



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## **Lessons Learned:**

Sustainability of Partners in Caregiving:  
The Adult Day Services Program



Grants Results Special Report  
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May 2006

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## The Purpose

For 15.5 years, *Partners in Caregiving* helped build sustainable community-based adult day services by working with adult day centers across the country. The Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C., served as the national program office for this Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) program (June 1987–December 2002).

Through a four-year demonstration program, a six-year replication program and a four-year information dissemination phase, the national program office educated mission-based, nonprofit adult day centers about marketing, financial management and program design so they could achieve financial self-sufficiency (and not rely on grants). Throughout all three phases of the program, the national program office operated as a resource center for the field of adult day services. Although no longer receiving funding from RWJF, the Partners in Caregiving office continues to operate, sustaining the work and accomplishments of the program.

This paper provides information on the three phases of the program and then describes the work of the Partners in Caregiving office in the post-RWJF funding period as it has achieved financial self-sufficiency.

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## Overview of the Program

### Four-Year Demonstration Program

The *Dementia Care and Respite Services Program* (1987–92) was the first national adult day services demonstration program in the country, with a \$3.9-million commitment from RWJF and \$625,000 each from the national Alzheimer's Association and the federal Administration on Aging. The main objectives were to find out if adult day centers could meet the needs of individuals with Alzheimer's disease (and other forms of dementia), and whether they could do so in a financially viable manner, with particular emphasis on operating revenue (i.e., fee-for-service payments).

With 17 sites in 13 states, the average grant award was \$281,000 over four years, with a maximum of \$300,000. RWJF support was set up as deficit financing, covering the centers' budget shortfall, rather than fixed annual awards. The demonstration program identified key factors relating to financial performance. It showed that adult day centers could effectively care for people with Alzheimer's disease in the community (versus nursing home placement), and were able to achieve financial viability through a combination of operating and non-operating revenue.

### Six-Year Replication Program

Originally, there was no plan for a second phase. But in 1992, to build on the progress of the demonstration program and to promote further service innovation, RWJF created the \$2.5-million *Partners in Caregiving: The Dementia Services Program*. One difference from the demonstration program was that each \$2 of RWJF funds for an adult day center had to be matched by \$1 in local funds. Another twist was that RWJF wanted to test the idea that technical assistance might be as effective as, but less expensive than, grant support in helping centers achieve financial self-sufficiency. Therefore, one-half of the sites received grants and the other half only received technical assistance.

With 50 sites in 30 states and the District of Columbia, the adult day centers in the replication program not only served people with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, but those with mental retardation/developmental disabilities, chronic mental illness, as well as frail elderly people and those who were physically challenged (such as people with multiple sclerosis).

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Half of the 50 sites received grant support averaging \$93,000 per site (over two or three years), plus an average cost to the national program office of \$13,500 per site for basic technical assistance (direct expenses plus staff costs to deliver the technical assistance). The other 25 sites received technical assistance only, at an average cost to the national program office of \$39,000 per site, which included not only the national program office direct expenses and staff costs, but a small grant of up to \$5,000 per site made from the national program office's grant from RWJF.

The replication program continued to demonstrate that adult day centers are a viable community-based service option to nursing home placement and can be financially viable at the same time. Of particular note was that the rate of improvement in financial performance of the technical assistance-only sites was the same or better than the grant-funded sites. Work with sites ended in 1996. See [Grant Results](#) on the program for a fuller description of the replication program's accomplishments.

### **Becoming a Resource Center for the Field**

In 1988, late in the demonstration phase of the program, the field of adult day services adopted the national program office as a national resource center, when the first issue of the national newsletter (*Respite Report*) was published. While there was a National Adult Day Services Association, the national program office served as a key education and training resource for the field. The newsletter (focusing only on the project sites) kept the field updated on lessons learned, best practices, predictors of success and cutting edge services. By building its database of adult day centers over the years, and distributing *Respite Report* free of charge for 13 years (until 2001), the national program office became recognized as a resource for the field—a place to call on for information.

In 1992, the national program office further engrained itself as a national resource center when it published its first training products—videotapes and manuals on marketing adult day services. Although the national program office developed the training materials for project sites, they were packaged and sold at cost to adult day centers outside the program so they could access the same information. *Respite Report* promoted the materials.

The national program office developed and published the training products over a seven-year period, through 1999. The products consisted of 15 manuals, 19 videotapes and 15 audiocassettes revolving around marketing, fund raising and programming. In addition, the staff bound and indexed the issues of *Respite Report* into a two-volume set, which it sold. In 2002, the staff produced and sold a CD-ROM of the *National Study of Adult Day Services*.

In 1996, when it was obvious that *Partners in Caregiving* demonstration and replication program funding from RWJF was “really going to end,” the national program office staff decided to set up a free-standing technical assistance center for the field—The Partners in Caregiving Center. The goal was to sustain the work of the program by providing custom-designed education and consultation on a fee-for-service basis.

Starting in 1997, national program office staff began to develop the center and promote it across the country. Through a one-year, no-cost grant extension from RWJF, the staff took to the road, conducting a two-day conference—*Adult Day Services: 10 Years in 2 Days*—in three locations around the country. It presented 10 years of lessons learned, best practices, and predictors of success from the perspectives of marketing, financing and programming. The cost to attend one day was \$225; to attend both days cost \$350.

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Also during this grant extension, national program office staff developed market-driven technical assistance packages that adult day centers could purchase. This helped establish the Partners in Caregiving Center as a national adult day services technical assistance center. Staff provided this consultation to nine clients, generating \$116,000, which went into a revenue account created in August 1992 to hold the income from the sale of training products.

With work still to be done, RWJF approved another one-year, no-cost grant extension. The purpose was to continue to fine tune the technical assistance center model, continue information dissemination, and finalize all work in progress (such as program analyses, journal articles and book chapters).

During this time, national program office staff also began discussing future directions with RWJF with a focus on plans to take the program's technical assistance work to scale in three ways:

- **Sharing the Knowledge:** Since the program had developed a body of “how-to” knowledge, sharing the knowledge involved RWJF investing in “back-end” grant work to disseminate the lessons learned more widely.
- **Serving the Unserved:** To address unmet need for adult day services—particularly for difficult-to-serve populations, such as those in underserved rural areas and low-income, inner city populations—by developing new services.
- **Shaping the Future:** To respond to the need for additional research in the adult day services field (e.g., outcome measures and cost effectiveness), as well as development of “next generation” models—that would study the existence of integrated systems of acute care, long-term care and adult day services. Another component that was discussed involved researching the available options to institutionalize the Partners in Caregiving technical assistance capacity and training products.

As long as funds were available, the object was to keep the national program office in operation in order to wrap up the work of the replication phase, while decisions were being made at RWJF regarding next steps. RWJF continued to approve no-cost extensions to keep the program up and running. Instead of ending in 1996, the replication program ended in 1999—28 months after the planned end date.

#### **Four-Year Information Dissemination Phase**

In 1998, the “Sharing the Knowledge” component became reality. At the same time national program office staff was working on closing out the replication program, a new initiative began with a third round of funding from RWJF.

This \$1.9-million information dissemination phase, under the working title of Partners in Caregiving: The Adult Day *Services* Program (to dispel the myth that the work of the program only applied to dementia-specific adult day centers), was designed to expand on the role of the national program office as a resource center for the field by taking the 10 years of lessons learned, best practices and predictors of success, and disseminating the knowledge as widely as possible through:

- Mobile adult day services colleges (three days of intense training on marketing, financing and programming).
- A network of 17 teaching day centers (one day of experiential training at a national model adult day center—the best of the best from the demonstration and replication programs).
- A toll-free technical assistance hotline.

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- A 12-month technical assistance intervention project for centers completing the three-day mobile adult day services college.

In addition, the Partners in Caregiving office held four marketing and five programming one-day workshops across the country, distributed a newsletter nationally and made presentations at national conferences sponsored by groups such as the National Adult Day Services Association, National Council on the Aging, American Society on Aging, and the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.

### Mobile Adult Day Services Colleges

The mobile adult day services colleges were conducted in 14 states over a 12-month period (at a cost of \$175 per day to attend for one or two days, or \$350 for all three days). The combined attendance for the 14 colleges was 648 people representing every state in the country and the District of Columbia. Representatives of 386 existing adult day centers from 48 states attended—an 11 percent penetration rate based on a total of 3,407 centers nationwide.

### Teaching Day Centers

College attendees could choose from 67 training sessions at 17 teaching day centers held over an 11-month period (at no additional cost), with access to a toll-free hotline for ongoing technical assistance. One-third of all college attendees took advantage of this opportunity, with 58 existing adult day centers represented.

To determine the impact and effectiveness of the mobile colleges and teaching day center training, national program office staff developed a pre- and post-college adult day center profile. Representatives of *existing* adult day centers *only* were asked to complete the profile prior to attending a college—and prior to applying what was learned at the college. Twelve months after the college (and teaching day center training), representatives completed the same profile to analyze impact.

National program office staff distributed a total of 386 pre-college profiles to the existing centers, of which 284 were completed and returned (a 74 percent response rate). The 12-month post-college profile yielded a 95 percent response rate, with 269 (of the 284) post profiles returned. See [Findings](#) under “Testing the Effectiveness of Less Intensive Interventions.”

### A 12-Month Technical Assistance Intervention Project

A 12-month technical assistance intervention project—created by the national program office staff as an afterthought—was designed to test the effectiveness of an even less intensive and less expensive technical assistance package than what was provided to the 24 technical assistance sites that were part of the replication program.

The Partners in Caregiving office sent an invitation to submit an application to be a technical assistance site to 161 nonprofit adult day centers that attended the entire three-day college. A total of 24 technical assistance sites, representing 17 states, were selected by national program office staff.

Following the college, all technical assistance sites were required to attend a teaching day center training (at a national model program of their choice). They then received 12 months of technical assistance provided by national program office staff and an assigned mentor. The technical assistance sites completed the standard 12-month post-college profile, in addition to another post-profile after the 12-month technical assistance package was complete.

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### Testing the Effectiveness of These Less Intensive Interventions

To test the effectiveness of the less intensive/less expensive interventions, data analyses focused on three separate groups:

- Adult day centers attending a college only.
- Adult day centers attending a college plus a teaching day center training.
- Adult day centers attending a college and a teaching day center training, plus receiving 12 months of technical assistance.

The comparison of each group focused on the following key variables:

- Center structure (model, days open, hours of operation).
- Center services offered.
- Utilization data (average daily attendance, maximum capacity).
- Marketing information (conversion ratios from inquiries and visits to the center into enrollments, written marketing plan).
- Financial data (unit cost, fees based on levels of care, revenue streams, financial performance).
- A strategic plan.

### Findings

This testing process found:

- The three-day adult day services mobile college, the addition of the one-day experiential teaching day center training and the addition of the 12-month technical assistance package all had a positive impact.
- Overall, increased performance was seen across the board in regard to key variables, with greater increases for centers receiving the additional technical assistance.
  - Performance increases for the 211 college-only centers ranged from a low of 0 percent to a high of 18.9 percent.
  - Compared to the adult day centers that only attended the college, greater performance increases were seen in the 58 adult day centers also attending a teaching day center training—from a low of 0.8 percent to a high of 32.7 percent.
  - The 24 centers that also received the additional technical assistance increased performance from a low of 4.4 percent to a high of 47.8 percent. Regarding utilization, marketing, financial data, and strategic planning, the technical assistance sites outshone all others.
- The less intense 12-month technical assistance package cost the national program office only 38.46 percent of the cost of the technical assistance provided during the replication program: \$5,000 per site (in direct expenses plus staff costs), compared to \$13,000 per site.
- With performance increases for the technical assistance sites ranging from 4.4 percent to 47.8 percent, was this gain worth the \$5,000 per site? In some respects, the answer is yes, since a positive impact was seen. However, the greatest strides were made by the technical assistance sites in the replication program (after receiving three years of technical assistance).

A lesson learned in the replication program was that repetition is a key, keeping sites focused and on track via annual site visits and monthly telephone consultation. It takes time for adult day centers first to comprehend the predictors of success, then to implement them and then to actually see results.

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Maybe the leap from a three-year technical assistance package down to a one-year technical assistance package was too great (although this was all that could be provided within the confines of the program). It would be interesting to test the split between the two—by providing a two-year technical assistance package.

The information dissemination phase was to be a 2.5-year project, scheduled to end in 2001. In order to complete the 12-month technical assistance intervention component (approved in the second year), RWJF approved several no-cost grant extensions. This phase ended in 2002.

### **National Study of Adult Day Services (2001–02)**

As RWJF program staff continued to focus on the importance of promoting the development of adult day services, during the first year of the information dissemination phase, RWJF program staff and Partners in Caregiving staff began discussing the importance of conducting a national census and survey of the field—the first study of such magnitude.

The Partners in Caregiving staff planned and implemented the national study during the information dissemination phase. It involved developing the call for proposals, contracting with research groups, and implementing, analyzing, packaging and distributing the study. The study brought to life at least part of the plan for “Shaping the Future.”

As the Partners in Caregiving office began distributing and presenting the results of the *National Study of Adult Day Services*, it became even more engrained in the field as a national resource center—the only place to call. The Partners in Caregiving office was now recognized as the expert, not only for the wealth of information on how to succeed financially in the adult day services business, but also for being able to provide a profile of the field and of the gaps in the service delivery system.

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### **Findings**

- The study provides a portrait of the field—information that can be used to benchmark adult day centers within their own state; conduct state-by-state and state/national comparisons; and provide valuable planning information for individual adult day centers, and local, state and federal officials, legislators and policy-makers.
- The study shows adult day centers as a viable, cost-effective, community-based service option in the long-term care continuum, that helps keep individuals in need of chronic care at home and in the community, for as long as possible.
- The study shows the need for capacity-building at the state level in three areas:
  - Public awareness in underutilized areas.
  - Availability in areas where the service is not currently an option for caregivers.
  - Knowledge at the provider level regarding predictors of success (from a marketing and financing perspective).

The full study is available [online](#).

**The National Resource Center Continues**

The revenue account created in August 1992 held income from training products (ranging in price from \$14 for a report to \$30 for a manual to \$145 for a videotape series). Over time, income from conference registrations and consultations was added to the account. Over the years, three kinds of projects and services have generated these funds:

- The sale of training products (36 percent).
- College and workshop registration fees (34 percent).
- Consultation on a fee-for-service basis (30 percent).

Peak training product sales averaged \$50,000 per year when *Respite Report*—the main promotional tool for the products and services—was being published. Staff learned that not only would small, cash-strapped nonprofit agencies like adult day centers purchase training products, they would even pay \$350 in conference registration fees and \$150 for very targeted one-day workshops.

Over a nine-year period, staff paid only \$97,255 out of the revenue account for the reprinting and mailing of training products. By October 2001, the account held \$453,930.

Starting that month, the revenue account began to support office operations (telephone, postage, duplicating, etc.) in order to stretch the RWJF grant funds for the dissemination phase through December 2002. Beginning in January 2003, the revenue account also began supporting salaries of two full-time staff: the director and an administrative assistant—down from a full complement of seven staff at the peak of the program.

As of January 2003, the Partners in Caregiving office has been dependent on the revenue account for all program expenses: salary/fringe benefits of the director (the only person employed), temporary administrative support services, consultants, travel, office supplies, postage, telephone and printing/duplicating.

Through April 2006, revenue into this account has totaled \$783,876, against expenses totaling \$641,254. Current cash in the account will keep the program going through December 2007 with no additional revenue—five years beyond the end of *Partners in Caregiving* as a national program. Since additional revenue is expected, the life of Partners in Caregiving should extend beyond that date.

The original national program office has been able to continue as a national resource center after RWJF funding ended because it developed an array of materials for the field that it has continued to sell and because the resource center director (formerly the deputy director of the national program) has continued to provide technical assistance to the field through unsolicited consulting contracts.

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**Resource Center Activities**

Over the past several years, the resource center has conducted a variety of projects at the national and state level:

- The director continues as a paid consultant to the national Easter Seals adult day services network, as it continues to replicate the Partners in Caregiving mentoring program.
- On several occasions, the director provided training to adult day centers for the Michigan State Unit on Aging.

- For the Illinois State Unit on Aging, the director revised the Community Care Program proposal/instructions (for adult day services provider contracts with the state), and also developed a companion scoring instrument for the awarding of a contract. The Illinois project also included the development of an adult day services Web site component for people interested in getting into the business.
- The North Carolina legislature appropriated \$250,000 to support and sustain adult day services because the legislators were concerned that 30 adult day centers had closed in North Carolina over a five-year period. Using this funding, the North Carolina State Unit on Aging contracted with Partners in Caregiving to conduct an adult day services reimbursement methodology study, resulting in recommendations for systems change.
  - Under the 12-month contract, Partners in Caregiving also provided training to all certified adult day centers in the state via five one-day regional training sessions revolving around predictors of success, which included the distribution of Partners in Caregiving training products.
  - As part of this project, Partners in Caregiving identified adult day centers in the state at risk of closing and provided them with one-on-one technical assistance. Because the state appropriation was a major investment (no other state has funded such an endeavor), the final component was the development of recommendations for a system for sustainability.

### The Future

Over a 15-year period, the demonstration, replication and information dissemination phases, plus the national study, can be credited for moving the field of adult day services forward. Even so, the spread of this information has only been to those adult day centers that have been program sites, have requested information and materials from Partners in Caregiving, or attended conferences or workshops.

Widespread adoption of predictors of success by the field now becomes the next (and final) step. How can lessons learned/best practices/predictors of success (from a marketing, financing and programming perspective) be packaged to get the information out to everyone? Before Partners in Caregiving closes its doors, how can the accumulated knowledge be institutionalized?

Based on the national study findings, institutionalization is desperately needed. The study not only showed the need for capacity building at the state level, but also the need for increased knowledge at the provider level, particularly in regard to marketing and financial management.

### Next Steps

The North Carolina project provided the director with an opportunity to develop an assessment tool to determine which adult day centers are at risk of closing, and test it in an entire state.

By creating a knowledge base about adult day centers across an entire state—including their state regulatory and reimbursement systems, and a system through which centers at risk of closing can be identified based on the predictors of success—it shows that far more can be done to help other states support and sustain their adult day centers. The assessment tool, with scoring criteria, validates the predictors of success.

This project, completed in early 2006, has raised the possibility of creating a National Adult Day Services Institute, in a further attempt to institutionalize the predictors of success. It would involve training/education, consultation and

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research in the field (since there is still a major void in this area)—thus evolving from a national resource center to a national institute.

If this avenue is pursued, the Adult Day Services Institute would be established as a nonprofit organization. A business plan would be developed, with a goal of financial self-sufficiency at the end of three years.

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The director also is considering writing a book that would be a reference tool for the field. It would compile the predictors of success in a nutshell, and be used as a resource (and form of advertising) for consulting revolving around the assessment tool—and thus help with the development of the institute. This would be a second stage project for the institute.

The Partners in Caregiving resource center has brought the field of adult day services partway on a journey to self-sufficiency and sustainability. Through a potential institute, can it bring the field all the way to the goal? This report will be updated when the rest of the story is known.