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AN EVALUATION  
OF THE  
LAKES REGION HUMAN SERVICES COORDINATING COUNCIL  
~~X~~ "LACONIA YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU"

GRANT NUMBER

78-II-JJ-2313 C02

PROJECT PERIOD

September 8, 1978-March 30, 1979

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BACKGROUND

In September, 1977, the New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Crime and Delinquency approved a grant to the Lakes Region Human Services Coordinating Council for the establishment of the Laconia Youth Services Bureau. Funds were awarded for six months of operation.

In July, 1978, a GCCD evaluation was completed. That evaluation concluded that although numerous administrative delays were experienced during the first months of project implementation, each of the project objectives had been successfully addressed. Considering the initial success of the project, it was recommended that the remaining six months of first year support be approved.

On September 8, 1978, funding in the amount of \$11,165 was approved by this Commission for the six months continuation. Funds were apportioned as follows:

<u>Grant Number</u>	<u>Federal</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Total</u>
78-II-JJ-2313 D02	\$11,165	\$1,240	\$12,405

The project period was established as September 8, 1978 through March 30, 1979.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In 1975, prior to the establishment of this project, the Laconia Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee on Youth conducted a year and a half long study on the problems of youth in Laconia. That study was funded by LEAA through the Governor's Commission on Crime and Delinquency. The Committee was divided into four subcommittees to deal with the topics of Education, Juvenile Justice, Health and Social Agency Resources, and programs presently available. These subcommittees identified specific needs in each of the areas studied. In addition, all of the subcommittees identified the existence of problems of communication, a lack of coordination of present community resources, and the need for further

ACQUISITIONS

development of youth service programs.

As a result of the study, the Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee on Youth recommended the establishment of a Youth Services Bureau to coordinate services in Laconia. As proposed, the Youth Services Bureau was to bring together resources in the community in order to provide a planned, coordinated and efficient system of services for youth. The service region of the Laconia Youth Services Bureau includes all of Belknap County plus identified surrounding towns in Merrimack and Grafton County.

A coordinated network of services for youth was to be established through the achievement of the following objectives:

1. To develop an Information and Referral system for youth services including the compilation of a Youth Services Resources Directory.
2. To continue to establish and expand a local Youth Services Advisory Committee.
3. To coordinate existing youth programs by:
  - a) Sponsoring regular monthly meetings with service providers from throughout the Lakes Region;
  - b) Publishing a quarterly newsletter;
  - c) Sponsoring a public youth forum.
4. To develop a detailed Youth Services Plan for the region which will entail the following:
  - a) Data collection (to include information on youth services currently available, level of use, client characteristics, method of delivery, etc.)
  - b) Recommendations for future levels of service including new services needed and recommendations for improving the existing service network.
  - c) Establish priorities based on the information presented in the plan for youth services in the community.
  - d) Developing new resources and working for system modification according to the recommendations and priorities put forth in the plan.

Two staff positions, that of Project Director and part-time secretary, were to be supported through this project.

It was proposed that the Project Director would be responsible for developing a Youth Services Advisory Subcommittee, and preparing agendas and activities for the subcommittee on a regular basis. The Director was also to coordinate youth resources in the service area and provide information and referral to local youth and their families. In addition, the Director was to collect and analyze data on youth resources and problems, and assist in the preparation of a regional human services plan.

The Director was to be responsible to the Executive Director of the Lakes Region Twin Rivers Human Services Coordinating Council and was to work under his general supervision and guidance.

The qualifications established for the Project Director were the possession of a Bachelor's Degree with a major in Social Science or a related field, and 1-2 years experience in working with human service agencies.

The part-time secretary was to be responsible for performing the general clerical functions of the Youth Services Bureau including typing, setting up and maintaining a file system, and assisting in the codification and tallying of data. The secretary was also to be responsible for receiving visitors to the office, answering the telephone (including information and referral calls), and generally maintaining open communication among subcommittee members, service providers, clients and citizens.

#### PROJECT OPERATION

The position of Project Director was filled on April 25, 1978 by Ms. Julie McConnell. Ms. McConnell possesses a BA degree in Psychology from the University of Massachusetts. Prior to being hired as Director, Ms. McConnell was employed by the New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Crime and Delinquency as a Project Monitor. She has also served as a Probation Officer for the City of Laconia

and is certified to teach on the elementary level.

The position of secretary is filled by Larry Thompson. Mr. Thompson has been employed with the Lakes Region - Twin Rivers Coordinating Council since October, 1977. Since April 25, 1978, he has provided clerical services to the Youth Services Bureau on a part-time basis.

As proposed, the Youth Services Bureau was to seek to educate, consult, advocate and otherwise influence the community's institutions and resources to make them more responsive to the needs of youth. Towards achieving this end an Information and Referral System for youth services is currently being maintained. The Information and Referral System became operational during the first phase of the project as an extension of the existing Information and Referral System of the Lakes Region Twin Rivers Human Services Coordinating Council.

The information and referral service is available on an on-call or walk-in basis, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., five days per week excluding holidays. Free and confidential information concerning where to find help for a particular problem is provided by the Information and Referral System. In order to make an appropriate referral, an intake and information form is filled out on each case received. Special attention is given to persons seeking help who are already being treated by one or more other community service agencies. Through this means, the Laconia Youth Services Bureau has assisted agencies in coordinating their treatment of persons who are being treated by more than one agency.

Thus far during the grant period, publicity for the Information and Referral System has consisted of the following: three radio spots, local newspaper coverage, flyers, information posted in human service agencies and schools, a public speaking appearance before the Gilford Middle School, and a television interview on Channel 11.

The Youth Services Bureau began receiving calls for information and referral in May. All calls received are logged and recorded on a monthly basis. As of December 31, 1978, seventy-nine clients have been served through the Information and Referral System. Of those, forty-nine were seeking referrals and thirty were seeking information. Referral sources are reflected below:

Referral Sources

Parent or self	32
Laconia City Probation	10
Laconia Police Department	7
Schools	7
Tilton Youth Assistance Program	4
Meredith Police Department	2
Belmont Police Department	2
Sheriff's Department	1
Belknap County Probation	1
Other	13

The youth were subsequently referred to local human service agencies.

Following is a sample of these referrals:

Lakes Region Mental Health	10
Lakes Region Family Services	9
Vocational Rehabilitation	4
Division of Welfare	4
Alcoholics Anonymous	2
Legal Assistance	2
Probation	2
Department of Employment Security	2
C.A.P.	1
Tilton YAP	2
N. H. Task Force on Child Abuse	1
Hassle House	1
Marathon House	1
Carroll County Welfare	1
Dover Group Home	1
Laconia Police Department	1
PADA	1
Carroll County Mental Health	1
Yes-I-Can Camp	1
Bristol Community Services	1

Each information and referral call is succeeded by a follow-up contact. Follow-up procedures are utilized to determine the availability of services and the extent to which those services fulfilled the expressed needs. Of the

forty-nine clients referred to social service agencies by the Youth Services Bureau during the period May through December, 1978, forty-one were subsequently contacted for the purpose of follow-up. Of those, thirty-five (85%) reported success in acquiring an appropriate service. Six clients (15%) reported that an appropriate service was not available for their particular problem or need.

The information gathered from follow-up procedures was to be used in determining the gaps in the service delivery system in the project area.

A Youth Services Advisory Committee, which was established during the first month of project operation, continues to meet on a regular basis to advise and assist in the project operation.

The Youth Services Advisory Committee currently consists of thirty members who represent local human resource agencies as well as the general population. The Advisory Committee was also to include youth members. However, because existing Advisory Committee members could not reach a consensus as to method of solicitation for youth members, the committee remains without the youth members. The Project Director has solicited adult membership through personal contact, radio interviews and advertisements in local newspapers.

Membership of the Advisory Committee is based entirely on volunteers and is unlimited in number. No by-laws have been created for the regulation of the internal organization of the Advisory Committee and the governing of its members.

It was proposed that by September, 1978 the Director would develop a directory of local human service agencies serving youth. The directory was to include the following information: an explanation of the service offered, contact person, fee (if any), address, phone number, and business hours. As of September, 1978, all juvenile information for the directory had been collected and organized in proper format. However, the Lakes Region/Twin Rivers

Coordinating Council decided to incorporate an adult section into the human services directory and publish it under one cover. The collection and organization of that information by Coordinating Council staff has resulted in a delay in publication. It is anticipated that the directory will be completed by February, 1979. Upon completion the directory will be distributed to all local human service agencies. Copies will also be available to the public. The directory is to be updated annually.

The Director was also expected to continue to coordinate all programs serving youth in the service area of this project. Coordination has occurred through several specific activities:

1) The Project Director was to make personal contacts to service providers to gather and share information about youth programs and explain the operation of the Youth Services Bureau. During the first six months of project operation, Ms. McConnell conducted over fifty personal visits and numerous telephone interviews with youth service providers. A representative sample of those visits is as follows: police, probation, courts, Welfare, school guidance, personnel, religious practitioners, civic clubs, Lakes Region Mental Health, Child and Family Services, and Commission on Children and Youth. During the current grant period, Ms. McConnell has continued to maintain contact with these agencies as well as contacting numerous other agencies for the purpose of explaining the Youth Services Bureau.

2) The Project Director was to continue to solicit participation in the Youth Services Advisory Committee from all youth service agencies, citizens, and public officials. The Youth Services Advisory Committee, was established during the first month of project operation with a membership of twenty-six. The Advisory Committee's membership has increased to thirty during the current grant period and continues to meet on a monthly basis.

3) A quarterly newsletter was to be prepared and distributed by September,



1978, and was to cover topics of concern to youth and youth service providers. As with the Human Services Directory, the Coordinating Council decided to include articles pertinent to adults in the quarterly newsletter. All articles concerning youth for the first newsletter have been written by Ms. McConnell and are prepared for publication. The delay in publication can be attributed to the preparation of the adult section of the newsletter by Coordinating Council staff. It is anticipated that the newsletter will be completed by February, 1979. Upon completion, the newsletter will be distributed to all service provider agencies, clubs and organizations in the service area. Successive newsletters are to be completed on a quarterly basis.

4) The Youth Services Bureau was to sponsor at least one public forum on a special youth topic to increase public awareness and involvement in dealing effectively with youth problems. A symposium on Juvenile Court Diversion was conducted on November 15, 1978 at the Belknap Mill in Laconia, New Hampshire. The symposium, funded in part through this grant, provided \$592 for consultation by specialists in the field of court diversion. The consultants funded through this grant include Mr. Roger Baron and Mr. Tony Klein. Mr. Baron currently provides consultant services for LEAA, OJJDP and A.D. Little in the area of juvenile justice. Prior to providing consultant services, Mr. Baron designed and directed the "Sacramento, California 601 Delinquency-Diversion Project". Mr. Klein has served as the Director of the "Washington County, Vermont Diversion Project" since its inception in 1976. The following topics were discussed at the symposium: The Need for Court Diversion/The Problem with the Status Quo, Court Diversion - The Alternative, Model Court Diversion Projects, The Legal Ramifications of Court Diversion, and How to Establish a Court Diversion Program in a Rural Community.

At the conclusion of the Symposium on Court Diversion, an evaluation was conducted by Ms. McConnell. Of 112 attendees, sixty-nine evaluation responses were received. Of the attendees who had responded 36% were presently associated with a court diversion program, 55% were not associated with a court diversion program and 9% did not respond. Eighty-one percent of the attendees felt they had gained sufficient information from the Symposium to enable them to initiate a court diversion program in their community.

Due to the interest evolved from the Symposium on Court Diversion a Court Diversion Subcommittee was established in November under the jurisdiction of the Laconia Youth Services Bureau. The subcommittee is comprised of fifteen members who meet on a monthly basis. The subcommittee addresses such topics as a need for court diversion in the Laconia area, legal ramifications of court diversion and safeguarding the rights of juveniles.

It was further purposed that the Project Director would develop a detailed Youth Services Plan to include a needs assessment and the establishment of priorities for youth. According to Ms. McConnell, the Youth Services Plan will be an update of the 1975 study conducted by the Laconia Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee on Youth, referred to earlier in this report.

Towards completing a needs assessment of Youth Services in the Laconia area, Ms. McConnell is currently working with police statistics, court statistics, the information and referral logs, information derived from personal visits with service providers, and minutes of the Advisory Committee meetings. It is anticipated that a youth survey may be initiated in order to have input from youth in the final needs assessment.

The final Plan was to be completed by February, 1979. It was proposed that upon completion of the plan, the Project Director and the Coordinating Council would advocate for its implementation and the funding of those services prioritized therein.

The Board of Directors of the Twin Rivers-Lakes Region Coordinating Council is the administrative network for the governance of the Laconia Youth Services Bureau. The Board consists of ten members and is responsible for the general supervision of all activities of the Coordinating Council. One-third of the Board is replaced annually, and new directors are elected at the annual meeting of the Coordinating Council by majority vote of those present. In addition to the responsibility of general supervision, the Board is actively involved with fund raising and community awareness efforts.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Laconia Youth Services Bureau has now been operational for eight months. During that time an Information and Referral System for youth services has been developed and implemented. Thus far, the referral system has demonstrated an 85% success rate in appropriately matching agency professionals to clients' needs. The Information and Referral System has also enabled agencies to coordinate their treatment of persons who are being treated by more than one agency.

The majority of research has been completed for the development of a detailed Youth Services Plan. Towards developing that Plan, data obtained from the Information and Referral logs and follow-up procedures have enabled Ms. McConnell to identify gaps in the service delivery system.

The Laconia Youth Services Bureau, in its current existence as an information, referral, and planning organization was to be operational for only one year. It was anticipated that the future direction of the Youth Services Bureau was to be determined according to the priorities established as a result of the planning process and the input provided by the Advisory Committee. Although that planning process was not completed at the time of this writing, the Project Director indicated that next year's Youth Service Bureau would be directed towards providing direct services and a

court diversion component. Certainly, support for court diversion has been indicated by participation at the Juvenile Court Diversion Symposium and, as a derivative of that symposium, by the establishment of the Court Diversion Subcommittee.

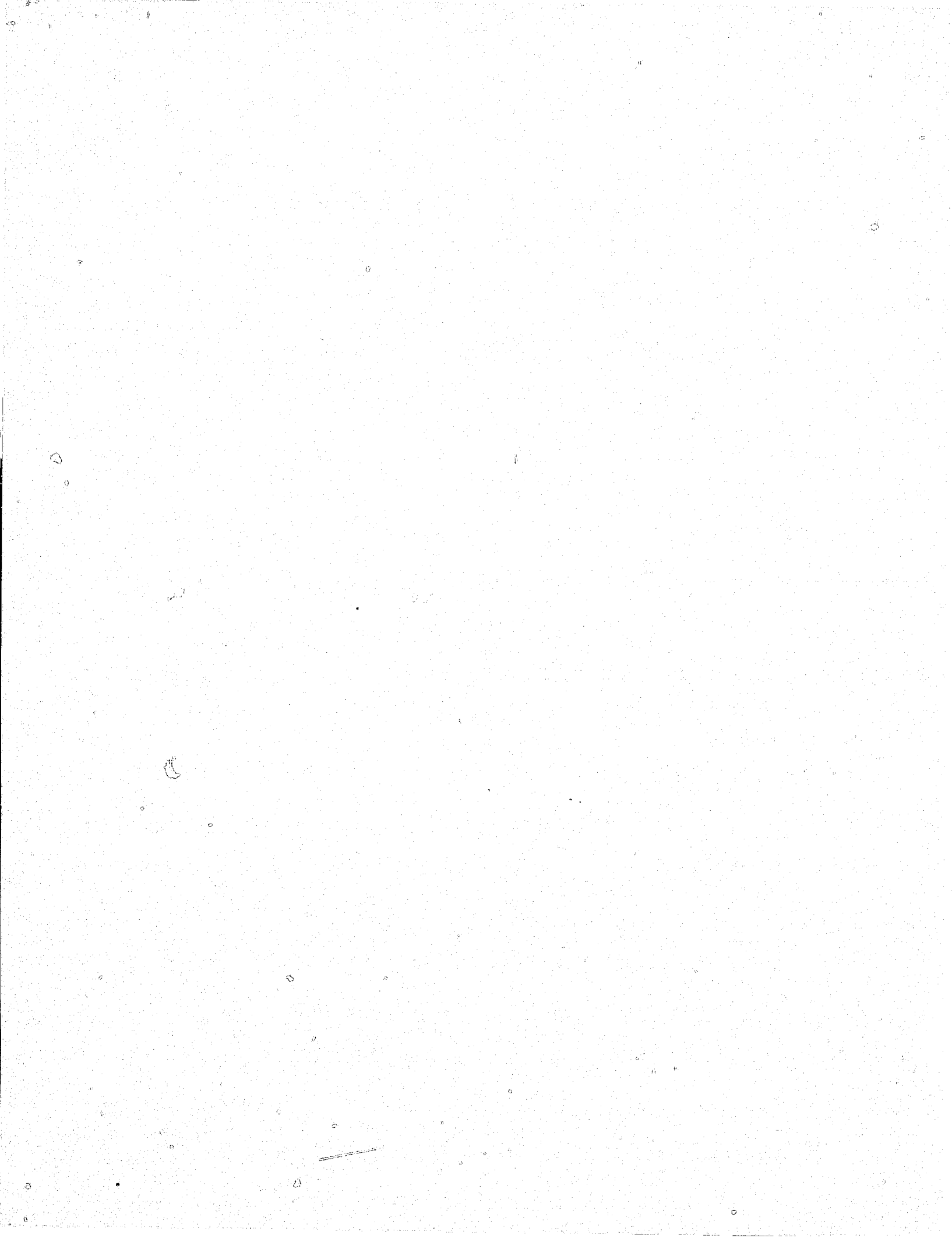
Ms. McConnell has done an admirable job of establishing liaison with local youth provider agencies. The most immediate impact of this project can be realized in the increased cooperation of youth provider agencies and more effective coordination of their activities.

Two programmatic difficulties were identified with respect to this project. These difficulties involved the failure to complete the Youth Services Directory and a quarterly youth newsletter by the proposed time of September, 1978. The Lakes Region-Twin Rivers Coordinating Council decided to incorporate an adult section into both documents. The preparation of this additional information by Coordinating Council staff resulted in delays in publication.

One minor administrative difficulty was identified by this writer with respect to the organization of the Youth Services Advisory Committee. Membership of that committee is based entirely on volunteers and is unlimited in number. No by-laws have been created for the regulation of the internal organization of the Advisory Committee and the governing of its members. As a result, attendance is frequently sporadic and consensus is often difficult to achieve. In addition, it was proposed that the membership of the Advisory Committee would include youth members, however, this has not been accomplished. The input of youth members is vital in addressing the needs of youth in the Laconia area. Therefore, it is recommended that formal by-laws governing membership and internal organization of the Advisory Committee be established by the Project Director.

A great deal of initial success has been demonstrated during the eight months of project operation. Because of this demonstrated success and the project's potential value to the community, the Juvenile Justice System

and the human services network, continued funding is recommended in accordance with Commission policy.



**END**