New Developments in LDS Social Services

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I am pleased to be with you today at this conference. It is always a pleasure to meet with individuals who have a common interest, that of striving to provide professional help to individuals who are struggling with life's challenges.

I am reminded of my softball days as a youth in the rural town of Hoytsville, Utah. Life there was a little less sophisticated in many ways. Our playing field often had to be mowed, raked and baled before we could play on it. I remember the last regular league game I played in before leaving there. It was quite unbelievable. Our team was leading by one point. It was the bottom of the last inning. Two of their men were out. There was no one on base and their best hitter was up to bat. Of course if he scored, the game would be tied and extra innings would become necessary. (It is important to note that the umpire was from Hoytsville and a good friend of the team.)

I was playing shortstop. With a full count, the batter swung hard and hit a drive just past me into the uncut grass. I searched desperately as he passed first base. Noting my frustration, the batter went on to second and then third base. I still couldn't find the ball, but as he passed third base a small rabbit jumped out of the grass near my hand. I grabbed him, and out of desperation, threw him as hard as I could to home plate. The catcher, at first not realizing it was a rabbit, caught it and tagged the runner out at home plate. However, the runner immediately saw that the catcher had a rabbit instead of the ball and bitterly protested. Thank goodness the umpire, being the fine man that he was, saved the game by declaring the runner was "out" by a hare.

Hopefully today I can continue discussing the truth and provide you some insight into developments of LDS Social Services.

Beginnings

To accurately understand the direction LDS Social Services is going, it is necessary to know something about our "roots." Future direction usually takes on a more meaningful perspective when we glance back occasionally and see where we have been. While we can't look back too long lest we lose our present direction, we can indeed gain meaningful insights and make corrections which will help our future course.

A glance backward in LDS Social Services is indeed fascinating. Though our time is limited, I would like to make note of some important events in our history.

First, our roots go back a surprising number of years. The Church has always been interested in the social welfare of its people. Surprisingly, much of what LDS Social Services does today is a reflection of the past.

One of the agency's earliest programs was a form of the Indian Student Placement Service. This program goes back to the days of Brigham Young when, under his recommendation as governor, the legislature in March 1852 gave probate judges the authority to take or purchase Indian women or children who were prisoners of other Indians or traders and assign them Mormon homes for care and protection. This event, along with the influence which later came from LDS missionaries who lived among the Indians, led to subsequent placements. Scores of Indian families sought placement of their children with Latter-day Saint families to increase their opportunities for personal development.

The history of the Church's social welfare efforts through the Relief Society is also noteworthy. Back in the early 1900's, President Joseph F. Smith once made the statement, "If there was anything in the Church that needed improvement, it was charity work." As a solution, he offered to establish a social services department. He invited Amy Brown Lyman, a prominent woman who had served on the social advisory committee of the Church and who in 1917 had been the official Utah delegate to the National Conference on Social Work, to become its head.

Although Sister Lyman had already been involved in social services work before accepting the position offered by President Smith, she sought and received permission to obtain additional training. She moved to Denver where she worked with the county public welfare department where she could have more experience with casework and administration. Upon her return, and after Heber J. Grant was installed as President of the Church after Joseph F. Smith's death, the Relief Society opened its social services department in January 1919. Amy Brown Lyman was its first director and worked in that capacity until 1934. From the beginning of the home service work in 1917 to shortly before the great depression, the Relief Society Social Service Department sought to provide a wide range of services to the entire church. The department became the center for serving LDS fam-
ilies in distress and accepted clients who were referred by priesthood leaders, other community agencies, and those who sought help directly from the agency.

During its early years, the agency also sought to train Relief Society leaders and social welfare aids in basic casework methods through its social work institute courses (which were patterned after the home service courses.) The office wanted to make more people aware of the skills involved in evaluating and properly diagnosing family ills. Educational workshops and programs were sponsored for some twenty-three years in the church where over 4,000 women were given an introduction to professional literature, interviewing techniques, and other aspects of casework.

From the beginning, the centralized church leadership relied heavily upon the social services department office as a resource to general authorities. They primarily needed advice on social welfare-political issues, in solving critical problems in planning and dispersing charity funds, in private referrals, and expertise in counseling individuals with chronic personal problems.

Although the social services department has grown and evolved from those early years, having since been unified with the Indian Placement Program and restructured under the Welfare Services Department, many of the standards and goals that were established during those early years remain today.

Current Developments

To understand some important developments that have occurred in LDS Social Services, it is necessary to understand the agency's relationship with priesthood leaders, who in many ways have a primary responsibility for members in need.

LDS Social Services exists to serve priesthood leaders. LDS Social Services provides service in two broad categories--licensed and clinical. Licensed services include foster care, adoption, and the Indian Placement Program. Clinical services include personal, marriage and family counseling.

LDS Social Services exist primarily to provide licensed services that cannot usually be provided legally by ecclesiastical leaders. This does not mean that clinical services are less important than licensed services. People in distressful situations need help whether their problems fall within the domain of "licensed" or "clinical" services.

However, ecclesiastical leaders can offer counseling services to members, and there are many fine professional resources such as each of you. There are other private and community resources that can provide assistance.

For a moment, I would like to discuss our relationship and role with priesthood leaders in clinical (counseling) services. With respect to this service area, LDS Social Services exists to serve priesthood leaders--not individual members. Only a few years ago our clinical services practitioners spent a significant amount of their time providing therapy for members in need. Though there was some priesthood leader involvement, most of the contact and interaction was between members in need and practitioners.

Approximately three years ago the decision was made that LDS Social Services' practitioners begin decreasing their direct services to members. Instead they were to offer more consultation and evaluation services to priesthood leaders. This change of focus constitutes one of the more recent developments in LDS Social Services. There are several reasons for this approach. One has to do with the growth of the church and the inability of LDS Social Services to meet the counseling needs of every member, even though we have expanded through the United States and six foreign countries.

At the present time, LDS Social Services agencies are becoming a resource center for ecclesiastical leaders. Rather than offering direct counseling services, we are becoming diagnosticians, consultants, and less and less therapists.

As a result we have an obvious and interesting challenge. Our staff must be proficient in diagnosis as well as consultation and evaluation. Though diagnosis is obviously important to therapy, the skills of providing effective consultative and evaluation services offer some unique challenges of their own. One of our priorities is to provide our staff with opportunities to better learn these skills.

Because of the growth of the church and the direction being taken by LDS Social Services, you can see how important it is that there are counselors like you in communities throughout the United States and even the world.

While we are unable to provide all of the services that church members would desire, we are in a unique position as the official social services arm of the Church. Priesthood leaders often call upon us seeking help. It is helpful when there are individuals like you to refer members to when priesthood leaders call for help. Many of you do much of this now. We hope you will continually be available to offer this important service.

Staff Development

We have recently placed greater emphasis in staff training, research and system development. With regard to staff we have had formal training experiences usually on an annual basis in a centralized location. Some of you have assisted with that effort. We presently have a plan to decentralize training. The primary responsibility for technical training rests with the individual employee. However we plan to help staff organize on a more localized basis where they can identify more of their individual and agency needs and then conduct training to meet those personalized needs. Our training seminars this year will be localized. We will provide four in various areas. Again staff will be responsible to identify and help plan for
training experiences to a larger degree.

We also hope in the near future to better tap many other available resources such as the facilities at B.Y.U., including the comprehensive clinic and values institute with whom we have already done some work. There are other community, institutional and individual resources, especially church members like yourselves, whom we hope will contribute skills for the benefit of church members. (I will mention other staff training developments in a few minutes under research/evaluation.)

Research/Evaluation

We are presently conducting a thorough evaluation study of LDS Social Services. Some of the questions for which we are seeking answers include:

1. What needs and problems should the system be addressing?
2. What is the actual system in practice and how does it differ from the desired system?
3. What are the effects of the system, expected or unexpected.
4. What can be done to develop a more effective system?

Our intent is to develop some guiding principles for the development of a system that can coordinate limited resources with a Church which in many areas is rich in people and professional resources. Much more can and must be done.

Materials Development

In a fast-moving, complex world filled with pressures, it is essential that we develop materials which will provide information, training, and skill development. This material may be used in a variety of ways. Though much of it is designed for professional staff, it can also be used by volunteers, resource individuals and leaders in local church units. Materials in our professional development program being completed now include fundamentals of interviewing, clinical application of the scriptures, volunteerism, diagnosis and assessment, marital therapy, homosexual orientation problems, selected readings in LDS values and human behavior. Others include specific training designed to help practitioners in specific service areas, including adoptions, foster care, unwed parent training, Indian placement and how to conduct effective consultations and evaluations. These modules can be self-instructional but may also be used for staff inservice training or in other ways.

We are also in the early stages of developing basic self-help audio modules which can help prevent problems and promote social-emotional health. These materials may be used by individuals, local church leaders or even practitioners in some areas. Though not a cure-all, we believe these materials can assist some individuals with some kinds of problems as well as help priesthood leaders as they provide counsel or refer members to treatment resources.

Management Information System

There are several additional developments underway that I'd like to mention. We are developing a management information system which will help identify individual and system challenges and inconsistencies and will also provide data to manage present operations and plan future direction.

Without going into detail, this is a computerized system which combines three sets of data into one management printout. The system includes basic service delivery statistical information, i.e. numbers of foster care children, supervised or adoptive placement, or the number of consultations, evaluations or therapy sessions conducted.

The second set of data is financial. Financial operational statements are fed into the computer to provide a cost analysis, i.e. costs per placement or unit of service delivery.

The third set of data used is an established set of parameters or expected workload for a full-time employee in a given service area. For example, under certain conditions a foster care worker may be expected to carry a caseload of twenty-five foster children.

When all of this is combined and analyzed it provides valuable information such as:

1. Percent of parameter of workload at which a given agency is functioning. It provides guidelines as to when agencies or individuals are carrying a disproportionate workload or when additional staff may be necessary.
2. It can provide information on trends in various agencies.
3. It opens the door for agency directors to evaluate their performance in relation to similar agencies.

It can assist in pinpointing strengths and deficiencies. Although it is impossible today to provide you with an adequate understanding of the system, perhaps you can get an idea of its compositions and functions.

Use of Volunteers

With respect to utilization of volunteers, last year volunteers in LDS Social Services provided over 100,000 hours of service. Their duties ranged from filing and other tasks to fairly sophisticated professional client assistance. Education varied from high school graduates to individuals with Master's and Ph.D. degrees.

There exists a great wealth of talent among our lay members which can yet be tapped to bless both the giver and the receiver.

Under LDS Social Services staff supervision, volunteers have completed home studies, helped supervise foster care placements, interviewed adoptive applicants, served as companions to unwed mothers, as tutors to Indian students and several other assignments.

In 1979 volunteers provided the equivalent of approximately fifty full-time staff. We are now completing a volunteer module which will provide guidelines and

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instruction on volunteer orientation training including possible duties to be performed in each service area.

International Growth

As the Church matures in its worldwide scope, many challenges exist in the area of social services. One of our key challenges for future development is to plan an international strategy. We presently have offices in New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Korea, England, Alberta Canada and Toronto Canada. Generally speaking, these countries have similar challenges to those found in the United States. However each also has some unique challenges.

Traditional service delivery systems, as most know and practice them, are quite unconventional and unrealistic in some countries. We view our goal as an exciting and challenging one, requiring a great deal of research, study and inspiration.

Many international problems are varied and complex. Often the problems are of such magnitude that isolating the symptoms from the root problems alone seems to be overwhelming. The truth is that they are related and require a great deal of work. We look forward to that challenge.

Conclusion - Challenges of the 80's

In August of this year, Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve spoke at our annual staff training seminar. His talk was inspirational and motivational, and it certainly provided us with a perspective and a challenge as we look to the Eighties. His words have application to all of us here. May I quote in part from his talk:

"I believe we face a new and different type of environment in the Church than we've ever known before. Seventy percent of our converts now are coming from countries outside Canada and the United States. That means they will be coming from different home backgrounds than we have known or have been familiar with. Also, it appears . . . that about eighty percent of those who will be converted in the United States . . . will come from backgrounds that will be different from traditional homes.

"Now the only way I know how to relieve those pressures is to anticipate, to stay ahead, to plan, and be prepared . . . This will be a decade where it will not be possible to lag behind and then attempt to pick up the pieces, for if we stop to pick up the pieces in this day and age, I think we will only cause a collision we'll be moving so rapidly.

"What does this mean to those who are in this business and have the responsibility of assisting in the correction of problems? I believe it means that we must change our game plan. As in the old game of basketball, stalling to get people back on their feet just won't work anymore. I believe they've changed the rules on us to where they have installed a 24-second shot clock, and we only have 24 seconds to make our goal. You see, I think with the speed that we will be moving in this decade, our offensive patterns must already be in place. We must be ready to move forward toward our goal with a well-executed plan wherever and whenever we receive the ball from any position on the floor.

"Now how will this game of the 1980's affect you? It is my opinion that with the speed, problem situations will develop rapidly in ever-increasing numbers because now children are growing up without seeing how that traditional home operates, and a large number will be converts coming into the Church.

"Second, the economics of this problem, our ability to finance a reasonable work load coming through the system, will be beyond the Church to handle. We just won't be able to afford the number of people that we will need to take care of all the problems. So I think that your roles will have to change from counselor dealing with people's problems to one of coach in order to get close to the people. Much more emphasis must be placed on the basic, fundamental programs of the Church, and we must make those programs work now. Home teaching has to operate. We have to be out with those people on a regular contact; to be there soon enough to discover..."
situations; the brethren will help the needy; family home evening will no longer be just a lecture. We must work to meet the decade that's ahead of us. You see, I think we must turn our minds to strategies, to plays, to motivation, to training, and being out there daily with these people to assist them with their problems. If they wait to come to you, I'm afraid it will be much too late or we won't have enough to be of much use. I think that that is a fact of life—the way the Church is growing and changing."

I appreciate having this opportunity to discuss some of the challenges facing LDS Social Services and the recent developments employed to meet those challenges.