

FUNDING

One of the most difficult tasks for emerging children's advocacy centers is the development of funding sources to support a program which is often new and concept and new in a community. While it is much easier at times to find funding for older, more established programs, you can generate excitement for the support of a new, ground breaking idea, which has a goal of providing services to child abuse victims.

Following are some of the steps to take in developing your fund raising strategy, but first make sure that you are clear about what you hope to gain, how much money you need, and what service the fund will support. It is critical that you be able to articulate what a children's advocacy center is, and why you and your group are the right ones to take on this challenge. Once you have these ideas firmly in mind, you are ready to start your approach to fund raising.

I. Define your potential funding sources

- **ORGANIZATIONS**

What funding organizations are in your local community and what do you need to know to get to them? What are their areas of interest? Have they ever given to projects dealing with child abuse? Have they ever funded start up agencies?

Example: The Junior League strongly supports programs that work in the area of children's issues. They are always looking for programs to support through both funding and, most importantly, volunteer opportunities (you usually don't get one without the other). The National Council of Jewish Women is another service group strongly interested in programs dealing with child abuse and neglect. Social Sorority and Fraternities (either on campus or alumni groups), the Rotary, Exchange Club, Optimist Club, and other services organizations are often looking for worthy projects. Try to arrange a time to speak at the club's monthly meeting to tell them about the children's advocacy center and the types of goods, services, and money that your program needs.

- **CORPORATIONS**

Which corporations are in your community and what types of programs do they like to fund? While they may not fund a children's advocacy center in the same way as they would the symphony, they are still interested in being good corporate neighbors. If you have an employee of a large corporation on your Board of Directors, you can ask this person for help in gaining access to the charitable contributions arm of that corporation.

A key concept in working with corporations is **Research**. Who is the corporation's local community relations person? Who is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), President, or Vice-President? Do you or do any members of your Board know these people? What kinds of programs do they like to fund? More importantly, can you get a meeting with them to discuss your program? Remember that if you get into the CEO's office, you have about fifteen minutes to make an impact. Be ready to sell your program as necessary and needed by your community. If you can't meet with the CEO, call the community relations/grants office and ask if they have guidelines for funding requests. Find out the timing of their grant cycle and make certain that you are on time with your proposal.

- **FOUNDATIONS**

Foundations are another good source of grant funds in your community. Foundations, which are a part of a business with either a headquarters or local office in your community, are your best bets. Look up what's available in the Foundation Directory available at your local library. Write to the foundation asking for their guidelines for proposals.

- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT**

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funding by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development are another good source of funding for child abuse programs. Your local city or county government will know how and when these funds are available in your community. These funds can be used for capital expenses as well as program expenses. In many communities these funds are heavily competitive, so do your homework. An important note is that while the guidelines for these programs state that they must be used for "low and moderate income families", children who are suspected of being victims of child abuse automatically meet this criterion without the need for gathering income data on clients.

- **UNITED WAY**

The United Way is a wonderful source of ongoing operating expenses. Many communities can add a new program that can be shown to truly make an impact on child abuse. Call your local United Way and ask to see their most recent needs assessment that will list the priority areas for funding. Review how many of the top areas are covered by programs offered through the children's advocacy center. Try and set up a meeting with the United Way executive in charge of new programs and present your issues, asking for some guidance on possible inclusion in the next campaign. Another good way to get started with the United Way is to apply for a Venture Grant that can be used one time to help "new and emerging organizations". These funds are fairly easy to access and can make an impact on your start-up costs.

- **INDIVIDUAL DONORS**

Individual donors are the lifeline for many new and emerging organizations. In order to approach an individual donor, it is imperative that you make one on one contact, preferably through a peer of the donor who can arrange the appointment and accompany you to the visit. Always be prompt and professional with a thorough knowledge of your program and an ability to answer difficult questions about child abuse, the prevalence in your community, and the ability of your program to deal effectively with child abuse investigations and interventions. Many wealthy individuals have established their own personal foundations to carry out their charitable giving. They may have someone designated to take grant requests for them or they may be willing to hear requests in person. Either way, be sure to be as professional as possible in your approach.

- **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Special events are a wonderful way to raise funds and develop community awareness about your program. If you can get underwriting for an event, it means that all of the money you raise goes directly to the children's advocacy center program. Many very successful events, which have aided children's advocacy center programs, are walk-a-thons, chef's celebrity dinners and auctions, golf tournaments, and benefit concerts.

Please be certain that you have enough control of the event so that you do not go into debt carrying out the event. If anyone approaches you about putting on an event for you and sharing the cost, be careful. Always remember that the most important thing you own is the good name of the program and the trust of the sponsoring agencies. For more information about special events, you may purchase "*Best Ideas in CAC Fundraising*" from National Children's Alliance.

- **ANNUAL SOLICITATION LETTER**

An annual solicitation letter is a good idea, particularly around the holidays. In your letter, reference the good work the children's center has accomplished, numbers of children provided services, and need for program support or expansion. Enclose a return envelope that allows the giver to designate a gift, memorial, or honor that you will acknowledge on behalf of the donor. Be certain to acknowledge these gifts in your newsletter also. It acknowledges your donors and helps others see the depth and breadth of your support.

- **NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE**

National Children's Alliance receives funding from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, to fund programs at various levels of development as they seek to provide services to children at risk of child abuse. These funds are used for Program Support, Training for individuals and teams, and Program Development for emerging programs. For further information on NCA's grants program, please go to National

Children's Alliance's website at www.nca-online.org, or contact NCA at 1-800-239-9950.

II. Funding Information

In order to respond quickly and efficiently to funding requests, begin now to collect the following types of information so that you will have it "at your fingertips" when requested.

- Newspaper articles about the children's advocacy center or articles about the severity/incidence of child abuse in your community.
- Information that you can put into a chart form about the numbers, ages, sex, etc., of children the children's advocacy center is currently providing service or plans to see in the future.
- The history and description of your organization is always of interest to funders. How and why did your program come into existence? Was there a precipitating factor?
- Budgets, audit, and the list of your Board of Directors are needed in most funding packets. Keep copies of your on hand and up to date.
- Your IRS 501 (c) 3 letter of tax exemption is one of the most important pieces of paper you will every have! Most donors will not give unless they can receive a tax benefit from their gift. If the children's advocacy center will be under the umbrella of another tax-exempt organization, be sure to have that designation letter handy and a description of how the CAC will operate under this other agency.
- A good, easy to read, information pamphlet about the center is always a great help to distribute whenever and wherever you speak, as well as to enclose in your funding packet. It's good to have one sized to fit in a standard business envelope so that when individuals in the community call requesting information about the program you can easily send this to them.
- A one-page summary of what a children's advocacy center is, what your program does, and a why a center is needed, is a helpful addition to many simple requests for information.

The most important thing to remember is that you need to learn all that you can about the person, company, and/or foundation you are soliciting and to give them what they want. If there are formal procedures, follow these to the letter. Expect about one in five charitable requests will be granted, and develop a thick skin. Remember that you are raising funds to make certain that children who are victims of child abuse receive the quality services they deserve in a comfortable environment where their needs come first. Many of us never thought we would spend time raising funds, but remember who is benefiting from your efforts and give it your best!