

FAITH IN COMMUNITIES: *FRUITFUL COLLABORATIONS* – A SURVEY OF GOVERNMENT-FUNDED FAITH-BASED COLLABORATIONS IN 15 STATES

National Press Club, September 4, 2002

Background

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) (Public Law 104-193) includes the Charitable Choice provision which opened doors for new partnerships between States and faith-based organizations (FBOs) to serve those in need. The Hudson Institute's Faith In Communities Initiative (Hudson FICI) has conducted research on various issues surrounding the Charitable Choice provisions. This report describes the most recent Hudson FICI briefing at the National Press Club, held September 4, 2002.

Purpose

The Hudson Institute, with the Center for Public Justice, hosted a panel discussion at the National Press Club in Washington, DC on September 4, 2002. The dual purposes of this panel were: 1) to announce the release of a study by Amy Sherman, Ph.D., a Senior Fellow at Hudson, and John Green, Ph.D., Director of the Bliss Institute at the University of Akron, and; 2) to discuss results of the study from the Federal, State, and local/grassroots perspective.

In addition to Drs. Sherman and Green, members of the panel included: Jay Hein of Hudson's Welfare Policy Center; Rebecca Beynon, Special Assistant to the President for Administrative Reforms, White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives; Dr. Stanley Carlson-Thies, Fellow, Center for Public Justice, and; Rev. Dr. Cheryl Anthony, Founder and CEO, Judah International Christian Center, Crown Heights, New York, NY.

Findings

After introductory remarks by Mr. Hein, Dr. Sherman provided an overview of the findings of her study, *Fruitful Collaborations: A Survey of Government-Funded Faith-Based Collaborations in 15 States*. This study supplements the "descriptive" findings highlighted in Dr. Sherman's earlier work, *Collaborations Catalogue: A Report on Charitable Choice Implementation in 15 States*. Dr. Sherman and her team gathered information on faith-based social service providers governed by Charitable Choice¹ in 15 States.² In total, Dr. Sherman

¹ Dr. Sherman only counted those partnerships governed by the provisions of Charitable Choice. Therefore, only those faith-based organizations providing services funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Welfare-to-Work, Community Services Block Grant, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration are included.

² AL, CA, CO, FL, IL, IN, MI, MA, MS, NY, OH, OK, TX, VA, WI.

and her team interviewed 369 directors of faith-based organizations involved in contracts funded by the government. Among the key findings of the report:

Faith-based providers most likely to be contracting with government are generally:

- Faith-based nonprofits (78%) rather than congregations (22%).
- Evangelical Protestants (21%).
- Operating at total budgets ranging from \$1-\$5 million and composed of between 100 and 500 members (62%).
- Predominantly African American (36%) or “mixed” (18%) in the composition of their congregations.
- Relatively new (since 1996) to the contracting process.
- Operating relatively small contracts (less than \$50,000).
- “Fully Expressive.”³

Faith-based providers report that government contracts have had several positive impacts on their programs, including:

- Allowing for the development of a new program (68%)
- Expanding a current program (76%)
- Serving more clients (87%)
- Adding a new component to an existing program (65%)

Faith-based providers are generally very positive about their interactions with the Federal government. A vast majority (90%) of respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the following statements:

- Accepting government contracts threatens to undermine the faith-based character of our organization.

³ Dr. Sherman’s study measures the “religious expressiveness” of each of the faith-based providers. The providers are ranked on a scale from “fully expressive” to “non-expressive” based on their practices (e.g. did they tend to invite clients to participate in religious activities outside of the government-funded program? How would you describe your faith commitment?).

- Accepting government contracts threatens to reduce the amount of private funds given to our program.
- Accepting government contracts threatens our ability to criticize the government based on our religious beliefs.

Policy Perspectives

Following the presentation by Drs. Sherman and Green, invited guests representing Federal and State government, and the ‘grassroots’ commented on the survey results. On behalf of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, Special Assistant to the President for Administrative Reforms Rebecca Beynon expressed her confidence that the survey accurately measures the reality of the situation facing faith-based providers. She commented on the clear evidence that FBOs *do not* feel that contracting with government is damaging to their essential character, and applauded their efforts at compliance with the provisions of Charitable Choice.

Representing the State perspective, Dr. Stanley Carlson-Thies of the Center for Public Justice, noted that compliance is extensive, but not totally complete. He notes that some States are still not separating funds, are failing to inform clients of their rights, most notably of the right to an alternative, secular provider. Dr. Carlson-Thies noted that the slow rate of change and operation vagueness occasionally present at the State level can constrain the ability of FBOs to comply fully with Charitable Choice. Dr. Carlson-Thies suggested certain actions States might take to correct these shortcomings, including:

- Issuing Executive Orders regarding monitoring and compliance
- Establishing Task Forces
- Providing counties with guidance regarding Charitable Choice
- Revising procurement policies, especially regarding hiring.

Rev. Dr. Cheryl Anthony, founder and CEO of Judah International Christian Center, Crown Heights, NYC represented the provider or “grassroots” perspective. Rev. Dr. Anthony commended the researchers and offered the following observations on the situation:

- Faith-based organizations need education regarding the advisability of segregating their funds.
- FBOs also need clarity regarding the reporting requirements associated with receiving government funding.

- Because contracts with the government are service-specific, FBOs wishing to meet the more extensive/holistic needs of their clients must be prepared to find alternative funding streams to provide other services.
- Federal and State government must recognize the evolving nature of faith-based organizations.

Conclusion

Coupled with the *Collaborations Catalogues*, *Fruitful Collaborations* draws a comprehensive picture of the characteristics, strengths, challenges, and perceptions of both State and faith-based partners in the delivery of government-funded social services. The commentary on policy perspectives was an initial step in operationalizing the lessons included in the research.

Fruitful Collaborations is available for download on the Faith and Communities Web site at www.hudsonfaithincommunities.org.