

COMMUNITY SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION
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Applicability: The Community Services Administration

- References :
- 1) The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as amended
 - 2) CSA Instruction 6320-1, The Mission of the Community Action Agency

MISSION STATEMENT OF
THE COMMUNITY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

THE BASIC GOAL

The primary goal of the Community Services Administration (CSA) is the eradication of "the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation." CSA is distinguished from other departments and agencies in two important ways. First, CSA's sole mandate is to assist the poor. Second, CSA concentrates its efforts and resources on identifying and eliminating the causes of poverty rather than only dealing with its effects. CSA's efforts are directed toward promoting appropriate institutional change and enabling the poor to become self sufficient.

CSA OBJECTIVES

CSA has four major objectives:

1. To act as the voice and advocate of the poor within government, make their needs and aspirations known to policy makers, and mobilize both public and private sector resources on their behalf.
2. To promote the development and strengthening of community-based institutions which represent the

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interests of the poor on the local level and carry out a range of programs and developmental activities responsive to their needs.

3. To undertake research and experimentation designed to expand the knowledge base of poverty problems and develop and test innovative solutions.
4. To develop and support local programs which meet the critical service needs of the poor and provide permanent improvements in living conditions.

REPRESENTATION OF THE POOR

Representation of the poor is the most important objective of CSA and is an integral component of the Agency's other major objectives. The ultimate objective of CSA is to provide the poor the wherewithal to advocate effectively on their own behalf -- the key to self-sufficiency. Present conditions, however, warrant continued and vigorous agency leadership to articulate the interests of the poor.

CSA's representational and advocacy efforts include many functions and activities. They encompass traditional responsibilities to find and secure funds, personnel, and other resources to support projects and solve immediate problems, and to enlist the assistance of the private and voluntary sectors. They include educating the general public to the realities of poverty and dispelling the many myths and misconceptions about poverty and poor people.

These efforts must also include monitoring and evaluation of the programs and policies of other Federal agencies which impact upon the poor, promotion of appropriate changes in legislation and regulations, and coordination among governmental activities affecting poor people's interests. CSA must also identify systemic changes in our social and economic institutions which must be made over a period of time if conditions causing poverty are to be eliminated.

COMMUNITY INSTITUTION BUILDING

CSA's representational efforts at the national level must

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be supported and paralleled by strong, responsive, and effective community-based organizations. Reliance for local advocacy must be placed on the network of community action agencies (CAAs) and, in the more specialized field of economic development, on community development corporations (CDCs). Accomplishment of the Agency's mission depends on this network of constituent-responsive local organizations, and a major CSA objective is to encourage the establishment of such organizations and to build their capacities to function effectively.

This network of CAAs and CDCs is ideally suited to perform a variety of functions. It operates as a delivery system for CSA-sponsored categorical programs and developmental initiatives and services financed by other Federal agencies. It also provides an effective and responsive vehicle which can coordinate and mobilize local resources, promote necessary institutional changes, and carry out CSA's research and demonstration efforts.

RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION

Since innovation and change are at the heart of any effective attack on the causes of poverty, a major CSA objective is to function as a laboratory for social and economic programs. Using its network of CAAs and CDCs as both a source of information on poverty problems and as a testing ground for proposed program solutions, CSA will continue to experiment with new approaches to problem solving. Successful experiments may be expanded to larger scale pilot or national emphasis programs funded by CSA or "spun off" to other departments and agencies, where appropriate. In either case a key element will be the dissemination of research and demonstration results to policy-makers at all levels of the public and private sectors. Experimental findings will also be utilized in the Agency's representational activities.

SERVICE AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM DELIVERY

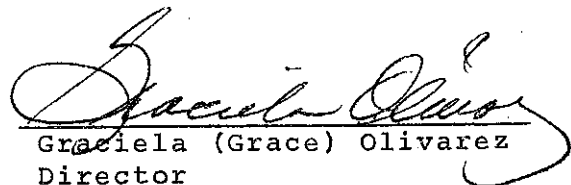
Although the delivery of services is not the primary focus of CSA, its overall mission is dependent on the selective commitment of resources to the delivery of

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service and developmental programs in critical areas. There are often serious service gaps or impediments to effective and responsive service delivery. A major objective of CSA, therefore, is to design and implement, often on a national scale, service and developmental programs which fill critical gaps, reach unserved constituencies, or provide a crucial degree of flexibility. CSA service and developmental programs serve as instruments for institutional change and as models which can effect permanent improvements in the living conditions of the poor and the manner in which both the public and private sectors respond to their needs.

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

None of the four major objectives of CSA can be isolated from the others. They are inter-related and mutually supportive. The CSA mission therefore requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach in which representational, institution-building, experimentation, and program delivery activities all receive emphasis.



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