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# Iowa's Full Service Agency:

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## A Review of Its Management and Operation

Prepared for the  
Iowa Department of Social Services  
Des Moines, Iowa

**American Public Welfare Association  
Washington, D.C.**

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1155 Sixteenth Street, N.W.  
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February 1977

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conceived as a review of the implementation, management, and operation of the full service agency concept in the Iowa Department of Social Services. Its major focus was on the interrelationships among the three levels of the IDSS' (Iowa Department of Social Services) Division of Community Services: the state, district, and local (county) levels.

Data were collected from two sources: interviews with approximately 45 key staff members at all three levels and with two members of a county board of supervisors; and from a review of documents and legislation pertaining to the planning, implementation, and operation of the full service agency. The majority of the interviews were conducted with staff members working in the central offices of the Division of Community Services, the Des Moines District office, and the Polk County offices. Staff members from three other district offices and general administrative personnel of the IDSS were also interviewed.

In order to place the current operations of the Division of Community Services into perspective, information about agencies which existed prior to the IDSS was reviewed, and events following the creation of the IDSS and leading up to the full service agency concept were traced. The present operations of the full service agency are described in six major areas: organizational structure and lines of authority, funding patterns, budgetary process, personnel policies and practices, policy and program development, and communications patterns.

Conclusions were drawn by evaluating the findings according to two points of reference: the way in which the full service agency is intended to operate as set forth in documents about the full service agency concept; and a number of applicable principles of organization and management theory.

The findings reveal the interdependence of the various parts of the IDSS: problems in one part often have effects in other parts. The major conclusions, which follow, reinforce this interdependence:

- The state-local funding mix causes numerous difficulties throughout the IDSS
- The IDSS has no current statewide model for a district office
- Lines of authority and patterns of communication generally conform to the plan for the full service agency
- The state-local funding mix reduces the administrative and program control of the IDSS over its local offices
- County-paid staff doing state jobs reduce the pressure on the IDSS to provide adequate staffing with state and federal funds
- Supplements to county directors' salaries tend to weaken their identity as IDSS managers
- Some districts might have trouble developing identities, and the Des Moines District has an identity problem
- The Polk County office functions virtually as a full service agency
- Procedures for policy and program development and communications need to be strengthened in the social service programs, but it appears as if the IDSS has achieved stability in the income maintenance programs

From the findings and conclusions, recommendations were formulated in four major areas. Accompanying each recommendation is an action plan which, if followed, will lead to the goal implied by the recommendation.

The recommendations are:

- The IDSS should continue its trend toward the development of strong district offices. The action plan specifies the development of a district model and a review of the present methods of supervision of the district offices.
- Procedures for formulation and dissemination of policy and program materials in the social service programs should be established. The action plan outlines the process for establishing those procedures and also strengthening the credibility of the Bureau of Program Services with the IDSS field staff.
- The IDSS should move toward a wholly state-funded system, but one which provides for continued county involvement in the IDSS programs. The action plan outlines, in three phases, the steps needed to achieve this goal.
- Consideration should be given to making Polk County a single-county district. The action plan indicates the steps needed to create such a district, and also presents alternatives for dealing with the present Des Moines District.

These recommendations address themselves to virtually all of the conclusions. If they are adopted and the action plans followed, many of the problems identified by the study should be resolved.

This study was completed under a contract between the Iowa Department of Social Services and the American Public Welfare Association. This report is intended solely for the use and information of the State of Iowa, Department of Social Services, Des Moines, Iowa.

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## INTRODUCTION

Late in 1974 the Iowa Department of Social Services (IDSS) implemented a "full service agency" concept in its Division of Community Services. The state was divided into 16 geographical areas, and a district office--the full service agency-- was established in each district. Through the district office and its county offices, all the direct services provided by the IDSS were made available to the citizens of Iowa.

In the summer of 1976, the IDSS requested the American Public Welfare Association to evaluate the progress the IDSS had made in moving toward realization of the full service agency concept. The IDSS was specifically interested in the inter-relationships among the three administrative levels of the Division of Community Services: the state, the district, and the local (county) level.

This report contains the results of the American Public Welfare Association's study of the full service agency. It examines the historical background of the IDSS and the events leading up to the full service agency. The report details the current operation of the Division of Community Services and concludes with findings, conclusions, and a number of recommendations for change.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was planned as an inquiry into the interrelationships between the three administrative levels of the IDSS Division of Community Services: the state, district, and the local level. The current functioning of the Division and the relationships between its three levels were to be assessed according to the 1974 reorganization plan leading to the implementation of the full service agency concept and any subsequent additions to the plan.

Achievement of the study purposes required the collection of data which could describe the current functioning of the Division of Community Services at all three levels. In order to evaluate these data, all documents pertaining to the full service agency and its intended operation also needed to be reviewed.

Two primary sources of data were identified:

- IDSS staff members at all three levels
- Official IDSS documents pertaining to the reorganization

A two-part data collection plan was developed. The first phase consisted of identifying and interviewing key persons at the state, district, and county office levels. The Des Moines District office and the Polk County office were selected as the primary sites for collection of data from the district and local levels. An open-ended interview outline was constructed which included several major areas: the functioning of the IDSS prior to the full service agency concept; the transition; the current organizational structure and functioning; funding; and practices in the areas of personnel, policy and program and communications.

During a two-week period, interviews were conducted with 44 persons, as follows:

- The commissioner and deputy commissioner of the IDSS
- Fourteen state-level Division of Community Services staff, including both administrative and program personnel
- Five staff members from the Des Moines District office
- Ten staff members from the Polk County office
- Eight staff members from the Ottumwa District (including county offices)
- Two additional district administrators
- A county director from the Des Moines District (outside Polk County)
- Two members of the Polk County Board of Supervisors

The second phase of data collection, done concurrently with the interviewing, entailed obtaining the documents necessary to evaluate the interview data. These included the reorganization plan, relevant legislation and IDSS memoranda, staffing plans and personnel materials, annual reports, and news releases. These documents were then reviewed to provide the background information and official statements regarding the intended functioning of the full service agency.

After collection of the data, findings were analyzed and compared to the documents pertaining to the reorganization and operation of the IDSS, as well as to some principles of management and administration applicable to the IDSS. This comparison allowed the formulation of conclusions about the operation of the full service agency, and a number of recommendations resulted from conclusions in areas in which it was found that improvement could be made.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### Predecessor Agencies

The Iowa Department of Social Services (IDSS) was created on July 1, 1968, by an act of the Iowa Legislature. The department brought together into one administrative unit the functions of three agencies which had previously provided social and income maintenance services to the people of Iowa: the Board of Social Welfare, the Board of Control, and the Board of Parole. These three agencies had been in existence for decades. The youngest, the Board of Social Welfare, was established in 1937. During their years of operation, they had developed clear roles and functions, though there was occasional duplication of field services among them.

Prior to 1968 and the IDSS, the Board of Social Welfare had the responsibility for administering the provisions of the Social Security Act under which the state provided social services and financial assistance (the ADC program) to families. Though the Board of Social Welfare was a state-operated agency and its employees members of the merit system, the board really did little more than supervise these programs. Iowa's 99 counties had the primary responsibility for administration of both the program and the staff through a county director. County boards of social welfare also took an active role in the programs through their county directors; and counties provided 50% of the non-federal share for payments and the office space and equipment for employees working in the county.

The Board of Control was a state-funded agency which operated the state's institutions. Under its jurisdiction were the mental health and

mental retardation facilities, adult and juvenile correctional facilities, the home for aged and disabled veterans, and the two homes for dependent and neglected children. The Board of Control also had a limited field staff, primarily to provide follow-up services to those discharged from its facilities. In addition, it had some responsibility for monitoring private care facilities and inspecting jails. Unlike the employees of the Board of Social Welfare, the employees of the Board of Control were not members of the merit system.

The Board of Parole was the third predecessor agency. It had two primary functions: to determine which incarcerated offenders should be granted a parole, and to supervise them once they were paroled. In order to carry out this latter task, the Board of Parole employed a staff of parole agents who were located in various areas of the state. Like the Board of Control, it was a state-funded agency, and its employees remained outside the merit system.

#### Creation of the IDSS

With the passage of the enabling legislation in 1968, the task of unifying the various staffs and functions of the three boards into a single agency began. The new IDSS, a single administrative unit, could facilitate common planning, budgeting, and administration; and it could coordinate the services to eliminate overlap and duplication. It also brought the employees of the Boards of Control and Parole into the state merit system. Some of the patterns established by years of tradition continued, however. Though the IDSS began to administer all the state's service and income maintenance programs, it did not become the sole funding source. The 99 county governments continued to furnish 50% of the non-federal share of the ADC programs, and

to provide equipment and office space for employees assigned to the county.

The county offices, each under the supervision of a county director, had the responsibility for providing the department's direct services. These services were those which had been provided through the Board of Social Welfare prior to July 1, 1968: the social and income maintenance services mandated under the Social Security Act. In addition, counties also provided general relief, a program in which the state had no financial or program participation; and the food stamp program, in which the state had no direct financial participation but did establish policy guidelines. In some counties, these two programs were integrated into the county IDSS office under the supervision of the county director. In others, they were provided in separate offices with separate staff.

Within the IDSS at the state level, there were two bureaus to which the county departments related: Family and Children's Services and Income Maintenance. County IDSS employees were accountable to their county director, but also reported to state level specialists in the service area in which they worked. The county director alternately was accountable to state-level specialists in either social services or income maintenance, and to his own county board of supervisors.

The uncertainty regarding the status of county IDSS employees went one step further. In the 1967 Ahern decision, the Iowa Supreme Court held that county directors were county employees under control of the county board, even though the Board of Social Welfare paid their salaries. By extension of the decision, IDSS employees in county offices were also viewed as county employees, even though they were state merit employees paid by the Board of Social Welfare. The legislation creating the IDSS did not clarify the status of the county-level IDSS employees.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE FULL SERVICE AGENCY

The "full service agency" concept was implemented by departmental directive on July 1, 1974, and the transition to the new system was completed six months later. Prior to the implementation of the full service agency, the IDSS had undergone or been affected by a number of evolutionary changes which led to the full service agency.

Several of these changes occurred within the IDSS as part of its continuing development: shifts in the organizational structure which pointed toward the decentralization of the full service agency. And a number of changes occurred within the laws which altered the relationship between the IDSS and Iowa's 99 counties.

### Organizational Changes

In 1967 Iowa Governor Harold Hughes established sixteen regional planning districts in the state. When the IDSS was created, a plan was developed to divide the state into sixteen administrative areas (with boundaries coterminous with the planning districts), each with an area office. Ten areas instead of sixteen ultimately became operational, and in 1969 the Bureau of Field Operations, with personnel in both the central office and the ten area offices, was established.

The purpose of this bureau, as described in the 1971 IDSS Annual Report, was to "insure the effective implementation of the Department's Social Service and public assistance programs provided at the community level" (p. 42). Its duties, listed in the same report, were to "provide technical consultation and administrative supervision to the county staff,"

to assist the county department "in all aspects of administration and service programs," and to "lend expertise to counties in such activities as personnel matters, classifications, office space, and equipment" (p. 42). To what extent the area office was able to exercise any direct line authority over the county departments is not clear, but the county director did have one more administrative level to which to relate around certain matters. Counties, however, clearly retained the responsibility for implementation of both income maintenance and social service programs.

By 1973, the responsibility and authority of the area offices had expanded. The area administrators were responsible for the "interpretation of policy and procedure for Income Maintenance programs..." and the area and county offices together were responsible for the "implementation of services as developed by the Bureau of Family and Children Services." (IDSS Annual Report, 1973, p. 48). Lines of authority remained unclear, however, since there were still state level specialists who controlled the policy and thus had at least indirect line authority over the local IDSS staff members.

Early in 1974, in a state level reorganization, the number of area offices was reduced from ten to five, but the area supervisors continued to be responsible for implementing the programs of the Bureau of Family and Adult Services (previously the Bureau of Family and Children Services). This reorganization was an interim measure lasting only about eight months until the creation of the full service agency.

#### Statutory Changes

Two provisions adopted during the 1973 legislative session which became effective on January 1, 1974, clarified both the lines of authority



and the funding patterns within the IDSS. The first change arose from the need to place all the IDSS staff firmly under the administrative control of the IDSS and eliminate the confusion which had existed since the 1967 Iowa Supreme Court decision in the Ahern case. A new section was added to Chapter 217 of the 1973 Code of Iowa, which reads in part:

The commissioner of social services or his designee, shall employ such personnel as are necessary for the performance of the duties and responsibilities assigned to the department. All employees shall be selected on a basis of fitness for the work to be performed with due regard to training and experience and shall be subject to the provisions of chapter nineteen A (19A) of the Code.

In return for the counties' giving up their administrative control over the local IDSS employees, the State of Iowa agreed to assume the counties' share of the costs of the income maintenance programs for which federal financial participation was available. The counties were thus relieved of providing 50% of the non-federal share of the ADC program, but continued to have responsibility for provision and funding of general relief, and provision of the food stamp programs (including funding 50% of administrative costs). Additional financial relief came to the counties on January 1, 1974, from the federal government, when it assumed the costs for the old age assistance, aid to the blind, and aid to the disabled programs.

Added to Section 234.11 of the 1973 Code was a part which spelled out the counties' relationship to the IDSS:

The board shall act in an advisory capacity on programs within the jurisdiction of the department of social services. The board shall review policies and procedures of the local departments...and make

recommendations for changes...[and] may also make recommendations for new programs. The state department shall...insure that county board recommendations receive appropriate review at the level of policy determination.

Even though IDSS employees assigned to county offices were clearly removed from any administrative control of the county board, the county was required to house and equip them:

Where the department of social services assigns personnel to an office located in a county for the purpose of performing in that county designated duties and responsibilities assigned by law to the department, it shall be the responsibility of the county to provide and maintain the necessary office space and office supplies and equipment for the personnel so assigned in the same manner as if they were employees of the county (New Section added to Chapter 217, Code of Iowa, 1973).

This section also provided that federal matching funds were to be used to reimburse the counties in the same amount the state would have received had it provided this space and equipment.

#### Planning Process

In the fall of 1973 the commissioner reached a decision to reorganize the department and make its services more accessible to the people who needed them. The reorganization was intended to further the commissioner's stated purpose of the department:

The purpose of the Department is to make available to the people of Iowa an array of financial and social services which prevent or reduce the incidence and effects of conditions which handicap or disadvantage the individual in society (IDSS Proposed Plan for Community Based Service Delivery System, February, 1974, p. 1).

The job of planning a service delivery system which would best carry out the department's purpose was given to a task force appointed by the deputy commissioner. The task force, which began work in November 1973, consisted of the following persons:

- IDSS staff members from the bureaus of Family and Adult Services, Income Maintenance, and Administrative Support
- Representatives from local county agencies
- Resource persons from various levels and other IDSS programs assigned to assist task force members

The task force worked through December and January, and by February, 1974, a proposed plan for the reorganization was developed. This proposal, after receiving the necessary approvals, was sent out to chairmen of the county boards of supervisors and boards of social welfare, field division supervisors, county directors, and superintendents of the IDSS institutions. Eight meetings were held around the state with these and other community persons, and a six week period followed during which comments could be made.

The February proposal contained several broad service delivery goals for the reorganization:

- To insure, to the greatest extent possible, that every Iowan has access to all IDSS services
- To insure all citizens "equal service delivery reliability and capability"
- To develop a system based upon community needs
- To provide services of the highest possible quality

The proposal also contained a number of goals pertaining more specifically to the system itself:

- To provide a mechanism for cooperative relationships with all community-based providers in order to coordinate services
- To develop a system within the sixteen OPP regional guidelines
- To maintain a minimum number of levels of administration
- To provide at least one entry to the full service agency in every county
- To make available through the entry facility (directly or indirectly) all services provided by the IDSS

The concept of the full service agency, as presented in the proposal, consisted of service entry facilities, each staffed minimally by a social service and an income maintenance worker and one secretary. These entry facilities were to be linked to the full service agencies through which all the IDSS services would be available. The full service agency itself was intended to be no smaller than the district office and all its service entry facilities. This intent is shown most clearly in the table of state organization which includes sixteen full service agencies linked to the service entry facilities. The county offices do not appear on this table and are not mentioned in the text; they were presumably to undergo a transformation into the service entry facilities.

The February proposal contained little indication either about the full service agency's relationship to the central office or about the extent of central office realignments. Two central office bureaus, Income Maintenance and Adult Corrections, were apparently planned to continue direct line supervision of field staff. And the directors of these two

bureaus as well as Family and Adult Services were to be assigned supervisory personnel, one of whose functions was the following:

Supervise to the extent necessary, to insure the effective implementation of the objectives established by the Department for community based agencies (p. 8).

#### Implementation of the Full Service Agency Concept

Departmental directive 74-2 reorganizing the department and implementing the full service agency concept was sent out on June 24, 1974. Changes had been made in the reorganization plan initially proposed in February, and these changes primarily concerned the reorganization of the central office and its relationship to the district and local offices and staffs.

#### State Office Reorganization

As part of the total reorganization, the central office divisions and bureaus were realigned. Five major divisions were established: Administrative Services, Management and Planning, Correctional Institutions, Mental Health Resources, and Community Services. Each of these divisions had a major responsibility for part of the department's total program; the Division of Community Services was to direct the delivery of the programs and services provided through the district and local offices. In addition, the Division of Community Services was subdivided into seven state-level bureaus: Specialty Resource Services, Correctional Services, Income Maintenance Services, Medical Services, Mental Retardation Services, Youth Services (including the four juvenile institutions), and Veterans Services.

According to the departmental reorganization directive, the primary function of the seven bureaus was to "develop policy and procedure for Division programs," but they were also to "provide all initial program interpretation and ongoing consultation essential to the implementation of services at the local level" (Appendix D, p. 4). Except for an initial transitional period until the district administrators assumed their positions, the bureaus were removed from any direct line authority over either district or field staff. The bureau directors, however, were expected to:

1. Maintain regular communication with appropriate administrative and program staff to keep updated on Department service needs.
2. Develop staff training for personnel located throughout the state in cooperation with the district administrators and the office of staff development.
3. Confer with the district administrators in the evaluation and hiring of personnel who have responsibility for program delivery.

Line authority and accountability for the program and staff rested with the district administrators, who were directly accountable to the director of the Division of Community Services. The district administrators assumed many of the functions which had previously been held by (or shared by) state level program staff and county directors: assessing needs, employing staff members, establishing goals and objectives, working with local agencies, monitoring programs, and evaluating the performance of staff under their supervision.

### District Offices

The districts, though they were to become the full service agencies with the primary responsibility for ensuring that all IDSS services were provided, had some constraints placed upon them. The district office was envisioned to include only a district administrator, a business manager, and a secretary (except in some larger districts where some additional staff might be necessary). The long-range plan was to place "all direct service staff, specialist staff, and consultative staff in local offices."

Although the reorganization was to take effect on July 1, 1974, the district administrators were not all hired until October 1; and they did not officially begin work in their districts until after a period of orientation and training.

### Local Offices

The county offices, which had previously been the locus of administrative and program control, became "local" offices, of which there would ultimately be at least 100: "a complete system of local offices...functional under the administrative direction of 16 Department District Administrators" (reorganization directive). The models of county administration in effect at the time of the departmental reorganization directive were to be continued: one or more counties with a single county director; and one or more counties with no county director, but with an income maintenance and a social service supervisor.

## THE FULL SERVICE AGENCY: PRESENT OPERATION

At the present time, the full service agency concept has been in operation for about 20 months. Many of the original features of the re-organization plan have been retained; others have been changed either purposefully or through evolution.

The sixteen full service agencies - the districts and their local offices - are all a part of the Division of Community Services. In order to accurately describe the manner in which the division functions, it is necessary to examine seven key areas:

- Organizational structure
- Lines of authority and accountability
- Patterns of funding
- Budgetary process
- Personnel policies and practices
- Policy and program development
- Communications patterns

Organizational structure and lines of authority and accountability are virtually inseparable; these two areas are discussed as they relate to the three levels - state, district, county - of the division. Each of the other areas is covered in a separate section.

### Organizational Structure and Lines of Authority

#### State Level

The Division of Community Services, the director of which is accountable



to the commissioner, is currently being reorganized into three bureaus: Program Services, Benefit Payment, and Child Advocacy. The division will also include an Office of Community Mental Retardation and the Iowa Veterans Home as separate entities without bureau status. A new bureau of Planning and Evaluation is being created within the Division of Management and Planning; it will perform quality control reviews for the Division of Community Services.

The purposes of this state-level reorganization are as follows:

The changes . . . will better utilize the skills of the existing staff; improve the capabilities of the Division of Management and Planning; make appropriate adjustments in duties to correspond with changes in the positions; provide the proper support for the districts in order to implement programs and policies; and to reinforce the "level of three" reporting lines, from the district administrator to the division director to the commissioner ("The Weekly News Thing, "July 2, 1976).

The Bureau of Program Services will include in- and out-of-home services, licensing (residential, day care, and foster care), mental retardation services, and the community development coordinator. Many of the program specialists previously responsible for these services have been transferred to the new Bureau of Planning and Evaluation; new "program generalist" positions will be created. These generalists will have many of the same duties previously carried by the specialists, but will share responsibilities for the various programs among them.

The Bureau of Benefit Payment includes the functions of the previous bureaus of Income Maintenance and Medical Services: developing policies and procedures for income maintenance, medical assistance, food stamps, and WIN programs.

The Bureau of Child Advocacy will develop policy and program for the three youth service institutions. It also has responsibility for a number of functions which relate to services provided through the district offices: "protecting the legal rights of children under guardianship or committed to the Department; monitoring court reports; administering the juvenile compact; and performing court liaison services" ("The Weekly News Thing," July 2, 1976).

This state-level reorganization did not alter either the lines of authority or accountability between the state office and the district and county offices. With one exception, all program and administrative authority flowed through the director of community services to the district administrator both before and after the reorganization. The exception is the four field income maintenance representatives (one position is currently vacant), who were and continue to be supervised by the chief of the income maintenance section in the state office. Each IM representative covers four districts, and his salary comes from one of the district's budgets (where he is housed). His position, however, is a staff position, and he has no line authority over any of the district or county income maintenance staff members; the line from the director of community services to the district administrators to the line level staff members is unbroken.

#### District Level

As was intended, the district offices have become the new centers of line authority within the IDSS. This result appears to derive from a number of factors: from a conscious decentralization of administrative authority from the state level; from the creation of a strong single

line of authority; from the abolition of state level specialists with a strong program identification (thereby placing the program effectively in the hands of the district administrators); and from the fact that the districts neither are organized nor function as they were originally intended.

In the original reorganization plan, the district was intended to consist of the district administrator, a business manager, and a secretary. There is no district in the state that has only those staff members. When the district administrators assumed their positions, they inherited the previous area staff (about 45 people in the Des Moines district alone). Though there have been reorganizations at the district level, the districts have continued to control many of the functions which provide service to or for the entire district: staff specialists in social services, income maintenance, staff development, mental retardation, volunteer services, or Title XX planning; or service units which provide (or coordinate) services for the district in adoption, family therapy, WIN, adult services, or medical review services. The composition of the district offices varies, but all have some functions centralized at the district level.

There are basically two organizational models (with variations) in use by the districts. In one model, the district administrator supervises the county directors (or the income maintenance and service supervisors, if there is no county director), and the county directors then supervise all county level employees and program. In this model, the district specialists, unless they are providing direct services, function wholly in staff positions, with no line authority over either the county staff members or county IDSS programs. Depending upon the style of the particular

district administrator, they deal either through him or directly with county and state level employees in their program areas: seeking or providing technical assistance and policy interpretations, sometimes monitoring direct service programs, sometimes carrying out the programs themselves.

In the second type of organizational structure in use by district offices, the district specialists actually supervise the IDSS programs carried out by the county offices. In this model, the line of authority by passes the county directors:

The administrative line of responsibility flows directly from the district administrator through the intact family service supervisor, the business manager, and the income maintenance supervisor to the respective staff in the county office (Table of Organization Proposal for District 10, June 3, 1976).

The county directors, however, retain administrative authority over their program staff, so the lines of authority and accountability are divided, part flowing to the county director, and part to the district program supervisors.

A variation of these two models occurs in districts which use the two models simultaneously: some counties in which the county director supervises the program staff directly, and some counties in which the program staff are supervised by the district program specialist.

#### County Level

Despite the fact that in some districts some county IDSS staff members are supervised from the district program level, the lines of authority and ac-

countability are relatively clear until they reach the county directors. At that level, two lines of authority and accountability merge: those coming from the IDSS, and those coming from the county boards of supervisors and boards of social welfare. This merging of lines is a function of the mixed funding patterns for services in Iowa, and is a reflection of the fact that accountability follows funding. Although the IDSS has the legal authority to hire and fire county directors, the current position classification standards for county social services directors reflect the county director's dual accountability:

County directors function independently under the direction of the County Board of Social Welfare, the County Board of Supervisors, and the area administrator of Field Operations.

Since these position classification standards were written, the IDSS has undergone a reorganization which has clarified lines of authority down to the county directors and also placed the county directors legally under the administrative control of the IDSS. Notwithstanding the lack of revision of the position standards, however, the county directors continue to function under the dual direction of the county boards of supervisors and the district administrators. (The county boards of social welfare now act in an advisory capacity.)

When county directors' salaries were last evaluated (1972), the intent was that their state salary include compensation for the duties that they perform for the county board. Of the four weighting factors used in determining a pay grade, 10% of the total was based upon the integration or non-integration of the county. This intended single

payment is in accordance with the rules of the Iowa Merit Commission, which state that

no employee shall receive any pay under governmental jurisdiction other than that specifically authorized by the Commission for the discharge of the duties of his position or additional duties which may be assigned to him or which he may undertake, or volunteer to perform as a state employee (Section 4.4(2), Rules of the Iowa Merit System, August 1975).

Interpretation of another merit rule has permitted the county boards to supplement county directors' salaries, a practice which occurs in numerous counties. The amount of the supplement (over and above the state salary) ranges up to about \$900 a month.

In summary, the lines of authority and accountability within the Division of Community Services are clear with the exception of the county director's dual accountability; the lines extend from the director of the division to the district administrator, to the county director. Staff specialists in the central office function without line authority, but derive their program authority through the line; the direct contacts they have with other IDSS employees above or below them in the hierarchy occur with the consent of the line administrators. The exceptions to this pattern are the four income maintenance representatives, but they have no line authority over any other IM staff even though they are supervised from the IM Bureau.

#### Funding Patterns

The IDSS derives its funds from three sources: the Federal government,

the State of Iowa, and the 99 county governments. The manner in which these three funding streams merge is most evident at the county level.

An IDSS county office can administer basically five program categories (distinguished by source of funds or by program control): income maintenance, social services (except for purchase of service), purchase of service, food stamps, and general relief. How these programs are staffed, funded, and programmatically administered is described below:

- Income maintenance programs are funded entirely through the IDSS, staffed with state merit employees paid by the IDSS, and the policy and procedures are established by the IDSS.
- Social service programs (except for purchase of service) are also state-funded programs, and policies are established by the IDSS. All service staff members are state merit employees paid by the IDSS with the exception that at least three counties (Polk, Linn, and Johnson) supplement their IDSS quotas with county-paid staff members to provide the state-mandated services.
- The purchase of service program guidelines are promulgated by the IDSS and contracts are approved at the state level, but the counties may initiate contracts and they retain the prerogative of using or not using any given contract. Matching funds for purchased homemaker, alcohol and drug treatment, and foster care services are provided by the IDSS; all other services are matched with county funds (the county includes the entire cost of

these expenditures in its budgets and the state reimburses it with federal matching funds). All POS employees are state merit and state-paid except in Polk County, which also has county-paid employees working in purchase of service.

- Policy for the food stamp program is established by the IDSS, but the county boards are obligated by law to provide and administer the program. In all but one Iowa county, the county IDSS director administers food stamps. Food stamp employees are a mixture of county-paid state merit employees, and state-paid merit employees. Counties, however, are required to provide the 50% of administrative expenses not covered by federal funds.
- General relief is a state-mandated program entirely controlled and funded by the counties, and only county funds are used for staff and program costs. In integrated counties, the county IDSS director administers the program; in non-integrated counties, there is a separate administrator of the Poor Fund. If the county office has no employees hired specifically to work with general relief, the county IDSS employees provide the services and the county reimburses the IDSS for their time.

In addition to providing some of the funds for these basic programs, county boards of supervisors may provide additional funds for the county IDSS offices. Counties may supplement state programs, hire staff members to perform state jobs, and supplement county directors' salaries. Counties



also, ultimately, control the kind and amount of office space, equipment, and supplies available to the county IDSS offices since they must provide the non-federal matching funds for these items.

### Budgetary Process

Operating within the constraints imposed by the available federal and state funds, all three IDSS levels take part in the budgetary process. County boards of supervisors are also involved in appropriating money for the IDSS, but are not included in the departmental budgetary process. The county director's formal participation in the budgetary process appears to center primarily around his preparation of a budget for the county office, a budget which goes not to the IDSS, but to the county board. The county budget includes those items which the county is required to fund: housing, equipment, and supplies; the purchase of service match; administrative costs of the food stamp program; and staff and program costs of general relief (in integrated counties). Items which the county chooses but is not required to fund would also be included: any county paid staff members working on IDSS programs, any supplement to the county director's salary, and any special program which the county office provides over and above the IDSS programs.

Items in the county budget are negotiated between the county director and the county board. The district administrator appears to be involved only with the purchase of service (though this practice could vary from county to county or district to district), since there is a limited amount of federal money available to the state for the purchase of service. Once agreement is reached between the county director and

the board of supervisors and the budget is approved, the board is responsible for approving all expenditures and the county director, for monitoring them.

The state and federal portions of the Division of Community Services' budget for district and local operations are allocated to the district offices. The district administrator has the responsibility to prepare a negotiable personnel budget, but most other funds are allocated based upon previous expenditures and total money available. How the resources allocated to the district are divided up among the offices within the district is left up to the district administrators, who can negotiate with each county director. Districts, however, have Title XX planning groups that recommend how Title XX funds be distributed among the counties for purchase of service.

The only program budget specifically prepared at the state level is in staff development. For the present fiscal year, the districts prepared their staff development budget requests, and sent them to the staff development unit, where the district and institutional budgets were combined into a total IDSS staff development request. The total budget was approved much in the fashion it was submitted (though there have since been two reductions), and monies were allocated to the districts.

District administrators must approve expenditures and must monitor their allocations to ensure that they stay within their budgeted funds. They do not, however, have final approval over at least two items in their budgets: purchase of service and staff development. Though the districts have a budget for purchase of service, ultimate control lies with the counties, because they determine how these funds are used. Counties also monitor POS expenditures, though this practice may vary from district

to district. And the district administrators, who are accountable for remaining within their staff development allocation, cannot authorize any expenditures until they have received prior approval from the IDSS staff development office.

#### Personnel Policies and Practices

The IDSS follows the personnel practices established by the Iowa Merit Employment Department. The appointing authority has those powers which the merit rules delegate to him, but he may also delegate some of his powers downward. In the case of the IDSS, the commissioner (who is the appointing authority) has done so.

Many of the routine personnel transactions are performed at the lowest possible level--the employee's immediate supervisor. These actions include approval of vacation time, sick time, and compensatory time; and initiation of disciplinary actions and merit increases. Promotions from within and hiring of new staff members are also generally handled by the immediate supervisor, but county directors (or higher level supervisors) and district administrators may choose to be involved in promotion and hiring of staff members within their respective jurisdictions.

The commissioner has delegated to the district administrators final authority for three types of actions: authorization for the filling of vacancies (within available funds and positions), approval of leaves without pay up to thirty days, and final approval of disciplinary actions. In larger counties such as Polk, disciplinary actions would normally be completed at the county level, with consultation (and final rights of approval or denial) from the district administrator.

In other personnel transactions, the district administrator serves only as a step in the personnel process. He must approve, but does not have final authority over, leaves over thirty days without pay, pay increases for exceptionally meritorious service, and reallocations. He also serves as the third step in the grievance procedure.

#### Policy and Program Development

Policy and program development occurs primarily at the state level, though staff members in both the district and the county offices may be involved. The broad social service program outlines are contained in the state's Title XX plan, a plan which is developed through a process involving a wide selection of professional and lay persons. Within the context of the state plan and the funds available, programs and policies can be developed. Within the IDSS, programs appear to be initiated primarily through policy rather than in any independent, organized process institutionalized into the system.

In the income maintenance programs, policy development and modification occurs through an orderly, routine process. Whether policies are being changed as a result of federal regulation or as a result of a need pointed out through the field staff, the process is essentially the same (though the constraints may differ). Staff members in the income maintenance section write a preliminary draft which is circulated among the income maintenance representatives, at least four districts, and selected other people at the state level. They have thirty days in which to make comments, then the income maintenance section prepares the final policy and issues it. If the IDSS does not have the authority itself

to approve the changes (rules or substantive changes), the proposed policy is then sent on for the other state level approvals (outside the IDSS) before returning to the IDSS for issuance.

Within the service programs, policy formulation is initiated by staff of the Bureau of Program Services. Changes occur when there is a change in federal regulations, state law, funding availability requiring program modifications, or as a result of input from the field. Modifications are usually developed by a committee of local and/or district and central office staff. There is no set schedule for issuance of policy, and policy format is determined by the procedures unit in the Division of Management and Planning. Purchase of service policy is developed by the POS unit in the Division of Management and Planning.

#### Communications Patterns

Verbal communications have been described above. Written communications within the Division of Community Services follow different routes, depending on the content: administrative, income maintenance materials, or social services materials. Administrative communications follow the lines of authority that have been established; they flow from the division director to the district administrators to the county directors. and back up the line following the same route.

The Bureau of Income Maintenance has established a procedure for routing communications dealing with income maintenance matters. In an interoffice memorandum issued April 29, 1975, entitled "Issuance of Interpretive Memos," the bureau developed a policy regarding format (address, subject, content, and distribution), classification and

filing, and control. This procedure specified that "all inquiries regarding policies and procedures should originate with District Administrators, IM Field Representatives, or IM District Supervisors"; and stipulated that all interpretive memos (those of general interest and application) be sent to district administrators, IM field representatives, district IM supervisors, and four county IM supervisors (Polk, Pottawattamie, Black Hawk, and Linn), as well as others within the central office. This policy continues to be followed, and has ensured that all those who need the material receive it, and that those receiving the material also know who else has received it.

There appears to be no established procedure for distributing program or policy materials which originate within the various service programs. Some materials may originate in the division director's office and follow the line; others may originate with the program specialists and be sent to district administrators, county directors, or district and county specialists in the program area. Communications moving upward generally originate with the social services specialist or specific program specialist in the district (or with their counterparts in the large counties), and move directly to the appropriate program specialist at the state level. Answers are generally returned to the source, and district administrators (or county directors) are apprised of the communications by their own staff specialists.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings and conclusions we present below are the result of numerous interviews conducted on-site in Iowa and an extensive review of written materials pertaining to the IDSS. Our conclusions were derived from evaluating the findings in relation to two standards:

- The department's reorganization plan of June 24, 1974, and changes and additions which have occurred since that time
- Principles of organization and management theory which we believe apply to the IDSS

There are two types of conclusions: those which treat strengths within the organization, and those which treat areas needing improvement. In some instances, areas of strength also have points of weakness associated with them; these subordinate weaknesses are identified.

The findings and conclusions are organized into five sections:

- Legal framework within which the department operates
- Organizational structure of the Division of Community Services
- Funding of the IDSS, again as it pertains primarily to the operations of the Division of Community Services
- Administration and management of and within the Division of Community Services
- Policy and program of the Division of Community Services

These sections were derived from the seven key areas we used to describe the manner in which the Division of Community Services functions,

and which we examined during the course of our study. Many of our findings and conclusions have implications going beyond the one section under which they are included. This overlap reflects the interdependence we find within the IDSS itself: a strength or a weakness in one area or at one level often has ramifications which extend far beyond.

### Principles of Organization and Management Theory

We said above that there are some principles of organization and management theory which apply to the IDSS. We do not believe, as did Frederick Taylor, that there is one best way for an organization to function, but rather that the best organizational structure and management style is one which best serves to accomplish an organization's purposes.

The administrative purpose and goals of the IDSS should support its overall program goal, which is "to insure that all services provided by the Department of Social Services are available to all the people in a district, and that the quality and quantity of those services is standard, whether they be provided directly or purchased." In the reorganization creating the full service agency, the IDSS appears to have developed an overall administrative purpose which can be stated as follows: to create a state-administered, decentralized department of social services. There are some assumptions consistent with the primary purpose underlying the establishment of the IDSS. They are as follows:

1. Programs, policies, and services be standardized throughout the state (an assumption of state administration)
2. Funds be distributed in some equitable manner throughout the state (an assumption of state administration)



3. Decisions be made and problems handled at the lowest possible level (an assumption of decentralization)
4. Local administrative units retain some flexibility in program, policy, and services, so that they can adapt them to special local needs or conditions (an assumption of decentralization)

From the purpose, these four major assumptions, and a few principles of management and organization we believe to be universally applicable, we have developed a set of standards which can be applied to the IDSS. These are listed below in general terms as they pertain to each section of this chapter.

Legal framework should

- specify the intent and overall purposes of the IDSS
- clearly establish the jurisdiction
- provide enabling legislation and regulation sufficient to carry out the purposes

Organizational structure should

- clearly outline positions in the hierarchy and their relationships
- define the place of each unit within the total system
- establish a clear line of authority and accountability from the commissioner to the county offices
- delineate a minimum number of administrative levels

Funding of the IDSS should

- be distributed in some equitable fashion among the administrative units

- be determined in a budgetary process which fully involves those who ultimately manage the funds
- enable the IDSS to purchase the greatest amount of service for its dollars

Administration and management of the IDSS should

- provide administrators authority equal to their accountability
- provide formal communications methods so that materials and information reach those who need it
- allow decision-making at the lowest possible level
- establish clear state policy and program guidelines

Policy and program of the IDSS should

- be standardized throughout the state, but be flexible enough to provide options at the local level
- emanate from leadership at the state level, but be formulated in an on-going process which involves staff members from the field

Legal Framework

The IDSS operates within the framework established by federal legislation and regulations and Iowa legislation and regulations. To a great extent, this legal framework both shapes the system and determines the constraints within which the system must operate. Any state-local system would share many characteristics with the system which currently operates in Iowa.

In studying the three levels of the IDSS, we have found several weaknesses evident at all three levels which stem from a source over which the

IDSS has no direct control: the legal framework. In this section we will list the conclusions we have reached and indicate briefly some of the difficulties which arise in other areas. The extensive implications of the legal problems will become evident as strengths and weaknesses in these other areas are discussed.

### State-Local Funding

Background: Excluding the federal funds which are ultimately administered by the state, the IDSS receives funds from two sources: the Iowa legislature and the 99 county governments. Each of these funding sources exercises control over the funds it appropriates and demands accountability for the expenditure of those funds. The commissioner, as an agent of the state, controls the expenditure of funds appropriated by the legislature, but the county boards of supervisors ultimately control the funds which they appropriate.

Following the creation of the IDSS in 1968, the county and state funding streams merged at the level of the county director. Subsequent reorganizations and statutory changes have not changed this arrangement. Within the IDSS hierarchy, the county director is the most senior person who handles county funds—preparing budgets and monitoring expenditures. Though the IDSS funds are managed at the district level, it is only as the responsibility for the expenditure and monitoring of those funds is delegated to the county directors that the two funding streams merge.

Even though a plan is developed between the counties and the district for the expenditure of Title XX funds, county boards of supervisors have discretion both in the commitment and the subsequent authorization for expenditure of the county dollars. In addition, they retain full control

of the monies expended for space, equipment, and supplies. As an agent of the county board of supervisors, the county director is accountable both to the county board (following the flow of county funds), and to the commissioner through the IDSS administrative line (following the state merit system and the flow of state and federal funds). Program and administrative control go with this accountability. Ideally, the amount of control would be directly proportional to the amount of funds and would also follow only the funded items or programs. There is no reason to believe, however, that reality corresponds to this ideal.

These observations on the department's funding lead us to the following:

The department's mixed sources of funding cause numerous difficulties at all three levels and create the potential for problems not everywhere in evidence.

The difficulties which the IDSS mixed funding causes will be discussed in the appropriate sections below. Though all these difficulties ultimately stem from this one source, their nature and severity are affected by other characteristics of the system.

#### Benefits Brought by the IDSS

Background: One of the benefits, often mentioned, of the IDSS is that the IDSS has brought to Iowa a system which provides relatively standardized services in all Iowa counties. Previously, many counties had provided only minimal, if any, social services. The services in those counties have now been brought up to a level "acceptable" to the state as a whole as evidenced by the statutory base and appropriations of the Iowa legislature.

A number of staff members in Polk County (and to a lesser extent in Wapello County) expressed doubts that establishment of the IDSS have improved the quality or quantity of services in their county. Though they will not deny the benefits to the state as a whole, they believe that the level of services within their county has been reduced to correspond to the statewide standards established by the IDSS. They see their counties as having led the way prior to the establishment of the IDSS as a state-administered system, and continue to believe that their counties would be better off on their own rather than as a part of a system which must be concerned with statewide equity.

It appears that the IDSS has been able to bring about a more equitable distribution of the federal money through its reorganization and its Title XX planning mechanism. This money has been redirected toward counties in which the level of services needed to be raised. Some counties (especially Polk), however, lost funds as a result of this redistribution, even though the remainder of the state appears to have benefited.

Given these findings, it appears that:

The creation of the IDSS has benefited the people of Iowa who are served by the IDSS. The creation of the IDSS, however, may have worked to the detriment of some large counties that were offering more comprehensive service programs that is now possible on a statewide basis.

Insofar as the standards the IDSS establishes are limited by law and the resources available to it, many of the lingering doubts about the creation of the IDSS are beyond the power of the IDSS to dispel. Some of the factors which appears to continue these doubts concern program development and Polk County, and will be discussed in the pertinent sections.

## Organizational Structure

### District Offices

Background: The reorganization directive of June 24, 1974, which created the full service agency, called for a small but powerful district office, consisting only of a district administrator, a business manager, and some clerical support. Only in rare instances would other functions be contained in the district office, even though the district office and its service entry facilities (as a unit) were to become the full service agency through which all IDSS services would be available.

At the present time all district offices have the two administrative positions originally planned, but also have numerous (and varying) staff members officially on the district payroll. Though we know of no documents which specify the expanded size and staffing of the district offices, these staff members were logical extensions of the original plan: at the time the district offices began operations, many inherited large numbers of staff members from the dismantled areas, and those that did not begin with a large number of staff members began adding as the need became evident. We described earlier in this report the functions that districts may currently perform and the staff members that they may count on their payrolls.

These findings lead us to the following conclusion:

The current organizational structure, allocation of personnel, and functioning of the districts differ from the original reorganization plan.

Currently, district offices vary widely in their organizational structures, their relationships to and authority over the county offices, what functions they perform, and how strong they are. Given this diversity,

it appears that:

There is no IDSS-directed statewide model for a district office.

Though we believe that the disparity between the original plan and the current situation is so great that our conclusions must be stated, we do not intend these conclusions to indicate that the current situation is bad and the reorganizational plan for the districts was good. On the contrary, we would speculate that, had the plan been followed, the district concept would never have succeeded.

#### Lines of Authority and Accountability

Background: The reorganization plan specified a single administrative line from the director of the Division of Community Services to the district administrator to the county director. The heads of the program bureaus were to function under the division director, and staff within the program bureaus would relate to program staff at lower levels through the administrative line, or directly to program staff at lower levels with the knowledge (and implied consent) of the district administrator. Administrative authority over the district and county program staff was clearly delegated to the district and county administrators.

This plan has been put into practice and seems to have gained both recognition and acceptance by most staff members at all levels. Program staff members at the state level indicated that they have no line authority over the program staff at lower levels. (The four district income maintenance representatives are the single exception to this pattern of authority.) Program staff members at district and county levels validated this relationship to the state level program staff.

Communications patterns between the program staff at the state level and their counterparts at other levels also follow the plan established in the reorganization directive. The state level staff members communicate either with the district specialists or the district administrators, depending upon the subject matter, the presence of a district specialist in the area, and the wishes of the district administrator. They field virtually no communications directly from the county offices. When they are contacted directly (or make a direct contact), it is generally regarding a specific case matter (such as a payment problem) in which the district has no particular interest. County staff members confirm the relative lack of direct contact with the program bureaus.

In addition to the formal lines of accountability and authority (and the resulting communications patterns) developed within the Division of Community Services, the Des Moines District (and possibly other districts) has established some additional vehicles for facilitating communications, planning, and problem-solving within the district itself. There are social service and income maintenance task forces chaired by a district staff member, and there is a district communications committee as well as a satellite committee for Polk County. The district also sponsors staff development and affirmative action committees, and publishes a newsletter, "What's Happening," which appears every several weeks and contains items of interest to the district as a whole.

The exceptions to the patterns of communications between the state and county program staff occur in Polk County. In Polk County the deputy directors for income maintenance and social service make routine calls and contacts with the state office. They normally do not send matters through the district office first, and then let the district either provide the



answer or refer it to the state offices. This direct communication between the Polk County office and the state offices was verified by both the county and district program personnel.

These findings lead us to the following conclusion:

Communications patterns and administrative lines of authority and accountability generally conform to the intent of the original reorganization, and seem to be understood and followed by staff members at all levels.

There were several exceptions to this clarity. Several staff members in Polk County mentioned that the district often gave special assignments to them without going through the county administration. The result was that they were overburdened occasionally by the district's requests.

#### A Sense of Unity

Background: A number of people at all three levels made comments which almost led us to believe that we were dealing with 100 separate agencies: the IDSS, and 99 county departments of social service. County employees, we were told, identify much more with their county than with the IDSS. When we tested this assertion among county level people, we found that no one denied he was employed by the IDSS, but that they did indeed see themselves first as employees of a county office.

These comments and observations brought us to the following conclusion:

The IDSS has not been able to create a sense of "we-ness" among its employees.

We do not disagree with the need for local employees to identify strongly with their local offices; such identification is essential in order

to form cohesive work groups and to increase morale. Beyond that local identity, however, the IDSS needs to foster an overall sense of unity; a single agency working toward overall purposes and goals. Unless that larger unity exists, it will be more difficult for the IDSS to attain its goals; it is only at the local level that they are translated into actions which affect the people the IDSS serves.

Two people above the county level suggested that the reasons for the county employees' failure to identify with the IDSS was the lack of IDSS-sponsored training and orientation for new employees; new employees never find out what the IDSS really is and does. Though we do not dispute this as a partial cause for the lack of unity, we would like to suggest some additional reasons:

- County offices have existed for years; the IDSS, only since 1968. Eight years may not be a sufficient time to pull the many predecessor agencies and offices together into a unified whole without more extensive staff training and organizational development focused on creation of a strong identification with IDSS goals and objectives.
- Staff members' primary allegiance will normally be given to the smallest identifiable administrative unit of which they are a part. For county level IDSS employees, that unit is a local office which also happens to be a county office.

#### Funding

#### IDSS Adaptation

Background: One Polk County employee we interviewed stated flatly that "until all the money comes from one place, I don't know how anyone

can organize the department." Though we share the concern about the mixed funding, we do not believe the situation to be as grave as our interviewee portrayed it. Rather we have concluded that:

The mixed funding has the potential to create serious problems, but the IDSS has managed to adapt its operations to the funding and has thus apparently kept the problems to a minimum.

Funds from the state and the 99 county governments are brought together and the IDSS is getting its job done. The counties house, equip, and supply the local IDSS employees; there is money for purchase of service; and in some instances the counties are more willing to appropriate money for services or programs than is the state.

#### Mixed Funding at the County Level

Background: That the IDSS has made some successful adaptations to funding cannot remove some of the problems or the potential for them, however. One problem caused by the funding pattern which no adaptation can overcome is the following:

- . Accountability tends to follow funding, often in inverse proportion to the size of the contribution.

When we described the operation of the Division of Community Services, we talked about the dual accountability of the county director: both the IDSS and the county boards legitimately expect a measure of accountability from a county director because of the funds they provide. A number of people at the district level and above discussed both the difficulties caused when county directors must be accountable to two places, as well

as the inverse relationship between funds and accountability. In talking about the salary supplements, one person noted that the supplement caused a situation in which "most of the county directors' first loyalty is to their county."

These findings, however, should not be unexpected, since accountability (or loyalty) is not merely a function of money. We believe county directors feel more accountable to their counties than to the IDSS for a number of reasons:

- . County directors are viewed as local people (and probably view themselves as such) by the county boards.
- . County directors handle county funds directly, but never see state money.
- . County directors are directly involved in the budgetary process to secure county money, but only remotely involved with the IDSS budgetary process.
- . Tradition persists despite the IDSS' attempts to make county directors IDSS employees.

We single out county directors in this discussion of dual accountability because it is only at that level that the funding streams merge and accountability divides. The effects of this division of accountability, however, are felt at all levels of the IDSS. County level IDSS employees are also accountable both to the IDSS and to their county, though perhaps not to the same extent as their county directors. The lines of authority and accountability, clear above the county level, are not clear at the level of the county director and below.

Another implication of the dual accountability is the fact that the county director can be no more than 100% accountable. Part of this 100%

goes to the county, and with it goes a measure of the IDSS' administrative control over a county director.

We found several other effects of the mixed funding in the county offices. A district administrator told us that he was unable to transfer staff members from one county to another. The reason, he said, was that the local IDSS employees were still identified as county employees because the county provided the office space and the desk. The result: under- and over-staffing could not be handled through transfer, only attrition and replacement. The IDSS also has little to say about the amount, nature, or quality of the office space, equipment, and supplies provided its employees.

We also noted some program effects of the mixed funding. The non-federal match for much of the purchase of service comes from the county governments. Though the IDSS approves and signs the contracts, the county can determine how the money will be spent under the contract (or if it will be spent). A county can also choose to expand the IDSS program: it may supplement an IDSS program or begin a new program administered by the county director and operated through the local IDSS office.

There are, no doubt, other negative effects of the mixed funding visible at the local level. These findings, however, lead us to make the following conclusion:

The mixed patterns of funding reduce the administrative and program control the IDSS has over its local offices.

In addition to these negative effects, one might also postulate some positive effects, since any governmental body which funds an organization generally has a great interest in the organization. We found that to be

the case. One district administrator said he believed the local contribution was the ideal way to keep the local boards involved, and both he and a county director agreed that the boards would become much less involved if there were no requirement for them to provide funds. On the basis of these and other similar comments, we have concluded that:

The mixed funding serves to retain the interest of county boards of supervisors and social welfare in the local office operations.

Some of this interest probably stems from other sources as well: some boards' tradition of involvement and the fact that many board members apparently still receive calls from and about IDSS clients.

#### County-Paid Staff

Background: Earlier in this report we wrote that at least three counties (Polk, Linn, and Johnson) have hired, at county expense, employees to do IDSS jobs. We did not obtain precise figures on the extent of supplementation. In Polk County, however, where the practice is most prevalent, it appears from an examination of the table of organization that as many as 15% of all service workers are county employees. At the time of this study, for example, four of the eight workers in the child protective unit were county paid. We were also told the provisions of the 1974 child abuse act could not have been fully carried out in Polk County had the county not provided funds for some additional personnel to staff the unit.

From this and other related observations and comments by staff members at all three levels, we have concluded that a possible consequence of the

counties' supplementation of staff is the following:

The staff paid by the county to perform IDSS functions helps serve clients but perhaps reduces the pressure on the IDSS to provide adequate staffing with state and federal funds.

County supplementation of staff has some other unintended side-effects as well. A county director who can turn to his board for his needs instead of to the IDSS becomes less a part of the IDSS and more a part of his county system. And a county government which chooses to supplement staff (or program) ultimately reduces the services it can buy. In this respect, we have concluded that the state has failed to capitalize on an opportunity which would maximize the dollars being spent for services:

The state's failure to capture federal matching funds for county-paid staff members costs the counties more money and reduces the services that can be purchased with county dollars.

If the state arranged to use matching funds or the county were successful in getting the IDSS to provide the staff it believes it needs, county money would be freed up to use for the purchase of service or equipment it is required by law to provide.

#### Supplements to County Directors' Salaries

Background: In addition to supplementing both staff and program, county governments also supplement the salaries of county IDSS directors. Though we do not know exactly how widespread this practice is statewide, it appeared to us that about 50% of the county directors in the four districts with which we had some contact received a salary supplement. The amount of these supplements, as we stated earlier, apparently ranges from

about \$50 to about \$900 a month.

We talked above about some of the reasons for the county directors' dual accountability, and indicated that the salary supplements were one of the factors which reinforce the dual accountability. Salary supplements also create another situation:

County supplements to county directors' salaries  
undercut their identity as managers on the IDSS team.

One of the primary reasons for this conclusion is inherent in the position of the county director. As an IDSS employee, the county director is covered by the rules of the state merit system, a system which secures his position--and his salary. The supplement a county provides has no similar security; a county is not required to provide any supplement whatsoever since the IDSS salary theoretically covers all the duties a county director performs.

Because the supplement is not as secure as the state merit salary, there is potential for the county supplement to demand a disproportionate "loyalty" and accountability from the county director. Such a situation may also create an inverse relationship between amount of salary and amount of accountability.

#### Administration and Management

Our findings and conclusions about the operations of the districts stem primarily from extensive interviews in the Des Moines District and a brief series of interviews in the Ottumwa District, though we also interviewed the district administrators from Sioux City and Cedar Rapids.



## District Operations

Background: We encountered some concerns about the operations of district offices. Several people mentioned that districts were creating 16 versions of state policy as they took on more responsibility for policy interpretations. We did not determine whether the extent of the variation was great enough to be detrimental to a uniform state policy, or merely an expression of local flexibility. And one person at the state level was concerned that there was not enough on-site supervision of the district administrators, and that they had been given too much autonomy.

A county director mentioned that the district specialists sometimes worked in her county without her knowledge with the result that she was sometimes unable to respond to local people who asked her questions about the district's activities in the county. And a county director also mentioned that there were more than enough specialists in the district, and that what was really needed was staff members in the field to give more direct services.

Confusion about the roles and functions of the specialists at the district level was prevalent among staff members in Polk County, who also voiced some confusion about the role of the district itself. Many saw the district as merely one more administrative level to be tolerated, a level which took but did not give. These findings plus our conclusions that the IDSS has no statewide model for a district office lead us to a further conclusion:

Some districts might have difficulty developing an identity, since the state office has not clearly specified the roles and functions of a district office.

### Des Moines District

Background: In the districts with which we had some contact, we found no significant confusion about a district identity except in the Des Moines District. In the Des Moines District, the role and function of staff vis a vis county or state staff, the location and office space for staff, and the ordinary indicators of an organizational identity were frequently missing. Our findings in the Des Moines district, therefore, present a picture which causes us to conclude that:

The Des Moines District has an identity problem.

Part of the district's identity problem stems from what it lacks and part from a blurring of functions and roles between the district and the Polk County office. The district has no office space it can call its own; its staff members are scattered among three different office locations. And at least within the West Des Moines office, not all the district staff members have a clearly designated office space. Some were scattered among the Polk County employees, so it was not possible to determine, by merely visiting the office, who belonged to the district and who belonged to the Polk County office. We were also unable to find a telephone listing outside the state system for the district office; we tried both the directory and the Bell operator.

The blurring of the distinctions between the Des Moines District and the Polk County office occurs in ways other than the special ones mentioned above. There was a certain amount of confusion in the minds of staff members (and in ours as well) about the adoption unit: was it part of the district or the county office? The Polk County office also has staff members whose roles duplicate those of the district staff. As we said when we described the communications within the Division of Community Services, the two deputy directors relate to the staff office personnel around program matters just as the district specialists do. They also seek and provide the same kind of policy interpretations to Polk County staff as do the district specialists to the remainder of the district, but not to Polk County. Though the district has a staff development specialist, Polk County also has a person working in staff development.

#### Polk County IDSS Office

Background: These findings regarding the lack of a clear identity for the Des Moines District and the blurring of roles and functions between the district and the Polk County office lead us to another conclusion.

The Polk County office functions virtually as a full service agency.

Polk County has personnel who function as district personnel: without their line responsibilities, the deputy directors' jobs would

be identical with the district service and IM specialists. They are also classified at the same pay grade. Polk County already provides (or could easily provide) the services available through most districts: WIN, family therapy, youth services, purchase of service, adoptions. And Polk County has a self-sufficient business, personnel, and accounting operation.

One of the Polk County people we interviewed, in describing the difficulty of bringing about any changes, complained that it was necessary to go through "16 different levels to get anything done." Several other Polk County staff echoed his complaint, and several people (in the central office as well as Polk County) also suggested that the Polk County administrative line has one too many layers.

We did not do an in-depth study of the Polk County hierarchy, a task which would have required examining job descriptions and responsibilities, actual duties, patterns of communication, decision-making, and so on. We did, however, take a look at the table of organization to see if there might be some evidence to substantiate the comments. According to the table, there may be as many as five levels of administration and supervision from the county director to a service worker:

- County director
- Deputy directors for income maintenance and services  
(pay grade 30)
- Supervisors of community service, centralized service,  
and the assistant deputy director for income maintenance  
(pay grade 28)

- Supervisors of full or major units (pay grade 26)
- Supervisors of sub-units (pay grade.24)

The entire Polk County system has about 250 employees, and there are about 160 or so directly involved in services and income maintenance. Given that number of employees and five administrative and supervisory levels, we conclude that:

The Polk County Office has more administrative levels than necessary to manage and carry out its service functions.

### Policy and Program

#### Income Maintenance

Background: When the full service agency was designed, central office personnel in the program bureaus were removed from line authority over field staff, and the bureaus themselves were realigned. We interviewed staff in both the income maintenance and the social service programs to find out how the reorganization was working.

The IM programs turned out to be operating just as they were described in the section on the operation of the full service agency. The IM bureau has no line authority except over the four IM representatives, who themselves function in a consultative manner. There was agreement regarding the authority and responsibility of IM people at all levels.

Procedures have been established for policy and program development, written communications, and policy interpretations. Staff members at all three levels reported that these procedures are clear and effective.

Some representative comments were that the IM Bureau responds quickly on interpretational issues, that it tries to incorporate suggestions from the field, and that reasons are usually given when some suggestions cannot be used. In general, our interviewees expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the IM programs. They also seemed to realize the extent to which the IDSS IM policy must conform to federal requirements.

These findings lead us to conclude:

The IDSS has achieved stability and the objectives of the reorganization in the income maintenance programs.

Policy and program development occurs in an orderly and planful manner, and effective methods have been established for routing written communications and providing rapid answers to interpretational questions.

#### Social Services

Background: As far as policy and program development (used synonymously with manual revision) was concerned, everyone we interviewed either had been involved or know of someone who had been involved in revising manual materials. There was agreement that field staff members were adequately consulted in preparing revisions.

In general, however, people talked about problems within the social service programs. There were a number of comments about out-dated manual material and changes in the manual (short of total revision) which were made haphazardly, if at all, and one county director requested a "manual that could be relied on."

The most frequent concerns, however, related to the responsiveness of the central office to requests from the field. Staff members at all levels (including one central office person) said that the state offices

were unresponsive. One district specialist said that it was extremely difficult to get answers, probably because "nobody knows the answers." Another district specialist noted that the responsiveness depends on the person in the central office, but sometimes no answers could be obtained. When we asked these specialists what they did if no answer came back, they said they either acted on their own initiative or waited with the hope the problem would disappear with time.

There were several other aspects to the concerns over the central office program operations. One Polk County service supervisor said that it was impossible to get "yes or no" responses to proposals; that some communications to the central office apparently get lost; and that some communications from the central office apparently never get sent out. This latter comment reflects another concern of several people, who noted that there was no routing list for the service programs. As a result, they were never certain if everyone who needed some information had received it.

These comments on the service programs lead us to conclude that:

The procedures in the service programs for handling routine communications and for providing policy interpretations and interim manual revisions appear to be inadequate, ineffective, or simply non-existent.

#### Central Office Reorganization

Background: When the central office sections of the Division of Community Services were reorganized, one of the published purposes of the reorganization was to provide proper support for the district in order to implement programs and policies.

Our findings confirmed that there is a great need to accomplish this purpose. As we reported above, we found that the district and field staff are extremely concerned about the lack of support and expertise from the central office. They need answers to their questions; they want help developing their programs; and they look to the central office for policy and program leadership and expertise.

A major feature of the reorganization is the replacement of the former program specialists with program generalists or managers. These new program managers have the responsibility for one or two program areas rather than just a single one. Their duties include the development of program, the writing of policy and procedure, and the legislation in their particular areas. They have not been given any line authority over field staff (just as the program specialists no longer had line authority), but are responsible for the coordination of the various social service programs.

At the time we collected data for this study, the reorganization had just been announced and the new positions were not yet filled. Several staff members told us that they did not know to whom to send their questions about policy, and there was also some generalized concern about the ultimate effect of the changes. These and other findings from our interviews and reviews of the documents about the reorganization lead us to the following conclusion:

Field staff may express concern about their receiving adequate program support until (and unless) the program generalists become closely identified with and develop expertise in their assigned programs.



Polk County: Program Development

Background: We noted above that one Polk County supervisor said it was impossible to get "yes or no" answers to program proposals. The belief that the IDSS has been unresponsive to Polk County's program needs and proposals was pervasive among the people we interviewed.

In addition to viewing the IDSS central office as unresponsive to Polk County's proposals, many Polk County staff considered the IDSS central office to be programmatically restrictive and uncreative. They saw the Polk County office, on the other hand, as innovative and as willing to try new programs.

This perceived lack of IDSS responsiveness has led to a situation in which Polk County staff members are more willing to turn to the county for approvals and funding than they are to the state. The Polk County Board of Supervisors is seen as supportive and responsive to program needs, and it also provides a much quicker "yes or no" response than does the state. We learned, for example, of a proposal being prepared for the county, in which county funds would be used to replace some Title XX purchase of service funds which had been reduced. What the state had taken away, the county was being asked to replace.

Even if the board of supervisors is not asked to fund proposals, it apparently approves them before they are sent up through the IDSS hierarchy. One of the county supervisors reported that requests for program changes follow an approval path from the county director to the county board, then back through the county director for transmittal into the IDSS line of authority.

These findings lead us to conclude that:

The Polk County board appears to control program development and innovation within the Polk County IDSS offices.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the previous chapter on findings and conclusions, we noted that a strength or a weakness in one part of the IDSS often has effects which extend to other parts of the organization. Thus, though the chapter dealt with the findings and conclusions in five separate sections, conclusions in one section often relate to those in another.

The recommendations presented in this chapter cluster in four areas:

- District office operations
- Bureau of Program Services
- State-local funding
- Polk County

Since many of the conclusions were closely related and had similar causes, the recommendations presented ultimately address themselves to all the major conclusions regarding areas which were identified as needing improvement.

### District Office Operations

In the 1974 reorganization plan, the district offices emerged as a key concept in the development and realization of the full service agency. Though the original plan for the district offices called for only two administrative persons and clerical support, it did make provision for the addition of other staff members in larger districts if they were needed.

All the districts have added more staff and functions than was originally specified. In our conclusions, we also noted that the organizational structure, strength, and functions of district offices vary from district to district. After conducting the interviews and reviewing relevant documents,

we were unable to identify a current IDSS model for a district office. It appears as if the districts themselves have developed their current structures largely as the result of individual initiative and perceptions of local needs and conditions. The administrative styles of the 16 district administrators have no doubt also had a great impact upon the current shape of each district.

We believe, as did those who planned the reorganization, that the districts are indeed the key to the success or failure of the full service agency. Not only is supervision of staff and program in 99 counties unwieldy from a central office, but many of the counties are too small to provide many of the necessary but less frequently used IDSS services. The district offices constitute an intermediate administrative level which can more adequately supervise the county-level operations, and they also can offer the less frequently used services efficiently and economically.

In order to carry out their functions, however, the district offices need both the authority and the staff to do so. Our findings indicated that, in the two years of district operations, the districts have developed a role in the IDSS, though the strength and clarity of this role appears to vary widely. The IDSS has delegated authority to the administrators, and it also has given them the staff essential to provide both supportive and some direct services.

Our recommendation regarding the operation of the district offices is the following:

The IDSS should continue its present trend toward the development of strong district offices which provide both supportive as well as some direct services to the district as a whole.

Since we are recommending a continuation of a policy already underway, we do not foresee any major problems which stand in the way of this recommendation. There is, however, an area which could become a problem as the districts become stronger and as more authority is decentralized to them: the need to maintain a consistent state policy and program throughout the state while at the same time retaining the option for local flexibility.

This problem, though already mentioned by several persons at the state level, will probably become more apparent as the districts develop greater strength and clearer identities, and become more independent. Since we also identified several other problems in the present operations of the districts, namely the lack of a model and some possible discrepancies between the districts' authority and their responsibility, we believe that there are a number of steps which the IDSS should take in order to clarify district roles and functions.

1. Review the present district structures, staffing patterns, and functions
2. Develop a new model for a district office
  - Include general guidelines for the district's role, staffing patterns, functions and services, and its relationship to the county offices
  - Provide flexibility so that districts can adapt to local needs and conditions

3. Review current IDSS decision-points, especially in the areas of personnel, policy and program, and fiscal matters
  - Ascertain what decisions can be decentralized in order to eliminate multiple-level approvals
4. Review existing methods of supervision of the districts
  - Determine if the current level and method of supervision is adequate to maintain a common application of IDSS policy and minimize slippage of essential central office control
  - Consider methods to reduce the span of control of the director of the Division of Community Services and to provide more frequent on-site supervision

If these steps are carried out, we believe that the district concept will be strengthened and that the offices themselves will be given greater legitimacy. A flexible model and a further decentralization of authority, when possible, will validate the progress which the IDSS has already achieved in creating a system of full service agencies throughout the state. And a review of the current methods of supervision followed by any needed changes should avoid some of the pitfalls that otherwise might be encountered as the district offices gain autonomy.

#### Bureau of Program Services

Almost all of the field staff with whom we spoke mentioned difficulties in obtaining support and policy interpretations from the social services side of the Bureau of Program Services. As a result of the numerous comments on these problems, we concluded that there are no

established procedures for providing policy and program interpretations, manual revisions, or technical assistance to field staff members. As an adjunct to this larger problem, we also concluded that the new program generalists would not be able to carry out their duties until they become closely identified with and develop expertise in specific programs.

In order to resolve the larger problem of lack of support, we recommend that the IDSS do the following:

The IDSS should establish procedures in the social service programs for policy and program development, manual revisions, and provision of interpretations and technical assistance to field staff.

There should be no major obstacles to carrying out this recommendation, and, since the Bureau of Program Services has recently been reorganized, the time for implementing the recommendation would be ideal. There are several major steps needed:

1. Establish a task force comprised of field staff members and the program generalists
  - Determine the specific problems field staff have encountered
  - Identify what kinds of information, technical assistance, and procedures field staff need
  - Review the existing mechanisms
2. Develop new procedures, which will
  - Provide for continuing input from field staff
  - Ensure that manual materials are routinely updated and, as necessary, totally revised

- Ensure that requests for interpretations and assistance are followed up in a timely fashion
- Encourage suggestions for program innovations and policy changes

This process of review and planning will have a side benefit: the new program generalists will begin to be identified with specific programs, and field staff members will become familiar with them. This process might also resolve much of the problem which prompts our second recommendation, which is the following:

The IDSS should strengthen the roles and credibility of the Bureau of Program Services' staff with the district and local staff.

Credibility is ultimately based upon performance. By establishing procedures for getting field staff members the information, assistance, and answers that they need, the foundation for the credibility of the program generalists will be laid. This credibility might be further enhanced by emphasizing with the Bureau of Program Services staff the importance of timely responses and the need for thorough explanation of decisions that are made. The explanation becomes especially important when a decision denying a request must be given. Our findings indicated that too often no explanation accompanied a decision, with the result that the district or local person became discouraged from making further suggestions.



## State-Local Funding

When the IDSS was established in 1968, the State of Iowa took the first significant action in creating a state-administered, state-funded department of social services. Subsequent changes in both federal and state law have moved Iowa closer to the full realization of a department which can provide services of comparable quality and amount throughout the state.

We believe that Iowa and the IDSS should continue moving in the direction first set in 1968--toward a state-funded and state-administered system. During the past eight years, the IDSS appears to have made significant progress toward this goal, both in consolidating its position as the sole service provider and in resolving the problems which confront any new organization.

Our recommendation for the IDSS, then, is the following:

The IDSS should continue moving in the direction of a state-administered, wholly state-funded system which continues Iowa's tradition of positive county involvement in the service programs.

If the IDSS is to attain this goal, it must overcome a number of obstacles--solve a number of problems--between its present operation and the goal. We have identified three primary problems which must be satisfactorily resolved before the goal can be realized:

1. Reluctance or inability of the Iowa legislature to assume the total costs of the IDSS program
2. Reluctance on the part of the counties to give up any more of the control of the program to the IDSS
3. The present patterns of state-local funding

Although the first and second problems stand as difficulties in their own right, they are both functions of the state-local funding; if the problem of funding is resolved, the other two problems will have to be resolved simultaneously. We believe, then, that the funding problem is the foremost difficulty standing between the department's present operation and the goal we have set forth.

The state-local funding, though a problem itself, also leads to other problems within the IDSS. In the conclusions, we pointed out a number of funding practices which either create problems, or have the potential to create them. These practices are the following:

- County supplementation of county directors' salaries
- County-paid staff performing legitimate IDSS functions
- The requirement that county governments provide office space, supplies, and equipment for the county IDSS offices
- County funding of the non-federal share of the administrative costs of the food stamp program
- County funding for some of the Title XX non-federal match for purchase of services

As we indicated in the conclusions, the mixed funding creates a number of problems which resound throughout the IDSS: lessening of program control, the dual accountability of county directors, reduction in the pressure on the IDSS to provide adequate levels of staffing in all counties, and others. By moving further toward a state-administered, totally state-funded system, in other words, by eliminating the state-local funding, we believe that many of the problems we identified will either be eliminated or reduced.

We have developed a three-stage action plan for moving the IDSS toward a state-administered, state-funded system. This plan deals primarily with the state-local funding issue, but its success depends largely upon the IDSS' ability to secure the necessary state funding and its ability to overcome any reluctance on the part of county governments to cede more of their authority to the state.

Phase I of the plan consists of two actions which can begin immediately, and which do not require any legislative authority or the appropriation of any significant increase in state funds.

Review the county director series

- Review current functions of the county directors, including both their IDSS and their county duties
- Establish a current classification and salary scale for the duties county directors perform
- Make any reclassifications of county directors according to the revised scales
- Develop a plan to reduce salary supplementation by counties after the review and reclassification. This plan might include a grandfather clause for those currently receiving supplements to avoid reductions in salary. It should also specify a reduction in county supplements as state salaries are increased and a prohibition against any additional new supplements or raises in existing supplements. At the end of a definite period of time all supplements should be prohibited.

Contract to provide Title XX matching funds for county-paid staff performing IDSS functions

- Identify county-paid staff members who are engaged in legitimate IDSS jobs in Title XX programs
- Negotiate with county governments to provide 75% reimbursement for those positions
- Negotiate an agreement with the county governments that all new positions in the county IDSS offices must have prior IDSS approval, and must be consistent with IDSS program plans and budgetary constraints

Phase II of this action plan consists of three actions which will require amendments to current legislation or appropriation of funds. Since this phase requires both gubernatorial and legislative approval, the IDSS will have to engage in both careful planning and preparation before these steps can be presented for action by the governor and the legislature.

Assume the administrative costs (housing, equipment, supplies) of operating the local IDSS offices

- Determine the current costs of operating the local offices
- Develop a plan for handling current equipment and supplies, and for take-over of existing leases
- Prepare necessary legislation

Assume the non-federal administrative costs of the food stamp program

- Determine the current administrative costs borne by the county governments

- Prepare necessary legislation
- Develop implementation plans

Begin placing county-paid staff on state payroll

- Review staffing plans in counties in which county-paid staff exist
- Develop a plan for gradually placing these staff on the state payroll
- Secure additional funding, if necessary

Although we have outlined the steps needed for implementation of Phase II only briefly, it is the most important phase. Others more familiar with the Iowa political system will have to develop a strategy if this phase is to be carried out.

Phase III is the final step in reaching the goal of a state-administered, state-funded system. If the other steps are carried out successfully, only one state-local funding practice will remain--the county-matched purchase of service. There is only one step in Phase II: to evaluate the advisability of the state's assuming the non-federal costs of the purchase of service system. We recommend evaluating the advisability of this action primarily because the IDSS needs to find a mechanism whereby the county governments can be kept involved in the operation of the IDSS. Their continuing to provide the non-federal match for some of the purchased service might be the ideal way to continue that involvement: county dollars would normally be spent locally for service provided by local agencies.

If, after an evaluation, the IDSS finds that it is advisable to assume all the costs of the purchase of service programs, then the IDSS must find some other way to maintain Iowa's tradition of local involvement with service programs.

### Polk County

In our conclusions we noted that the Polk County IDSS offices function much like a full service agency. The offices either provide or would readily be able to provide many of the direct and supportive services of a district office; the administrative and program personnel function much like those in the district offices; and the Polk County offices are larger than many of the IDSS' 16 district operations.

Many persons interviewed during this study expressed concern about the district and central offices' responsiveness to Polk County's needs and situation. County staff members tended to view their agency as unique in size and in program scope and quality. As a result, even though they comprehend the statewide equity issue, they would like for the IDSS' central offices to be more responsive to their needs. There was some ambiguity about the role of the Des Moines District and its staff, and it was generally viewed as benignly positive but not as bringing any particular benefits to the Polk County operations.

As an additional indicator of comparative size and complexity, we refer to the current position classification standards for the district administrator series. Each district was evaluated according to five factors: caseload, staff, number of counties, total population, and the geographic dispersion of the district. The Des Moines District was assigned a weighted total of 0.1515, a total 77% larger than that

of the next largest district (Cedar Rapids), and it received a total more than twice as great as all but three districts (Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, and Ottumwa). Much of this size is the result of Polk County, which has about 10% of the entire population of Iowa and a larger proportion of its caseload.

In light of both our findings and a number of our conclusions, we make the following recommendation:

The IDSS should strongly consider making Polk County a single-county district.

The findings indicate that a number of benefits would result from such a realignment of the current Des Moines District:

- The districts would be more equal in size than they currently are, with the Des Moines District far larger than the others
- The inevitable competition between Polk County (because of its size) and any district of which it were a part is eliminated
- Polk County will be able to compete with other districts about its equal in size for funds and program innovations
- Other counties in the Des Moines District will not have to feel that they are being "overshadowed" by Polk County

If the IDSS chooses to follow this recommendation, we foresee two major problems which need to be overcome. First, the IDSS will need to develop a workable model for a single-county district. And second, the IDSS will have to determine what to do with the remaining seven counties in the present Des Moines District. The action plan we have developed addresses itself to these two major problems as well as to others.

The action plan includes three steps which can begin concurrently:

1. Development of a model for the new Polk County District.

The model for multi-county districts can be used as a basis, with modifications made for the fact that Polk is a single county.

2. Review the current structure and functions of the Polk County

offices. This review should include the positions and functions of the current administrative structure and primary supervisory personnel, the direct services the office provides, and the supportive services it has available. The review should be made with the purpose of finding out how current positions can fit into the new district structure, and what positions and functions should be modified or added.

3. Determine what to do with the remaining seven counties in

the Des Moines District. There are two possibilities: the first is to continue them as an independent district and create a Polk County District as a seventeenth district; the second is to integrate the seven counties into the surrounding districts. The selection of either alternative should be made not only after careful study of its impact upon the administration and program of the IDSS, but also after consideration of the impact upon the personnel who will be affected.

After the first two steps have been completed, an implementation plan leading to the creation of the Polk County District can be developed.



As we said before, we believe that Polk County already functions or has much of the capability to function as a full service agency. We do not foresee the need to add large numbers of positions, but rather to redefine many of those which currently exist. If new positions are required to enable Polk County to function as a district, some of these might be transferred from the current Des Moines District, depending upon the IDSS' decision regarding that district and the counties within it.

If the IDSS decides to continue the Des Moines District without Polk County, it will also have to organize the new district and determine where it will be based. Since the new district will be substantially smaller than the old one, some functions and positions will no longer be needed; others might have to be added to compensate for resources available through Polk County but not available in other counties in the district.

If, on the other hand, the IDSS concludes that integrating the seven counties into the surrounding districts is the solution, then it will also have to plan for reallocation of the current Des Moines District staff.

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