow smoothly. The majority of decision-making occurs between the Director in Bistrita, and the board in Boston.

Ongoing structural change will set the tone for the upcoming year with the departure of

the American administrative manager. This individual is the second American to serve this function since the agency's creation in 1991, and the Board of Directors plans to transfer all administrative responsibility to the Romanian staff.

Among the administrative manager's many responsibilities include creating a transition plan for transfer of managerial duties to the Romanian staff, accounting and financial tracking, ensuring timely payment of utility bills, allocating program money according to the Board's budget specifications, and facilitating communication between agency offices in Bistrita and Boston. Additional functions to be handed over to local staff include grant-writing, liaison functions with the DPC, further development of the infant and pre-school programs, and administrative support for the Director.

The administrative manager acknowledges that upon her initial arrival, the boundaries surrounding her role in the agency were indistinct. The blurred definition of her role represented both an advantage and a disadvantage. As an American who signified expertise and knowledge, many staff members, including the Director, automatically looked to her for guidance. They often expected her final approval of important agency decisions. Her response was to encourage the Romanian staff to arrive at their own decisions while allowing her to make suggestions and teach them best practice methods. Additionally, workers from Romanian culture are used to having a readily identifiable, distinct leader from whom to take direction; the modalities of group process and shared decision-making were difficult for them.

From the American administrative manager's point of view, she noted that a foreign person, despite a warm welcome from local staff, automatically feels like an "outsider" to the organization. She faced initial barriers that included an inability to speak the language and difficulty understanding customary social practices in Romania. A large part of her adjustment

to living there was learning the ways of a new environment before feeling like an effective contributor to the organization. On the other side of her experience in Romania, she now expresses a concern about re-adapting to life in America as she travels home to prepare for graduate school.

Part of the administrative manager's role has been to facilitate and encourage independence in decision-making on the part of the Director and staff. A policy and procedure manual was created by the first administrative manager and was reviewed in 2002 by the board. That manual was created with little input from Romanian staff members; however, all staff has seen it and the funding organization maintains a copy. One of the proposed changes to the procedure manual is the implementation of increased mechanisms for communication between DPC social workers and RCR/FI staff.

RCR/FI has worked hard to bridge the transition between American collaboration in management to a Romanian-led organization. While this transition has created significant anxiety on the part of the Director and staff members, it is also viewed as an opportunity to put into practice management techniques and practice principles learned through the agency's long commitment to training and education. As RCR/FI matures, it raises the bar for itself, bringing its performance more in line with that of progressive Western social service agencies. As such, RCR/FI will promote itself as a site for effective collaboration with Western organizations who take interest in Romania's child welfare system.

The agency's teacher/counselor for the infant and pre-school programs will remain in charge of the infant and toddler residential suites, developmental assessments, and collaboration with the consulting physical therapist. Additionally, she will continue to conduct and develop the meetings with children and their foster and biological parents.

Additional staff includes a full-time infant caretaker in the residential facility and a part-time staff member who acts as liaison with the maternity ward in the local hospital. This part-time position was created to further the goal of early identification and intervention for newly abandoned children. This individual provides caretaking and developmental support for infants as their abandonment status is verified and they await release from the hospital. This staff member is key to the linkage between hospital staff and early intervention by the agency, as infants often wait several weeks for medical clearance to leave the hospital.

To document each child's progress in the foster care system, RCR/FI keeps updated statistics on the number of children served and presents this information in a yearly program review. Quantitative evaluations are conducted with foster families to document difficulties and successes, thus informing future improvements in program application. Children in the foster care system are evaluated every six months and their progress is recorded. Client satisfaction is also evaluated, including the response of children to social workers, RCR/FI staff, and applied interventions.

In relation to the DPC, continual collaboration between all levels of staff is deemed essential. To facilitate ongoing communication, RCR/FI and DPC staff attends conjoint weekly meetings to discuss issues that impact their dual functions. Additionally, RCR/FI staff meets on an as-needed basis with DPC foster care case managers, assessing children's developmental progress in their foster families and providing consultative services when foster families have specific needs.

One of the most interesting aspects of RCR/FI's operations was the division of labor between the agency and DPC staff. Recently, the organizations altered their policies such that DPC social workers are assigned to either a child or a foster mother, but not both simultaneously.

This system differs from many US models, in which social workers work with families in their entirety rather than selectively defining a child or parent as the service recipient. The underlying rationale for this segmentation of services remains unclear.

Under the US model, families are generally treated as a system in which all members are affected by and can contribute to formation and resolution of problems. In our interviews with staff members, the line between various service domains was drawn so finely that the RCR/FI psychologist was reluctant to make recommendations to her client's foster mother because that represented the domain of a DPC social worker. When queried about this plan of treatment, the psychologist stated that her function was to work with the child, not the foster mother.

An expansion of the use of Life Books represents a positive change, including the creation of life books for every child; these books will be continually updated with statistics about the child and important events in his/her life. The books are intended to follow the child wherever he/she goes within the child welfare system.

New employees are typically hired through newspaper and radio advertisements. Subsequent to their employment, staff members must pass a probationary period, during which their acclimation to the environment and work practices are evaluated for compatibility with the organization. If the employee successfully navigates this initial performance appraisal, he or she is given full employment status.

Once fully employed by the agency, staff members undergo a bi-annual performance evaluation (as discussed previously). Tasks are reassigned, expanded, or redefined based on these collaborative interviews. As is characteristic of American organizations, each staff member has a job description and a set of well-defined responsibilities. It is unclear whether a parallel task definition and performance evaluation system exists within the DPC.

Child development training is requisite for all newly hired staff members. Trainings for RCR/FI and DPC staff are made available by the staff at RCR/FI. Although DPC social workers are not required to attend the trainings, most of them participate regularly and show enthusiasm for learning. The Director felt that the high motivation of child welfare workers, coupled with the encouragement of RCR/FI staff, is responsible for the high turn-out at training sessions. During the training session our team attended, there were a large number of DPC social workers in attendance, and they participated actively in the discussion, asking many thoughtful questions.

Staff members must be able to conduct developmental assessments accurately, effectively collaborate with DPC staff, understand the source of behavior problems reported by foster families, and effectively train foster parents to implement workable solutions to assist the development of children in their care. Workers must also be able to withstand resistance and intense emotions on the part of foster and biological families in their reintegration meetings. Accurate prioritization of children based on their level of emergent need for intervention is paramount for staff members.

Currently, there is no full-time psychologist; the existing psychologist works part-time for RCR/FI and will be utilized for home visits when the agency expands its services in conjunction with the DPC. The social workers will increase their home visit schedules and will take primary responsibility for coordinating the literacy program within clients' homes.

It was clear that some employees were particularly well-suited to their work. One such example was the teacher/counselor, whose original degree was in economics, but whose love for children drew her to apply for this position. Other staff members have observed her skill with the children and their comfort with her; our observations of her at work in the agency aligned with this predominant staff opinion.



All staff endorsed a strong personal concern for the welfare of institutionalized children, believing in the importance of growing up in a family context. Some workers had grown up with adopted siblings and were able to use this experience in their education of foster families. Many employees said that although their work can be difficult and sad, they draw a lot of energy and motivation from the process of helping children and foster families.

The Director observed that the staff at RCR/FI comes across as smart, tolerant, honest, punctual, hard-working, open-minded, and enthusiastic about learning. She appreciated staff members' ability to integrate new ideas into their practice and their willingness to undertake any task, regardless of its nature.

The Director commented that the employees seem to be fulfilled by their work and happy with their jobs; however, the work itself is arduous and sad at times. When client satisfaction was assessed via questionnaires, the Director indicated that the agency received a positive evaluation by the children and families it serves. Correspondingly, RCR/FI won a best practice award in Romania and was selected as a model agency to which other organizations can look for advice and expertise. The Director also appreciated the flexibility given to the agency by the Board of Directors and the leeway to make decisions without micromanagement from donors.

Internal staff meetings occur twice per month, during which issues are brought to all staff members for discussion. Issues on the agenda include administrative issues and clinical case presentations. A training topic such as child development or new therapeutic intervention techniques is usually built into the meeting.

During discussions with the agency's teacher/family counselor, she acknowledged the existence of strong team support as she juggled multiple responsibilities and difficult families. According to her, team members were available to discuss complicated clinical cases and to

provide assistance if parents became emotionally volatile during meetings.

The American administrator believes that the primary strength of the organization lies in the dedication and support of its US donors and Board of Directors. Without their backing and continued support, RCR/FI would not be able to survive financially or to navigate the complexity of changes required by its large population of clients. She credits much of the successful collaboration to RCR/FI's organizational flexibility, motivation, and ability to tolerate rapidly changing social policy and its implementation. Other, similar programs have already folded due to black market influences, corruption, and lack of cooperation with outside funding organizations.

Agency-Specific Recommendations. A vital area of need for RCR/FI and the DPC is effective change management. According to Burke's (1994) model, this agency is truly undergoing transformational change, considering the rapid expansion of its service array and the exponential impacts this will have on staff and clients. A potential source of assistance is further collaboration with Case Western Reserve University and the Mandel School of Social Sciences, that has been involved in the growth of the organization in the last few years.

Additionally, RCR/FI has begun to occupy a position in which assessments of service users and client outcomes will be invaluable in directing future programming. Assessing client outcomes can inform the planned expansion and help in outlining client needs more definitively.

The DPC, in its search for more rigorous practice guidelines, may also benefit from collaboration with the Mandel school and other universities. As it develops links to the identity of social work as a discipline, it will become better informed about the latest practice models and how they can be adapted to its role in providing government services to families.

Lastly, there are several recommendations in terms of direct service and therapeutic

intervention. Of the utmost importance is the need for training in the family systems model, which presents the family as a dynamic unit rather than as a set of networked yet isolated individuals. This training will be vital to effectively linking therapy with parents to interventions with children – optimal therapeutic outcomes will not be forthcoming if parents and children are treated as independent service recipients by RCR/FI and DPC staff. It is recommended that RCR/FI and the DPC re-evaluate their decision to separate their interventions with parents and children.

Continued training efforts in behavior charting, family counseling, and developmental assessment will be vital to refining placement efforts. Staff should take advantage of opportunities to train with knowledgeable scholars and to utilize hands-on practice opportunities so that they may receive constructive feedback about their improvements in practice skills.

Lastly, staff members may benefit from considering the role of fathers in foster care, reintegration efforts, and in family planning. Many workers with whom we spoke stated that fathers might be reluctant to endorse family planning and contraceptive efforts. Unless fathers are involved in this process, and in the process of foster care and reintegration, significant difficulties may be encountered in families' implementation of therapy recommendations.

### ***The Romanian Foundation for Children, Community and Family***

The Romanian Foundation for Children, Community and Family, legally registered in 1997, aims at protecting children's rights. Across all aspects of the organization, FRCCF promotes the best interests of the child, seeking to ensure physical well being, emotional and mental development, the ability to be raised in a family environment, and other rights stipulated in the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

While the majority of FRCCR offices are located in Transylvania, it does have one satellite office in Bucharest and headquarters in Cluj. Its annual budget is one million US dollars, provided by Everychild in the United Kingdom, which is a branch of the Christian Children's Fund. Interviews were conducted with the Deputy Director and the County Program Director. These executives are accustomed to holding interviews with foreign evaluators and making presentations to potential donors. No interviews with social work staff or clients were obtained.

FRCCF has forty projects across six counties in Romania. The agency's initial focus was on the creation of prevention projects to retain children within their family rather than being institutionalized. Subsequently, agency programs expanded to include community assistance projects. Today, each county has a community center that acts as an umbrella for the "Family Homes" project. Family homes are a melding of institutional "group care" philosophy and family-oriented foster care interventions. There are approximately thirty-three family homes in operation; each is run by a couple and accepts up to ten children at a time. The home approximates the environment seen in US "group homes", in which a group of clients live together in a home-based setting under the guidance of a residential staff of caretakers.

Family programs aim at preventing child abandonment and school truancy, targeting families with many children and little income. The family programs offer education, tutoring, homework assistance, proficiency examination preparation, and literacy courses for children and adults. Community centers sponsor after-school programs that provide food, childcare, and homework assistance. This intervention is designed to reduce family difficulties in maintaining their children's education due to poverty or transportation issues. Currently, 4,500 children and 4,000 adults participate in the family program.

The agency also provides medical and counseling services as well as outreach for outlying mountain villages. Services to mountain communities include visitation and counseling for isolated families who are unable to obtain transportation to cities for services.

Family preservation interventions are aimed at retaining biological children in the home and address the national issue of abandonment due to parental poverty. Assistance takes the form of utility vouchers so that houses have consistent heat and electricity, in addition to donation of consumables and material goods. The program previously provided medications, but discontinued this practice as a result of stricter licensing and distribution laws related to medication.

Child advocacy programming targets children who currently reside in institutions. These children receive regular visits from physicians and counselors to assess their progress and to address developmental and behavior issues. A major function of program staff is to educate institution staff about child development and the rights of children. However, staff members have reported substantial resistance to change on the part of institution caretakers. Under the auspices of the Family Connection Project, social workers take institutionalized children to visit their biological families when possible, setting the stage for possible reintegration. Some children have already been able to reintegrate into their biological families from institutional care.

FRCCF also values prevention efforts, and has established a program for maternal assistance. This program assesses the material and psychosocial needs of pregnant women who are at risk for abandoning their infants.

A major component of FRCCF philosophy is promoting access to services for the Roma population. Each agency project has a percentage of Roma participants, unlike other social

service agencies that direct Roma clients to alternative services. Current programming includes outreach to a small, outlying Roma community that suffers from abject poverty. The Deputy Director indicated that working with Roma clients has been difficult due to previous Romanian prejudice and the lack of culturally competent training on the part of Romanian social workers.

The agency provided an annual review written in both Romanian and in English. This reflects the strong influence of reliance on Western donors for monetary support and the corresponding accountability that is required from the organization. Currently, ninety-five percent of FRCCF funds come from EveryChild UK, while five percent comes from the Romanian state. In 2003, ten percent of agency funding is expected to come from the European Union. Financially, the agency has had to research additional funding opportunities, as the focus of EveryChild will soon be directed toward needs in China and Africa. This year's budget has already been reduced, prompting agency efforts to establish relationships with donors in the United States.

In 2002, FRCCF merged with European Children's Trust (ECT) - Romania. The merger was prompted by the integration of FRCCF's traditional partner, The Christian Children's Fund, with European Children's Trust UK. The larger resulting organization (ECT) acts as an umbrella, overseeing branch operations. The merger led to expansion of services in Maramures county and in Bucharest.

One of FRCCF's primary concerns is the continued deficiency of conditions in childcare institutions. Institution staff has not grown professionally in their childcare methods and progressive training efforts have not been introduced. Respect for children's rights has not been a paramount priority demonstrated by institutional caretakers and many workers still confiscate children's birthday money or presents. FRCCF's psychologist and physician frequently interact

with institution staff in the hope of modeling more progressive methods of childcare; however, they report extreme resistance to learning on the part of the staff.

Many referrals come via word of mouth, enhanced by the agency's reputation in the surrounding community. At initial start-up, clients were attracted to the agency by advertising efforts. Institutions were also contacted at the agency's inception, initiating a relationship between institutions and FRCCF management. Diplomacy between FRCCF and institution staff remains a delicate balance – institutions are typically proprietary and territorial, especially in the face of rapid closures, job loss for staff, and negative press in the global community about living conditions for children. FRCCF social workers would like to conduct educational seminars for institution staff, but find it difficult to made headway given the tenuous balance between the functions of each organization.

With relation to institutional closure, a major problem faced by FRCCF is that children are not given time or instruction to prepare for transition from their long-term environment to new living situations. Institutional closure policy appears to mimic the faltering US deinstitutionalization process in the 1960's (Aderibigbe, 1997), with little warning given to staff and few preparations for clients to transition into the community. An institution may close with as little as two weeks' notice. As with the US experience, many older institutionalized children find themselves homeless because arrangements are not made for them to be placed in foster care or to be reunited with their biological families. These children are at risk for legal involvement, prostitution, health problems, and substance use (Krieg, 2001).

Community treatment of severe mental illness remains a significant concern for FRCCF. Large numbers of schizophrenic patients live on the streets with limited access to medications and counseling. Similarly, substance abuse has not received adequate recognition as a national

health problem – one Alcoholics Anonymous organization was initiated in Cluj, but it collapsed when its donor withdrew to support other programs. Healthcare and literacy also remain areas of substantial need.

The agency's goal in the next year is to work through logical frameworks for organization of services and to create objectives and indicators of progress for each project. Administrators began evaluations in 2000 to assess current outcomes for established interventions and community projects.

The Deputy Director expressed a positive view toward the Director, who has worked for the organization since its creation. She credits much of the agency's success to his hard-working, dedicated nature and his commitment to child welfare. She indicated that he represents the agency's accomplishments effectively to potential donors, increasing the likelihood that they will collaborate with the agency.

Little information was gained about the organizational culture from the interviews conducted. To gain adequate information, interviewing additional workers at multiple levels of the organization was an indispensable part of data collection. These interviews were not possible given the agency workers' schedules, so no data is presented on FRCCF culture.

FRCCF has 160 employees, 120 of which are full-time. All are professionals in their respective domains with social workers representing the majority of staff members. Each office houses a multi-disciplinary team comprised of social workers, a psychologist, and a physician. There are five offices in total, including an administrative facility in Bucharest. FRCCF has a well-defined board of trustees and directors comprised of individuals from the Romanian community.

Of significant concern to the Deputy Director is the substantial caseload borne by each



social worker. Each worker carries a client load of up to 150 families in addition to institutional clients. Currently, each family is visited no fewer than three times a year, but the agency realizes that effective interventions require more frequent visits. On the agenda for current problem-solving is how to utilize staff members more effectively given that finances are limited for hiring a large cohort of new social workers.

The Foundation has undergone major systems changes in the past year in response to a decrease in the number of its donors. The funding style adopted by FRCCF to balance the decrease in sponsorship is to solicit funding from individual donors in support of specific, identified children. Under this arrangement, a sponsor agrees to support a particular child by providing a set monthly donation until the child reaches age eighteen. This system operates as individual sponsors take responsibility for each child, and carries with it substantial reporting requirements. Each year, FRCCF creates a progress report for each child; the report and a picture of the child are sent to the sponsor along with personal thanks for continued support. In this way, individual donors get to know their sponsored children and can attach a face and a name to the money they send. While this strategy tends to enable retention of long-term donors, it is also labor-intensive, requiring the efforts of many staff members to create and send the reports.

In Maramures county, the agency has adopted a project-based style of operations. Donors are solicited to give money for particular projects, such as literacy training or Roma outreach. Yearly reports are generated for each project, not for each child or client family who participated. This system is much less labor-intensive than the individual-sponsor programs.

Each year, statistics are compiled on family data such as living environment, income, health status, and satisfaction with services. These data are aggregated and integrated into the

agency's annual progress report, which is shared with current and potential donors. The Deputy Director reported that data for children living in institutions is difficult to gather due to resistance from institution authorities, who refuse the administration of questionnaires.

According to the Deputy Director, selection of staff members has been effective in that the agency is attracting dedicated, committed personnel to conduct its programming.

The Deputy Director shared that the agency strongly needs American partnership, especially in areas of efficiency training and funding. Of particular concern for the agency administrators is the lack of efficient bridges for serving the Roma and inefficiency given the large caseloads carried by the social workers. While the efforts of the organization have brought about substantial improvements in the material and psychological environments of abandoned children, high variability in the conditions for children remain. One of the future goals of the agency is to implement individual intervention plans according to the US model, but given the ratio of staff to children, this has not been possible so far.

When the Deputy Director joined FRCCF, there were seventeen staff members and twenty-seven institutions; all worked together very closely. As the organization grew, operations began to resemble a "factory" environment, with a multitude of complex and increasingly difficult tasks. She acknowledges some concern about the organization losing touch with its aim and philosophy, especially as it courts a variety of donors with differing missions.

The Deputy Director stated that a highly valued agency goal is the idea that interventions for children with special needs is possible and can be made a routine component of social policy in Romania. She praised agency staff for their thoroughness in knowing each family on his/her caseload and its history, despite feeling overwhelmed and burdened by task requirements and

time constraints.

Agency-Specific Recommendations. One of the biggest concerns that presented itself during the interview was the need to anticipate and control expansion-related fluctuations in financial stability. Although the outcome of the merger between Christian Children's Fund and Everychild UK has been favorable, allowing for program growth and expansion of services, rapid maturation of the agency could stretch management capacity and create inherent structural flaws in terms of monitoring, expenditure controls, and outcome assessment. As such, FRCCF should engage in a thorough outlining of its current and future programming, utilizing a Logic Model (Groza, 2003; Renger & Titcomb, 2002).

Corresponding to an evaluation of programs, implementation, and controls is the necessity of examining the impact of the merger on organizational culture and systems. Are there requirements to alter previously stable management practices? Is there cooperative collaboration between Christian Children's Fund, Everychild UK, and FRCCF administrators? Is there consistency of vision regarding expansion of services to clients? FRCCF may benefit from stepping back and taking internal stock of the agency's post-merger status before engaging in large-scale program expansion.

### **HIV/AIDS**

#### ***Close to You***

Close to You (CTY) is a community-based agency that provides services for children diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Located in the large, industrial city of Iasi, its mission is to find foster homes for children with HIV/AIDS, promote public awareness about the disease and prevention, and to alleviate the social stigma faced by children who have the illness.

The program evaluation was conducted through discussions with agency administrators, social workers, office staff members, and student volunteers. We gathered information about the external social, political, and economic conditions facing the organization, as well as factors which impact their direct practice with families. Additionally, the team conducted logic model training designed to help agency administrators operationalize future agency goals and concretize a business plan for presentation to potential donors.

Close to You is funded predominantly by Holt International Children's services, which began in 1955 when it pioneered international adoptions in response to the many children orphaned by the Korean War. Currently, Holt is one of the largest international adoption providers as well as a supporter of children and their families through a variety of programs around the world. Additionally, they served as a consultant to the United Nations and routinely partner with a variety of foundations, including the United States Agency for International Development (Introduction to Holt, 2003).

Central to Holt's mission is the belief that every child deserves to have a loving home. As a result, the donor works toward family preservation, in-country adoption, and facilitates international adoption for children who cannot be placed in their countries of origin. Respecting cultural diversity and initiation of self-sustaining social services, Holt collaborates with independent partners comprised of local personnel in the countries it serves. Additionally, Holt serves as a resource for local governments as they work to develop social policies that serve child welfare interests (Stiles, Dhamaraksa, dela Rosa, Goldner & Kalyanvala, 2001).

Holt's projects in Romania include developing foster care programs, family preservation, and caring for children with HIV/AIDS. In addition to providing training for families, the donor

provides economic support for families who care for children infected with HIV/AIDS (Project Update, 2003).

CTY faces a number of challenges to its long-term viability and its direct delivery of services. Foremost among these challenges is the agency's dependence on a single donor to sustain its operations. Organizations such as Holt have a history of infusing agencies with substantial funds and providing business and practical expertise for a limited period of time. After this period, the organization typically reallocates its funds to assist other agencies and causes in other geographic areas. Currently, Holt receives a significant portion of funds from USAID, which is in the process of streamlining many of its programs. Given Holt's mission of providing assistance to pressing health and social issues worldwide, it is unlikely that it will remain CTY's sole supporter permanently. Consequently, a vital need of CTY is to develop strategic fundraising skills to cultivate a larger base of contributors.

An additional financial limitation is the lack of sufficient government funds to provide stipends for foster families who care for children with HIV/AIDS. Despite global attention to the growing problem of childhood HIV/AIDS, a systematic policy framework for dealing with the epidemic is needed. Although governmental laws exist to protect the rights of children affected by HIV/AIDS, the disease garners less political attention than other issues that impact children. As a direct result of insufficient national AIDS policy, the government does not allocate enough funds for provision of services to children affected by the illness. This is particularly concerning given the fact that many children contracted HIV as a result of mass inoculations during communism.

In the face of government inability to provide sufficient funds, CTY devotes some of its operating budget to underwriting stipends for foster families. Since only a portion of its budget

can be allocated for this purpose, the agency either turns down or wait lists willing foster families. In a recent recruitment effort, 160 willing families submitted applications to take children. The agency was only able to accept and train five of them due to limitations in financial resources and staff selectivity in choosing appropriate families for ill children.

Despite legal protection for children with HIV/AIDS, fear of the disease still presents a substantial barrier to children's ability to access mainstream educational services. Agency staff discussed the difficulties faced in negotiating school attendance for many children who are still healthy enough to go to school. Significant resistance is encountered on the part of teachers and school administrators, who seem to fear transmission of the illness by daily contact with affected children. Many families resort to keeping children at home rather than send them to face prejudice in the school system. Additionally, eighty percent of children withdraw from formal schooling because families cannot afford the expensive medications needed to maintain their health.

A barrier to accurate characterization of the scope of the AIDS epidemic in Romania is the lack of healthcare policies that provide for HIV testing and blood donor screening. The lack of health policies to address the issue harkens back to national minimization of the existence of HIV/AIDS in the general population. Unfortunately, this may lead to substantial increases in transmission of the virus until policy makers endorse public discussion of AIDS and implement efforts to prevent further transmission. At this point in time, it is unclear how many people in the general population are HIV positive and what proportion of this population includes childhood cases. These are only estimates of the incidence.

CTY's mission is to transition children with HIV/AIDS from institutional settings to foster family care, identifying affected children as early in their development as possible.

Additionally, agency staff discussed the need to alleviate social stigma associated with AIDS and expressed a desire to reach out to both urban and rural communities with education services. In the minds of agency staff, one of the keys to halting the AIDS epidemic is to provide transmission awareness and prevention information to Romanian communities. As part of this awareness effort, staff recognized that one of their more immediate targets for education is the adolescent HIV/AIDS population; these children oftentimes have not been told that they have the disease. According to CTY social workers, teens who are unaware that they have HIV are likely to become sexually active and transmit the illness to their partners. Training in safer sexual practices for these children is a primary goal of agency staff.

Furthermore, agency staff endorsed the need to provide therapy for diagnosed children and their parents, teaching them helpful coping skills as they battle the emotional and physical turmoil and stigma associated with the illness. To this end, staff has organized parent and child support groups and opportunities for individual therapeutic support. CTY is also creating a manual for parents that encourages open communication and honesty with their children about AIDS.

Lastly, health care services represent a major advocacy area for agency staff. On one hand, Romania's national healthcare system provides some coverage for client health problems. On the other, Romanian medicine lacks the financial backing and technical expertise seen in Western medical practice. It appeared that standard treatment for HIV/AIDS was palliative care, rather than the advanced medication regimens that have been shown to boost the immune systems of HIV/AIDS patients in Western countries.

Holt International currently provides oversight for the agency. During initial start-up, Holt placed several of its own staff members in the organization; their function was to guide

development of routine practice and management procedures, as well as the development of documentation. As the agency became increasingly self-sufficient, Holt replaced its staff members with Romanian employees who took over the administrative and direct practice functions of the agency. Currently, the majority of staff members are Romanian, and Holt provides oversight via email and scheduled business meetings with the agency director and staff. Holt's aim in the organizational start-up was to establish agency infrastructure using the expertise of its own staff, then turn the program over to local professionals. The Romanian agency director remains in close contact with Holt's leaders, seeking advice and expertise when necessary. The director in this agency serves mainly an administrative function, supervising a staff of social workers, a psychologist, and student volunteers. Throughout the interview, there seemed to be open communication between the director and staff members, and a bi-directional method of evaluating successes and obstacles in relation to service delivery.

Administrative support was provided by two people whose functions were to receive and triage intake calls, keep a master schedule for the agency, and to organize documentation of client cases and reports for Holt. The director and the staff acknowledged that the agency functions as a team more than as a hierarchy, with collaborative-decision making rather than decisions handed down from above. Staff members expressed commitment to programming goals, as they had a continual voice in their implementation and revision.

A readily apparent strength of the organizational culture was the mutual support offered by the director and staff members to each other. Interviewees acknowledged the emotional difficulty involved in caring for families in which the children were likely to die. It appeared that the devastating consequences faced by the children motivated staff members to prioritize an official, organized support system that practitioners could use to cope with client deaths. Social



workers stated that the death rate is very high for their clients and that their personal coping skills are refined continually.

A positive consequence of this culture of mutual support was that the agency had experienced very little turnover since its inception. In contrast to the United States, in which staff turnover is often a major problem in organizational functioning, CTY still has most of the same counselors, therapists, and directors with which it started during initial recruitment by Holt. This makes a statement not only about the supportive culture valued by the agency, but also the dedication and motivation of individual workers as well.

Additionally, a measure of prestige is given to people who work for non-governmental organizations, which makes jobs like these attractive to workers. A potential drawback of this prestigious experience, however, is that it makes employees more marketable to foreign agencies. This creates the potential for workers to gain valuable work experience before leaving the agency for higher-paying jobs in other locations.

Open communication was endorsed as highly valued by all agency staff. Constructive criticism, feedback, and acknowledgement of successes were all seen as avenues for improving agency functioning, and more importantly, the care provided for children and their families. A main concern of each worker seemed to be the impact of decisions on his or her clients rather than personal recognition for expertise or territoriality.

CTY is organized on a semi-hierarchical, yet team-based basis. Large-scale oversight is provided by Holt as the funding organization. However, Holt has transferred the majority of decision-making and leadership issues over to the executive director and her staff. In this agency, the director acts as the main liaison with Holt, submitting reports, soliciting advice, and trouble-shooting problems with Holt representatives. As she obtains direction from Holt, she

passes this down to the team members, typically in the form of discussions during weekly team meetings. Staff members discuss their perspective on policies and procedures, presenting both successes and difficulties in accomplishing goals during these meetings.

There appeared to be significant transparency between Holt representatives, the executive director, and all staff members. It was not apparent that any staff members were excluded from information exchange based on their level of education or years of service with CTY. All members seemed to be included in discussions and the staff viewed themselves as part of a functioning system rather than individuals attempting to compete with one another. If one individual reported difficulty with a client issue, it was likely that another individual would be impacted by and could influence that situation, as they interacted with the same clients in a different capacity.

Overt rules existed regarding reporting and documentation in that individual case records were kept and stored in a locked file cabinet. Agency members appeared to recognize that confidentiality is vital to their clients' well-being and ability to function in society. More subtle norms were seen in the atmosphere of mutual support, a philosophy of dedication to the HIV/AIDS cause, and sympathy for clients who had difficulty using services as a result of emotional or physical decompensation.

Although the executive director serves as liaison between agency staff and Holt, staff members are also free to communicate via letter, telephone or email with the donor, preventing a communication bottleneck. In many US agencies, communication with donors and higher level executives is limited to the agency director or personnel occupying similar positions. A unique quality of CTY is that all staff, regardless of position, are able to seek guidance from the primary funding organization.

Staff members report to the executive director, who provides feedback regarding division of labor, assignment of new responsibilities, and problem-solving for particular client cases. The director herself was educated in the social service sector, and thus has the same specialized expertise as the counselors and social workers who are providing services. Her background is a strength of the organization, since she can give feedback about the clinical delivery of services, understands the realistic amount of time tasks may take, and can speak the same professional language as those whom she supervises. Her expertise provides a strong foundation for carrying out employee performance reviews, hiring new staff members, and in building worker motivation.

The flow of information appeared to be optimal, given the collaborative, team-based approach endorsed by all agency members. Any difficulties in information flow appear to exist between the agency's desire to institute prevention efforts and lack of access to both urban and rural communities. Currently, education is limited to some radio and television ads, as well as workshops conducted in schools and at fairs. Ideally, the agency would like to collaborate with the Orthodox church, since the majority of Romanian communities, both urban and rural, are organized around a local church. An impediment to this effort, however, is the church's stance on sex education, discussion of HIV/AIDS, and inability to acknowledge increases in sexual activity on the part of young people.

Close to You employs four social workers, one to address the service needs at each site. These social workers work from offices at local hospitals, identifying children who are HIV+ or who have AIDS. The presence of these staff members has decreased abandonment levels dramatically, from a previous level of approximately fifty percent. Abandonment prevention is a significant component of social workers' time within the hospital system.

The agency is currently focusing on parent education and training to enable parent groups to take over some of the political lobbying and fundraising functions of the staff. This liberates more time for counselors to provide other services such as counseling and support groups.

The organizational climate was a positive one overall, with staff members seeming to collaborate effectively and to gain personally and professionally from their interaction. A spirit of motivation was apparent when interviewing the staff, along with a sincere dedication to their cause. It appeared that the obstacles they faced in accomplishing the agency's mission created an even stronger drive to persevere in achieving their aims.

One negative aspect of the climate, however, was the legitimate concern about what will happen to the agency when Holt removes its funding. Although significant time on the part of the director and staff is being devoted to attracting more donors, this concern seemed to overwhelm agency members at times. Although this feeling generates a valid cause for concern, none of the agency staff indicated that they were looking for other employment, or that they placed a high concern on their own immediate well-being. On the contrary, staff members seemed highly motivated to learn about attracting other donors so that they could continue to serve children affected by HIV/AIDS. Staff eagerly listened to the team discussion of program planning and courting donors and enthusiastically discussed ways in which these lessons could be implemented.

For the most part, staff in this agency were recruited based on their education in an area of social sciences, including psychology, sociology, and social work. This was a workplace requirement instituted by Holt when it transferred control of CTY over to Romanian staff members. As such, all staff members have training in various aspects of human development, family interaction, and social service practice.

However, several issues impacted staff ability to conduct their work effectively. Romanian education is still in a state of maturation itself, gathering significant information from Western knowledge and practice to supplement students' learning. The same held true for the organization itself, which actively invites outside experts to teach staff about new advancements in medicine and new approaches to dealing with the family system in the face of devastating illness. Additionally, workers expressed the need for additional training in family dynamics, especially surrounding life-threatening illnesses, and further development of their ability to train families in effective communication with their children about the serious issues they face.

Individuals surveyed during the interviews unanimously expressed a love for their work and a sense of enrichment resulting from being part of a social service organization. None of the staff expressed the need to change careers or to take a break from the sometimes heartbreaking work they conducted on a daily basis.

Although they stressed the need for and benefit of their team support network, they talked about finding professional and personal strength in helping children battle HIV/AIDS, and in watching how valiantly the children fought to achieve normalcy in their lives. The employees valued serving families with a sense of respect, and exhibited substantial patience with families who had trouble following through with recommendations or attending appointments.

The level of employee motivation was one of the most impressive aspects of the interviews. All were intensely motivated to ease the lives of families and children with HIV/AIDS and disturbed by the social stigma that follows them as they interact with society. During the information exchanges, all employees listened attentively and asked extremely relevant questions about adapting Western models to their Romanian practice. They demonstrated a spirit of openness and willingness to learn, and expressed no defensiveness.

Agency-Specific Recommendations. One of the most pressing needs for the agency was the ability to hire more social workers to serve the number of clients referred for services. Currently, CTY only has one social worker per site, making a total of four people who are able to liaison with hospitals. This has the potential to increase pressures on social workers if referrals escalate with increased diagnosis and detection methods.

A second vital need of the organization is to implement the Logic Model in its application to their mission and programs as soon as possible. In our discussions, agency staff exhibited a relative lack of distinction between their direct service counseling efforts, their social education programs, and their prevention projects. At times it seemed that administrators felt that each of these goals would be accomplished in part by all of the activities, rather than associating particular outcomes with particular forms of programming. In the eyes of potential donors, an amalgamation of goals and projects may not reflect the agency's capacity for organization and achievement of its goals. A more thorough plot of desired outcomes and methods for achieving them would make competition for funds a more effective agency endeavor.

Relating to foster family recruitment, it became apparent that CTY should evaluate its foster family screening mechanisms to enable recruitment of more families; currently, there are not enough families to serve the number of children referred from hospitals for placement. Additionally, agency staff could emphasize pre-placement training so that more families meet acceptance criteria. Following placement, post-training evaluation and troubleshooting sessions may supplement foster families' knowledge, and follow-up assessments could be implemented to measure family compliance with agency foster care requirements.

## Mental Health

### *Estuar*

Estuar is a community-based agency that provides mental health services and acts as an alternative to long-term hospitalization for adults with chronic mental illness. Its mission is to offer opportunities for the social-reintegration of adults facing disorders such as schizophrenia, depression, and anxiety. The agency provides a place to go during the day, counseling and support groups, art and occupational therapy, parent education, client advocacy, and legal support. Under the umbrella of its advocacy efforts, the agency extends help to clients in filling out legal paperwork, negotiating with family members regarding clients' rights to physical space and monetary income, and court representation. Additionally, Estuar focuses on creating community awareness about mental illness in an attempt to reduce the stigma currently associated with psychological disorders.

Estuar fields referrals directly from inpatient units at the local hospital, from word of mouth within the community, and through radio advertising and street fairs. Many clients seek out agency services voluntarily rather than being forced to come by their families. The agency organizes excursions into the community so that clients become acclimated to life outside the hospital environment, and so that members of society can become more familiar with mental illness. The agency offers its services from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm during the day, during which it typically serves thirty-five people.

Agency staff must re-negotiate funding every year; some projects are re-funded, others are not. Typically, staff expects a program to last for only a year, and attempt to plan new projects that align with established modes of care and progress already achieved by clients. This difficulty with gaining renewed funding for valuable projects reduces stability of programming

for clients.

One agency goal is to buy a house in which the agency can exist. Currently, they rent their facilities and costs are subject to frequent change. Owning a house would give the agency more independence and more flexibility to adapt it to program needs, as well as predictability in financial planning.

Estuar has a good community presence, and is regarded as an asset by clients and social service providers. It was well-known within the university faculty network in Cluj.

Estuar views itself as an alternative to continual re-admission of clients to the hospital, a solution to the “revolving door” problem faced by many people with chronic mental illness. Their typical clients cannot function independently in society, but utilize agency services to improve their job skills, outlook, and social functioning rather than decompensating and entering the hospital. This agency appears to be the sole community alternative to successive client hospitalizations.

Future goals include starting a project for handicapped individuals financed by the State Department. One of the difficulties faced by the organization is the lack of overall funding for Estuar that forces the agency to survive by the creation of separate but linked projects. Funds are restricted as well, and are not allowed to transfer between programs in support of overall agency functions. All expenditures must show a direct relation to the program for which the money was designated.

Currently, the agency functions as a model community mental health center in Eastern Europe. They participate in training other agencies in Eastern European countries who would like to build on their model of treatment. Last year, the agency trained social service professionals from Hungary and Bulgaria. Part of this training involves developing networks



with other mental health centers throughout Europe with the aim of sharing expertise and facilitating referrals. The staff views their agency as a platform for a community center, likening their office space and facilities to those of a club “where clients can do what they want in a safe, supportive environment”.

Under the leadership of a new director, the organization has undergone fundamental change in the past three months. The new director was chosen by agency donors with the approval of individual staff members. However, employees are the ones who must familiarize the director with the internal workings of the organization. Although the transition is reported to be smooth, this balance of knowledge and training of the new leader must represent a somewhat awkward juxtaposition of roles within the agency. One of the foremost questions was why an existing staff member was not promoted to the role of director. In many agencies, this is the norm, as existing staff members are often more familiar with the organization than a newcomer from the outside.

Of particular importance for the agency is how the new leader manages her entrance into the agency, especially in circumstances when she deems change to be appropriate. She appears to be accepted by agency staff; however, substantial conflict oftentimes results when new leaders wish to implement changes that are unfamiliar to workers.

The agency culture appears to represent mutual acceptance and cooperation. As this is expected from the clients as they interact with one another and participate in group therapy, it is vital that staff members model healthy interactions as well.

The agency consists of three staff members and one coordinator. All staff members are social workers, while the coordinator is a sociologist. The agency offers psychiatric consultation for clients on a weekly basis – during this time, the psychiatrist hold discussions groups about

medications without giving individual medical advice. Clients are encouraged to direct dose change and side effect concerns to their personal psychiatrists. The agency also receives consultation assistance from a local lawyer. Staff members share common responsibilities, such as running groups, in addition to individual tasks which are specific to staff members' professional expertise.

Clients organize their own social activities at Estuar, including community excursions, board games, and conversations within the facility. Often, clients work together to solve problems with their own personal expertise, such as one client helping another to complete an application for an apartment. The agency staff foster a spirit of client teamwork and mutual support.

During our interview, a client offered his impression of working with Estuar, stating that he appreciated users' involvement in the agency's design of programming, and that their input is continuously solicited at weekly meetings. He validated the importance of identifying client needs, including making programming changes where needed, stating that this increases the likelihood that clients will use and benefit from the program's services. He concluded by saying that he feels appreciated by his involvement and his interactions with the staff.

Not only is a spirit of teamwork encouraged on the part of clients, but it is evidenced by staff members as well. Staff members discussed a team willingness to take on multiple responsibilities, covering for each other during illness or emergency and sharing the workload to reduce the stress level of the staff. Importantly, staff members create a safe environment for sharing concerns and difficult clinical cases. The team is currently undergoing some transition with the hiring of a new coordinator three months ago. Team culture also was evident in the manner in which they positioned themselves in a semi-circle during the interview and responded

collectively to our questions, helping each other to converse in English.

Agency personnel are required to deal with chronically mentally ill adults, who oftentimes do not recover fully enough to become self-sustaining, independent members of society. As such, workers must incorporate realistic expectations of client improvement into their workplace goals, and be able to deal effectively and nonjudgmentally with relapses and setbacks. Significant patience and diplomacy is also required as staff members advocate with patients' employers and family members on behalf of their clients.

Staff members unanimously expressed the need for additional training in counseling, stating that they have learned primarily through hands-on job experience. Continued education is a substantial need of the organization.

Agency staff clearly valued the fact that they fulfill a vital need of the mentally ill population, and that without their services, clients would continue to revolve into and out of the hospital. Knowing that they embody a scarce and valued resource motivates many staff members to weather disappointments and the unpredictability of funding.

Estuar currently conducts weekly meetings to evaluate their techniques with clients and the progress of service users. Most staff members felt that paperwork is intensive, and that reporting to donors about various programs takes up a significant part of their time. Additionally, they create progress notes for all activities and review them on a quarterly basis. Given that Estuar is a satellite of a larger foundation with four centers, reporting is also required by the administrative bureau in Bucharest.

Reintegration is a main goal of the agency, and as such acts as a standard against which program success is measured. Reintegration is defined by agency staff as client ability to maintain a job with income and an independent, self-sustainable lifestyle. Most clients,

however, have not been able to achieve this due to social stigma against the mentally ill. The majority of clients only obtain black market or part-time employment because businesses are reluctant to hire people with mental illness. Additionally, public policy creates an incentive for clients to remain unemployed, as they are guaranteed a state stipend as long as they are considered to be disabled. Once they begin to get a regular salary, the state rescinds the stipend, which is not renewable if the person should decompensate and become disabled again. Clients choose to take the guaranteed stipend rather than risk a variable, unguaranteed income. As a result, current public policy paves the way for continued dependence on the part of clients.

Staff remained uncertain regarding the percentage of clients who are able to stay out of the hospital as they attend programming at the center. Some voiced the concern that their programs and nurturing, long-term atmosphere create client dependency on the center and its staff. Some clients have come to the center for many years, engaging in positive long-term relationships with the agency and other clients.

Agency staff estimated that the ethnicity of their client population consisted of fifty percent Romanian and fifty percent Hungarian. They reported serving a small number of Roma in the past, but attributed low Roma attendance to a “self-selection” mechanism that causes them to choose other alternatives for service or no services at all. Staff members stated that they felt Roma clients were not excluded solely due to their ethnicity, but due to cultural factors that made them incompatible with other clients. In describing the client experience of the Roma, staff noted that they were not integrated into activities or the community culture of the other clients at the center.

Agency-Specific Recommendations. One agency recommendation is to advocate for the establishment of a national mental health advocacy association, such as the National Association

for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) in the United States. The US-based organization provides backing for mental health agencies by advocating for policy changes, bringing vital issues to the forefront of public knowledge, and lobbying for legal reforms. Gathering together interested professionals, clients, and family members in a Romanian organization will help garner public and political support for mentally ill clients.

Additionally, Estuar may benefit from establishing a social work liaison at the hospital itself to facilitate referrals and evaluate the post-discharge needs of potential clients. This would also publicize agency services to clients and family members who may be unaware of the existence of this important resource. As referrals grow, donors may become significantly more interested in providing financial support for the agency.

### **Domestic Violence**

#### ***Artemis***

Artemis is a domestic violence shelter located in Cluj. Its mission is to empower women to escape from abusive relationships, to take charge of their lives, and to be able to communicate their abuse experiences to others. Services include counseling and shelter for sexually abused girls and women, services for at-risk women, an intake and information hotline, legal consultation, support groups, and advocacy for the rights of the abused. The agency shelter accepts women and children, offering services to girls at any age and to boys up to fourteen years. Recently established programming includes violence education seminars in local schools.

The shelter facility has a capacity of five families. Clients are housed at an undisclosed location that employs separate staff members from the administrative office in order to preserve the safety of shelter clients. During the four years in which the center has operated, free assistance was offered in approximately ninety cases of sexual abuse and violence. Specialists

working with police, prosecution, educators, and medical institutions created a collaborative approach to handling sexual abuse cases. As a result, psychologists and social workers from the Artemis Center and from other organizations are highly involved in multi-disciplinary interventions in sexual abuse, including child prostitution.

Referrals typically come from hospitals, although there is no law mandating reporting of abuse unless injuries are life-threatening. Hospitals, physicians, and teachers are not obligated to report child abuse, a gap in the child protection system that the agency is trying to close through public awareness, political lobby, and advocacy. Community awareness efforts are aimed at local schools, family physicians, lawyers and information campaigns using posters, fliers, and other educational materials. Presentations are often made through mass media.

Agency clients are mainly Romanians and Hungarians. Significant numbers of Roma abuse victims have been identified, however, the agency director discussed that there are “separate” service facilities for the Roma community. A Roma domestic violence center exists in Cluj, initiated by Roma women; this center collaborates with Artemis.

EU countries supply most of the funding for the organization. Through the Access Program, the EU co-financed most of Artemis’ activities during the year 2002. Small grants are also received from foreign embassies in Holland and Canada. In addition, the organization collaborates with Swiss donors who are sympathetic to the cause of domestic violence. Similar to Estuar, funding is often provided for specific projects, which must be renewed yearly. There is no overall funding for agency operations at this time.

The agency continues to create public and professional awareness about the dangers of domestic violence, holding psychologist training programs and international seminars throughout Eastern Europe. In 1999, Artemis was involved in changing old legislation that allowed no

protection for female and child victims of abuse. New domestic violence legislation will facilitate the organization of services to assist abuse victims, and will illustrate to governmental officials that the public sees family violence as a national issue. Slowly, domestic violence legislation is changing to allow more protection for victims; however, lobbying for harsher penalties for abusers has met with government resistance.

The agency has recruited local police cooperation, so that officers may request evaluations for identified victims and provide referral information for them. There is currently no implementation of “rape kits” or videotapes to document physical signs of abuse – Artemis is lobbying for this to be established as routine protocol in sex crime investigations so that courtroom evidence may be gathered to bring perpetrators to justice.

The organization’s mission is to stop abuse and empower women to take charge of their lives. Correspondingly, Artemis wishes to break the wall of silence that normally surrounds victims of abuse, encouraging women to speak out collectively and individually about their experiences. In current Romanian culture, physical and sexual abuse are taboo subjects, and victims are stigmatized for speaking out. Future plans include conducting counseling with men who are abusers – staff are in the process of writing a grant to secure funding for a batterer’s group.

Educational efforts include a book with contributions from leading practitioners and academicians, printed in Romanian and in English. Community organization efforts include the inception of a national coalition of organizations that provide services for women. Organization staff cites their main strength as the ability to work well with their clients and to be part of a cohesive team. This allows them the flexibility to organize progressive services that can be adapted to fit their client population.

Agency leadership appears to fall onto the shoulders of one administrator with the support of an American Peace Corps worker. The director appeared to be competent in facilitating organizational operations, yet depended on the social worker to act as liaison with English-speaking evaluators. The agency would benefit from cultivation of her English-speaking skills so that she can confidently represent the organization in funding circles. Internally, decisions appear to be made via consensus rather than through hierarchy.

A culture of “utmost confidentiality” is vital to the success of the agency’s services, as it provides shelter to vulnerable women and children who are sought by abusers. Clearly, lives are at stake if confidentiality is not maintained. It remained unclear what types of support are available to agency staff who undoubtedly deal with potentially explosive situations and traumatized people. It is also unclear how shelter workers are protected if abusers should track their mates to the safe house.

Artemis currently has thirteen employees. Recently, some of the agency’s larger projects did not get re-funded and staff lay-offs became necessary. In an interesting statement about the organizational culture, these staff members continued to volunteer for the agency without being paid. Additionally, Artemis relies on student interns for some tasks.

There is a technical hierarchy of command, however, decisions are typically made on a consensus basis with the involvement of all staff members. Job descriptions were defined two years ago, based on the tasks in which employees were engaged at the time. Task requirements are often fluid, as projects come and go with changes in funding; however, some common elements apply to all agency work. Staff members consist of psychologists and social workers, with some assistance from Peace Corp staff.

The agency creates individual project reports, but has not had the time or staff to create



an annual report. One of the director's main concerns is that the struggle to maintain funding occupies the time and thoughts of staff that could be devoted to programming.

The nature of Artemis' services engenders a complexity of management that is atypical of social service organizations. Specifically, confidential communication must take place between shelter staff and the home office without jeopardizing the lives of safe house residents. This adds additional burden to the functions of outcome evaluation and client documentation, given that complete secrecy must be maintained.

Staff members must be adept at handling and diffusing emotionally charged situations, and respecting the tenuous nature of the circumstances faced by traumatized women and children. They must adhere to the utmost confidentiality and thoroughly understand the unique dynamic that operates within abusive families. An essential task requirement is that workers adopt a non-judgmental stance toward women involved in abusive relationships, acknowledging the likelihood that some women may be unable to leave their abusers permanently.

The staff consistently attributed their continued existence in an unstable funding environment to their determination to "keep going no matter what". All staff members took pride in the fact that the organization has managed to survive several financial disasters in relation to funding availability and remains able to provide services to victims of abuse. This was unanimously cited as one of the greatest achievements of the organization to date. The willingness of staff to persevere without pay and the absence of frequent turnover make substantial statements about the motivation of workers to address the needs of women's and children's safety in the community.

One measure of the organization's effectiveness at bringing about desired social outcomes is seen in the legislative changes which have taken place since it began public

advocacy efforts. Overall, Artemis has been quite effective in influencing public policy surrounding domestic violence and child abuse. In May 2000, the organization mobilized a petition in favor of legislative modifications for “crimes against sexual life” and forwarded the signatures to parliamentarians and the Ministry of Justice. As a result, a campaign for Penal Code modification was begun. The results were favorable, and in November 2000 the articles in the Penal Code were modified.

Agency-Specific Recommendations. Given Artemis’ often tenuous financial standing, it may behoove the agency to engage volunteers and interns by developing partnerships with local universities. Interns can volunteer valuable service time in exchange for field experience and practical knowledge. This would enable the agency to save money while not relinquishing their existing staff to client ratio.

Additional cooperation with the Peace Corps would be ideal, allowing the organization to capitalize on existing positive relationships with Peace Corps workers. Peace Corps staff are typically paid by the Peace Corps itself, freeing agency funds for direct service costs and administrative overhead.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

### **Direct Practice**

Many of the agencies interviewed expressed the need for enhancing staff training in a variety of areas. The following recommendations are based on these expressed needs in addition to our own observations of agency practice and strategies taken from best-practice models in the United States. Consideration is given to understanding and impacting the complex relationships between children in foster care or the adoption process, their foster parents, and birth parents. Future work requires adaptation of these methods to account for the role ethnicity plays in adoption and foster care in addition to special considerations for the Roma population.

### Clinical Work with Children

Agencies should continue their focus on training in areas of child development, including education for children with disabilities, object relations, attachment, self-image formation, family systems, and biological, adoptive, and foster parent counseling. As providers become more comfortable with these concepts, they can expand their knowledge into providing services for children throughout their adoptive or foster care experience and into adulthood.

One of the key aspects of child development involves the creation of the self within the context of a primary caregiving relationship. Children who grow up under the care of someone who provides a nurturing atmosphere while setting appropriate rules and boundaries internalize the ability to regulate their emotions and to test their behaviors against the reactions of others (Micanzi-Ravagli, 1999). Additionally, children who develop in a healthy caregiving context are more likely to develop an image of themselves as valued and accepted by others.

Conversely, children who suffer early abandonment or lack an identifiable caregiver often have significant difficulty incorporating a sense of security and worth into their self-

representations. As they mature, these children may suffer from inability to regulate their emotions, creating volatile interpersonal relationships as they continually negotiate the fragile boundary of rejection and abandonment (Guttman, 2002). According to Erikson (1950), a person progresses through the crisis of trust vs. mistrust during the earliest stage of life, infancy. An infant forges an image of the caregiver as a reliable provider of his needs. Based on this early relationship, a person's basic view of the world emerges as trusting and confident or fearful and avoidant. As an individual matures, trust (or mistrust) expands to shape a general interpretation of life and society. Those who establish a paradigm of trust are able to weather misfortune with optimism, while those who have developed global mistrust respond to difficulty with anxiety or avoidant behavior (Newman & Newman, 1999). Erikson (1950) acknowledges that a blow to previously achieved trust often leads to a reduction in one's ability to cope with negative circumstances.

Institutionalized children, then, are likely not only to experience delays in negotiating their psychosocial development, but also may face an inability to progress beyond initial stages of trust versus mistrust given the long-standing lack of a permanent caregiver.

A definitive long-term consequence of early abandonment or removal from one's primary caregiver is a resulting devaluation of the self as the individual grows to wonder why he was "rejected". Self-doubt and persistent fears of inadequacy often plague foster and adopted children, who are too young developmentally to understand the reasons behind separation from their parents. Stigmatization by other children who have stable caregiving relationships further compounds a child's view of the self as damaged or unloveable (Kools, 1997). Ultimately, a child's ability to rely on assumptions of safety, predictability, and control are requisite for healthy crisis resolution and developmental progression (Newman & Newman, 1999).

As part of normal development, children from intact homes oftentimes fantasize about a second set of parents with “superhuman” qualities, such as having royal descent or enormous wealth. These fantasies are a normal part of childhood boundary negotiation with parents, and help children deal with confusing feelings of simultaneous love and hate for their family members (McGinn, 2000). In intact families, children are forced to integrate positive and negative conceptualizations of their parents, as there is no other set of parents to occupy the “idealized” roles the child creates. Eventually, the child develops a more balanced view of the world, including the ability to acknowledge that all people have both positive and negative sides.

However, children residing in long-term foster care face obstacles to developing a balanced view of others in that there is nothing preventing them from believing that a mythical and ideal set of parents waits to reunite with them. As the child carries a hope that the “fantasy” set of parents exists, he may have difficulty integrating “bad and good” into his relations with temporary primary caregivers. This problem is further amplified if children move frequently into and out of placements; numerous relocations prevent them from forming conceptualizations of themselves in relation to a primary caregiver. Alternatively, children may form the assumption that the “fantasy” set of parents is bad, and that they as the rejected offspring, are guilty by association.

This discussion of the primary caregiving context illustrates the importance of early intervention with respect to placing children in stable foster care settings and setting the stage for therapy regarding attachment, self-image development, and a balanced view of others. To this end, Life Books may be employed as therapeutic tools to discuss the child’s history, the terms of his early abandonment, and the future possibilities which remain open to him (Groze & Rosenthal, 1993). A strength of many agencies was the use of Life Books to facilitate

documentation of each child's history and to facilitate foster care and reunification transitions. Utility of life books may be extended further in direct therapy with children by encouraging them to express the feelings of confusion, rejection, self-doubt or insecurity that frequently accompany the absence of a primary caregiver (Groze & Rosenthal, 1993; Edwards, 2000). Life books may be used as a therapeutic vehicle for anchoring a child's experiences and weaving the threads of a coherent history into an otherwise chaotic existence.

Implicit in this discussion is the idea of bringing the child's self-image and questions about his worth to the forefront so that misconceptions may be addressed early. A counselor may help the child to integrate his "fantasy" parents by playing their role in therapy and providing a more balanced interpretation of the birth parents and the foster caregivers. While this work normally occurs as a child plays out his role in a family context, it is not impossible for this work to be done therapeutically by a skillful and interpretive therapist (Meeks, 1971).

For children who suffered early abandonment and subsequent long-term institutionalization, therapy should remain an ongoing effort for as long as it takes to see improvement in the child's self-concept and relationships with others. Oftentimes when children suffer a traumatic event, the things which happen to them are overwhelming, difficult to understand, and completely outside their control. The result can be a replacement of Erikson's (1950) "directed energy" with "psychic numbing", unresponsiveness, and guilt (Terr, 1990). This guilt serves as a psychological "balm" in that it reduces a child's feelings of powerlessness.

The child with trauma-related guilt may continuously recreate his early life events through play in order to find a solution which would have provided resolution. Repetitive re-enactment is a means for retrospectively establishing personal mastery over the environment. Without clinical intervention, children are typically unable to "solve" trauma and re-enactments

of stressful events may continue for years, often replacing productive activity such as schoolwork or social activities (Terr, 1983). Lack of trauma resolution may lead children to internalize guilt as a vehicle to mediate environmental unpredictability. However, this guilt may limit a child's self-confidence, preventing him from initiating novel behavior and continuing to learn (Newman & Newman, 1999).

The idea that early abandonment and institutionalization are significant traumas should be paramount in the consideration of therapists who work with these children, and counseling should be mandatory at all points of placement transition. Especially as primary caregivers are vital to helping children process environmental uncertainty (Edwards, 2000), therapists should remain cognizant of the implications of change for each child. Some children may achieve resolution of these issues quickly; others, however, may need ongoing therapeutic work for several years as they make sense of threatening early separations.

The discussion of long-term therapeutic work brings us to development issues specific to adolescence. Adolescence has been termed the "recapitulation of the traumas of infancy" (Kaplan, 1984), and is characterized by a reworking of identity development in relation to one's caregivers (Erikson, 1950). During adolescence, even children who resolved successfully the events of early abandonment may resurrect thoughts about their birth parents, including preoccupations with the former "fantasy" parents. During this time, teens may generate a multitude of questions about their origins.

To complicate matters, adolescence is typically a time when teens test parental boundaries, negotiating the limits of their freedom and internalizing ideas about consequences. The emotional work completed during this time is reminiscent of the boundary testing that normally occurs when infants discover they are separate beings from their primary caregivers. A

primary difference lies in the fact that teens are mobile, self-sufficient beings, unlike infants whose testing is necessarily limited by their inability to function independently. It is natural, then, for teens to pit their foster care or adoptive parents against the unseen birth parents once more.

Therapeutic work with teens in long-term foster care or adoptive placements should address these reprisals of the mythical “good” or “bad” birth parents, giving precedence to the teen’s internal image of himself as derived in part from them. Support should also be given to the teen’s foster or adoptive parents, as their child’s inquisitiveness about the birth parents may feel threatening to cohesion within the family.

#### Family Transition Management

During the interviews with RCR/FI, significant attention was paid to staff members’ requests for training in managing children’s transition from institutional care to foster families and reunification with their biological parents. Although a broad overview was given, a more comprehensive assessment of the social workers’ knowledge and in-depth training are required. Specifically, education in object-relations theory, attachment, and stages of child development may enable providers to understand better children’s reactions to separation and transition while accounting for their chronological and developmental ages (Micanzi-Ravagli, 1999; Neal & Frick-Horbury, 1998; McGinn, 2000).

Furthermore, the loss and healing processes of foster and birth parents requires therapeutic management. For birth parents especially, relinquishment of a child to institutional care, foster parenting, or adoption represents a loss, and grief often accompanies it (Noy-Sharav, 2002). As social workers facilitate children’s entry into foster care or reunification with birth parents, sensitivity to this loss and grief process is paramount. For birth parents who



relinquished their child to an institution, subsequent reunification may trigger revisitation of this loss, along with guilt for “failing” to be adequate caregivers for their children. This guilt may be exacerbated if their child developed emotional, cognitive, or behavioral problems as a result of being institutionalized.

On the same note, foster parents who welcome a new child into their homes not only enter a period of adjustment in the family life cycle (Grotevant, Wrobel, van Dulmen & McRoy, 2001), but may re-enact some of their own issues with parenting, loss, and change. These may include a sense of obligation to right the wrongs done to children through institutional care, or the desire to re-create and “fix” a prior parenting experience. Foster parents who do not have other children may have experienced the same sense of bereavement and unfulfilled expectations exhibited by childless adoptive couples.

As we have given significant attention to therapy with the foster child, so must we delve into the very personal issues which foster and adoptive couples bring to the family relationship. For many couples, foster care or adoption represent an alternative to having children of their own (Noy-Sharav, 2002). Some couples may view foster care as both an opportunity and a representation of their own inadequacies if they enter into caregiving as a means to have a family (Noy-Sharav, 2002). Correspondingly, the foster or adoptive child may come to embody both an opportunity and personal failings. This is a difficult factor to negotiate within the family unit, especially when the system is disrupted by the child’s developmental challenges, illness, or behavior problems.

Much as children hold tightly to the fantasy image of their birth parents, foster or adoptive parents have often envisioned their “ideal” child as he fits within their image of the “hoped for” family. As events occur to disrupt these idealistic expectations, parents are forced to

cope with the pain of reworking their ideals to align with reality. Normal fluctuations within the family life cycle may seem amplified by the complicated nature of the foster or adoptive relationship. Therapeutic work should consider the special challenges faced by foster or adoptive families, and focus on how each change affects the family unit as a whole, and how that change impacts individual family members.

These issues illustrate the importance of more comprehensive screening measures for foster parents who plan to engage in long-term foster care. Current agency screening measures do not include a comprehensive psychological evaluation to determine whether potential foster parents have issues that would preclude them from being effective caregivers for children who often have multiple developmental and emotional needs. Individual interviews with social workers may be conducted to ascertain families' motivation for becoming foster parents and to identify 'red flag' issues that may be relevant to the quality of care they are able to provide. Additional attention must also be paid to identify families who engage in foster care for economic motivations – these families may have difficulty tolerating children who have significant special needs. This is an especial issue given that poverty continues to be a widespread national problem in Romania (Kerrigan, 1999). Whether interventions involve foster or birth parents, social workers should present use of support services as an integral part of the foster care or reunification process, encouraging regular contact and communication about significant issues in the family system (Groza & Ryan, 2002).

#### Client Outcome and Research

Therapeutic improvements may be well-served by implementation of outcome research, allowing practitioners to evaluate the success of their interventions. Currently, there is no established mechanism for assessing client satisfaction with service, the relative value of

different interventions, or the outcomes of institutionalized and foster care children as they approach adulthood. For example, research in the US shows that children who occupied multiple foster homes during their early adolescence are more likely to exhibit disruptive behavior or become involved with the legal system as adults (Kools, 1997). It would be helpful to gather similar outcome data as Romania refines its application of the foster care model.

Software implementation would assist outcome research tremendously, allowing agencies to identify children who enter the welfare system and follow outcomes such as length of foster care stays, number of behavior problems, educational achievement, and quality of socialization activities. Furthermore, tracking software would allow monitoring of reunification efforts, including length of time from institution to reintegration, parent/child satisfaction with the reunification process, reported behavior/developmental problems, school performance, and child social functioning.

With respect to prevention, tracking measures could be implemented to add reliability to abandonment prediction. Factors such as parent characteristics (age, income, ethnicity, social supports) and prior abandonment history may be relevant to families' decisions to relinquish a child.

#### Life Skills Training, Foster Care, and Adult Outcomes

While the critical issue facing Romanian child welfare workers now is provision of adequate family environments to abandoned children, future consideration must be given to adult outcomes of these same children. Inadequate attachment and multiple separations not only impact childhood developmental processes, but also the ability to maintain work and personal relationships during adulthood. In a study of college students who completed the Adult Attachment Interview and personal relationships questionnaires, Neal and Frick-Horbury (1998)

found that the quality of early attachment related to stability of adult self-image, while authoritarian vs. permissive parenting styles impacted self-other relationships.

While placing a child in stable foster care is a major achievement, it represents only the beginning of therapeutic work with the child. Not only should therapy include processing multiple losses and separations, but it should also build upon each child's strengths in soliciting and creating stable relationships within and outside of the foster family. These efforts might include socialization goals via activities with friends or memberships in sports or hobby clubs, skills training which builds upon the child's natural interests and talents, and mentoring about future educational or occupational goals as the child matures.

### **Organizational**

The following is a list of organizational level recommendations for Romanian social service agencies. These suggestions are designed to encourage strategic planning as agencies conceive of new projects and solicit funding for them, as well as to promote healthy expansion and growth. Additional consideration is paid to developing a philosophy of equality as agencies engage in relationships with donors that, in turn, promotes integrity of agency mission. Lastly, suggestions are made to encourage an inter-agency collaborative effort in strategic planning so that multiple organizations may benefit from the localized expertise of individual agencies.

#### Capacity building

Romanian social agencies should build the capacity of their organizations to complete their specified goals. This includes committing to training of staff in relation to service provision, defining the roles and responsibilities of the board of directors so that it can contribute effectively, and building systems for management oversight and evaluation of agency progress. Selecting a board and working with it will help in fundraising efforts. A properly constructed

advisory board greatly broadens the range of expertise and experience available to entrepreneurs.

In Romania, the board of directors is an emerging concept that needs further amplification to meet agency needs. The structure and formation of boards was a concern expressed by several social welfare academicians during the university interviews. In comparison with the United States, an invitation to serve on a board of directors does not carry an implication of honor in Romania. As such, receiving and giving invitations to serve does not confer the same status as it does in the United States. It is not a normalized practice to serve on a board, and board members may not have extensive familiarity with the non-profit sector in which their agencies operate. Further collaboration between social service agencies, universities, and Western scholars may be useful in cultivating and structuring board membership to better serve agencies. Given the pressing needs of Romanian NGOs, the fiduciary and fundraising responsibilities of the board become primary. The management staff of NGOs need to direct considerable attention toward selecting a board and working with it to help in fundraising efforts. A properly created advisory board can greatly broaden the resources available to management.

Another aspect of capacity-building concerns the necessity of developing grant-writing skills and acquiring detailed knowledge about donors' expectations in evaluating whether programs qualify for receipt of funds. This entails not only knowledge of best-practice models to demonstrate service delivery effectiveness in terms of client outcome, but also development of program evaluation skills in order to clearly represent the value of services to clients and the community. Conducting regular program evaluations may persuade possible donors that agency services are a cut above other alternatives, including the option of doing nothing (Groza, 2003). Program evaluations provide the opportunity to educate donors about realistic expectations of

services and requisite funding levels. An evaluation effort also can add value by exposing inefficient use of resources and highlighting programs that are no longer relevant.

Up to this point, Romanian non-profit organizations have not seen themselves as having distinctive “organizational identities” and thus do not form strategic alliances with each other. This is an issue that needs to be addressed, because identities for strategic positioning in specific sectors may increase program attractiveness and result in increased revenue. For example, if a health-service agency markets itself as a local authority on the subject, it may attract volunteers, academicians, collaborations with other non-profits, and donations. Partnerships with the local media are becoming more widespread in agency promotion of education campaigns (NGO Sustainability Index, 2001). Marketing an organizational identity may become a profitable avenue to explore in the future, as the social service sector evolves.

Volunteer management is another method in which agencies can capture needed human resources to help with basic agency activities. Although Romania now has a legal definition of ‘volunteer services’ and an emerging body of individuals willing to donate their time, social service agencies must manage this resource effectively in order to benefit from it (NGO Sustainability Index, 2001). Training in volunteer management may be a worthwhile investment of agency resources.

#### Role of Donors

Many of the agencies interviewed demonstrated substantial dependence on a single, large donor for financial viability. Although this relationship helps agencies initiate services and become visible in their communities, over-dependence on sole sources of funding carries the risk of financial failure after the funding cycle ends. Typically, large donors donate funds for a limited time, after which they reallocate their donations to other areas of need. Throughout the

interviews, we noted that preparing for this major financial transition was not emphasized in the strategic plans of the agencies or their donors.

One recommendation for managing transition is for agencies to solicit assistance in creating a viable exit plan with their supporters at the beginning of the funding period. A second recommendation is that agencies collaborate with their initial donors to attract a larger base of contributors as part of organizational capacity building. This enables agencies to adapt their methods of revenue generation while they remain fully supported, rather than waiting until funding contracts are nearing expiration.

Cultivating a large resource of diverse donors will help agencies minimize financial risk. Using this strategy, the agency decreases exposure to loss if a significant contributor withdraws. Furthermore, it may be easier to solicit a small amount of funds from replacement donors rather than attempting to replace substantial contributions from a single donor.

Harnessing the growth of e-philanthropy to attract donors is an avenue for cultivating a large resource of diverse funders (Young, 2003). This could be as simple as creating an on-line presentation of the organization's mission, activities and performance measures to draw a well rounded picture for potential donors. Simple and inexpensive ways of enhancing the visibility of the website in search engine results can be used effectively.

#### Corporate Collaborations

Building collaborations with the corporate sector is another method of risk-spreading for the agencies. Established relationships between social service agencies and industry are not common practice currently (NGO Sustainability Index, 2001). However, in return for monetary or material assistance, agencies can offer corporations substantial benefits in terms of improved public and community relations, enhanced employee morale, and greater marketing

effectiveness. Corporations can also secure needed expertise and knowledge from trusted NGOs, and can cultivate new markets by collaborating with nonprofits. Corporations in the United States have also benefited from tax privileges associated with nonprofit collaboration. Romanian NGOs would do well to identify corporations that complement their missions.

Corporations with compatible missions can be valuable to NGOs in sponsoring shared "events". Such events are useful for both the NGO and the sponsoring company to build a community presence, while securing community endorsement of the NGO's services. For example, a condom manufacturing company may be interested in supporting HIV/AIDS initiatives. As another example, art displays by HIV+ or disabled children may encourage further visibility in the community. For unsponsored or partially sponsored events, the concept of a 'suggested fee/donation' at exit points would do well to cover the cost of event, without losing community participation due to mandatory entrance fees (Young, 2003).

#### Endowments

In the future endowments could prove to be a profitable, self-sustaining mechanism for ensuring agency financial viability in Romania. However, before this resource can be effectively utilized, non-profits must cultivate their knowledge of the endowment concept and develop marketing skills to create a presence in the community. Efforts may then be directed toward attracting endowments from the planned giving arena.

A preliminary step in this process is for Romania to develop a legal framework to support endowments. The non-profit sector also needs to establish a stable history. Currently, many organizations are too young to maintain the long-term commitment necessary for managing endowments. In addition, the taxation of international gifts significantly reduces the advantages of these plans.



Endowment funds are typically invested in a wide portfolio of financial instruments in an effort to strike a balance between earning high interest rates, and safeguarding the principle. As self-sustaining sources of funds, endowments could cover a substantial percentage of operating costs, leaving additional monetary resources available for client services and thus are resource worth developing.

In addition, endowments also minimize the financial risk associated with dependence on time-limited sources of funds. This brings organizational stability and provides a cushion against unanticipated changes in costs and funding over time. Large endowments in the United States signal prestige and permanence, thereby attracting major donors. Additionally, endowments can help the NGOs pursue their own missions without excessive pressure from donors (Young, 2003).

#### Fee for Service

Most of the services offered by the NGOs we interviewed are provided at no cost. While the basic economic condition of the client population might warrant this, it may be worthwhile to charge a nominal fee for therapeutic services. Many social service agencies are devoted to changing client behavior and attitudes, and paying a modest fee may increase the likelihood that clients will be committed to programs. Requiring clients to pay a minimal fee may foster this commitment and can enhance the mission.

A challenge most Romanian NGOs will face is the dynamics of fee-setting for services that were earlier offered gratis. This is likely to prove particularly difficult in the backdrop of the influence of the Communist era when all services were free. A strategy typically used to cushion the transition to a fee-for-service structure is an introduction of a simultaneous 'product' change. Some nonprofits which have adopted this approach continue to offer a version of the service free,

while presenting a preferred option at a set price (Oster, Gray & Weinberg, 2002)

### Controlled Expansion

Given that agencies compete for limited funds in Romania's dynamic economic environment, several agencies interviewed felt tempted to adapt their projects and ultimately their missions to be compatible with those of the foundations from whom they are seeking assistance. Over time, agencies risk mission drift by expanding their services to appeal to donors rather than turning down financially supportive contractual relationships. Currently, many agencies do not see themselves as equal partners in relationships with donors; consequently, they view themselves as without choice in guiding their overall focus.

Integrity of mission also stands at risk of being compromised as nonprofits turn to commercial ventures to earn income for operations. To ensure that commercial activities do not compromise the NGO's mission, the agency can establish a committee to conduct periodic review of all projects. This requires development of explicit rules governing the nature and type of activities that are acceptable. It would be valuable for nonprofit boards and management to spend time explicitly articulating the mission, defining the limits they wish to place on commercial activities and establishing a framework that considers ventures in this context (Civil Service Society Foundation, 1998)

### Transparency in Reporting

In an effort to attract donors and to overcome deep-seated distrust of government influence, emphasis must be placed on transparency in reporting and management practices. Fear of corrupt practices is deeply entrenched within Romanian society, especially for non-profit organizations which depend heavily upon government funding. Transparency includes exhibiting good management control systems, strict financial accountability, and demonstrating

measurable impact on clients and other stakeholders. Denizia Gal, a professor at the University of Cluj-Napoca, discussed that Romanian administrators become concerned when asked budgetary questions because previous questions of this nature “are not always designed to help” (personal communication, May 9, 2003). In the United States, agency transparency regarding budget and other operations is paramount. It is often considered to be a return for the tax-exempt status that the non-profit sector enjoys.

#### Collaboration between Non-Profit Agencies

Many of the agencies we interviewed appear to suffer from similar difficulties in terms of the global social service environment. For example, several of them experienced financial distress in their time of transition from single donors to self-sustaining income mechanisms. Although their direct practice services often differed, agencies may suffer from the same obstacles, and therefore would benefit from problem-solving with other organizations. ‘Technology transfer’ in terms of planned-giving strategies or program-evaluation methods may be beneficial to all agencies despite differences in clientele.

To facilitate open communication, agencies may benefit from the proactive use of government sponsored fora designed to refine the utility of government services provided to the NGO community. Interfield collaboration also reflects current trends within the U.S. social service sector, enabling organizations to reap substantial benefits from collective agency experience.

## Social Policy

Political advocacy efforts are a valuable area for agency investment in this time of dynamic policy change in Romania. Agencies should direct efforts at strengthening their advocacy skills in order to impact the nascent political and legal frameworks being erected by the government. To date most non-profits have been able to bring about legal changes through advocacy, such as the efforts of Artemis in presenting women's issues and domestic violence at the forefront of policy debates. Currently, social work does not have a strong political presence in Romania – this may be due to the absence of a visible coalition of practitioners and administrators who consistently speak out about government policy.

A particular strength of the NGO community is that it takes financial burden from the government by providing services that the government would otherwise have to underwrite. This position may serve as a bargaining chip in advocating for stronger child welfare laws or non-profit tax exemption status.

An organized political presence will also serve as an impetus for the government to refine child welfare laws that are currently in place but ineffective. Social workers may lobby to put pressure on the government to allocate financial resources to support enforcement of laws such as mandating reporting of child abuse. Furthermore, the discipline of social work may collaborate with lawmakers to standardize the current body of law that represents an amalgamation of laws from many foreign countries, yet has not been adapted to Romania's legal system specifically.

“Brain drain”, or the exodus of valuable educators and employees to prized jobs out-of-country, was cited by many academicians and agencies as a threat to their investment in training. Although most of the agencies we studied demonstrated very low rates of turnover,

administrators were cognizant of the fact that many workers wish to relocate to the United States or other Western countries. The training workers are receiving and their collaboration with American donors makes them highly marketable outside Romania. Similarly, university professors acknowledged that many top students go abroad for advanced education but never return to apply their skills in Romania, choosing instead to remain in the United States or in other Western European countries.

Agencies and educators should focus on creating incentives and exit barriers for valued professionals who may be attracted away from social service in Romania. One way to retain professionals is based on the US human resource model of “vesting”, which offers attractive retirement benefits to workers who remain with their companies for specified periods of time. Additionally, agencies may market themselves both in- and out-of-country to establish prestige inherent to their organizations and enhance their attractiveness to employees. Lastly, government efforts to woo workers to stay may involve subsidies that make Romanian social services salaries more equivalent to those in the US or Western European countries. If funds cannot be devoted to this effort, other benefits, such as increased vacation time or childcare benefits may be used instead.

### **Study Limitations**

With respect to Burke’s (1994) transformational model, we wish to point out some potential pitfalls in presenting data within this framework of change. Notably, the data collected under this model are open-ended and qualitative, leaving much room for interpretation and placement within the levels of the model. In organizing the data, the team noted that levels of the model are not always distinct from one another and that categorization of the interview data seemed arbitrary at times. For example, interview data that appeared to fall under “Individual

Needs and Values” often seemed relevant to “Motivation”; although the data itself was distinct, its interpretation often was not. Interpretation of the interviews is necessarily framed by the researchers, and measures are required to establish reliability in categorizing interview comments within the model. This point is extremely relevant to making recommendations for agency change, in that one set of recommendations would come from factors associated with “individual value and agency fit”, whereas another would come from issues surrounding “employee incentives and motivation”.

Our team resolved this problem via consensus debates, during which a majority vote was taken regarding where to place specific interview data within the model. In retrospect, our team would choose to add an inter-rater reliability piece to the data analysis, with each person categorizing the data set independently, then calculating a reliability value for the team as a whole. This still leaves room for lack of consensus, however, and the ultimate utility of the model involves presenting a set of cohesive recommendations to agencies which participated in the evaluation.

Additionally, the model leaves substantial room for investigator bias in that interview data may be interpreted differently by each researcher and the resulting conclusions (and agency recommendations) may be skewed by these individual interpretations. For example, if one researcher interprets agency financial struggles as stemming from lack of director knowledge about the funding environment, whereas another researcher interprets that same data as reflecting agency integrity of mission, two (perhaps incompatible) sets of recommendations could be derived.

On a positive note, however, the transformational model offers a unique avenue for gathering agency data in a non-threatening, helpful manner. Despite its lack of quantitative

rigor, the model offers a vehicle for conducting in-depth agency examinations, pointing out areas of improvement while emphasizing strengths and accomplishments. Using this model contributed to the team's effectiveness at engaging agency staff and enabling them to feel comfortable in sharing their ideas about obstacles to and avenues for growth.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude our examination of the nascent field of Romanian social work, several points must be noted. Among the most important is the willingness of Romanian social service professionals and educators to open themselves up to examination in the effort to improve their field. It is not always easy to tolerate the scrutiny of outsiders, especially in light of the continuous battle Romanian providers face in serving the needs of disadvantaged populations. The people with whom we worked unfailingly opened themselves up to constructive criticism in the hope of improving their services.

One of the concerns held by each team member throughout each stage of the project was to avoid being perceived as coming from a position of superiority. Our intention as a team was to present examples of American best practices with the idea of stimulating a process of indigenous model development created specifically for the Romanian context. During our visit, it became clear that many Romanians view US social workers as the "experts", often deferring to our "authority" on a variety of subjects. Throughout the interviews, our team endeavored to walk the fine line between providing helpful information and dispelling the aura of authority that is often applied to Westerners.

Similarly, the providers and educators with whom we worked exhibited enormous dedication to their craft despite uncertain job security and difficulty acquiring sufficient materials with which to conduct their work. The social workers exhibited enormous compassion and skill

in caring for clients, and it was invigorating to see the dedication and cooperation on the part of agency staff. There were many times in which our team wished to bottle up the reservoir of energy and motivation we saw in the staff and bring it home with us. The field of Romanian social work has come a long way and has overcome formidable obstacles in a short period of time. Not only was it motivating to characterize social service growth thus far, but also exciting to anticipate the direction the field will take in the future. Our profound thanks goes out to the Romanian people for sharing their world with us.



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