

# Health Services System Environmental Scan (HSSES) Summary

## CASE EXAMPLE: PERSONNEL AND TECHNOLOGY

Reporting Participant: Alice Rayford

CRFTH Staff: Beth Stamm

Organization: Rural Rescue

Date: Sept. 27, 2005

### Introduction

Alice Rayford, the reporting participant, has been the executive director of Rural Rescue Inc. for eight years. Her education/background is in social work.

Rural Rescue, Inc. is a non-profit 501-C that provides wrap-around services for children and families at risk and/or who are adjudicated because of child abuse/neglect and maltreatment. These services include forensic interviewing, legal prosecution of charges, psychotherapy, residential care, and foster care placement. Rayford estimates that all these services incorporate approximately 85 employees and/or foster parents.

### Community Characteristics

Rural Rescue, Inc. is centered in Ada, Oklahoma, (city population = 67,939; county population = 106,065; 2000 census). The organization also serves additional rural counties within an approximate 80-mile radius. Many of these counties have no other service options. Rural Rescue includes two residential treatment facilities located in nearby rural Ponca City.

### Reason for Contact

Rayford requested consultation because of issues regarding recruitment and retention of personnel. Specifically, her greatest concern is turnover of counselors and therapists, who have an average tenure of approximately one year. As a result, the therapy needs of children and appropriate continuum of care is negatively affected. In addition, Rayford indicated that she would like to receive assistance and information regarding potential grants for technology development and foster care programs. Rural Rescue lacks a database to track referral and service statistics for their organization, thus inhibiting the directors' ability to track information relevant to the success of pursuing further grant funding.

### Service Population

Rayford reported that therapists at Rural Rescue frequently treat children with anxiety disorders and depressive disorders. However, their service population primarily seeks assistance for trauma reactions.

### Providers

Rural Rescue currently employs five full-time counselors, a half-time psychologist, and a consulting psychiatrist. All providers have either Masters- or Doctoral-level training. There are approximately 85 employees, including a prosecuting attorney, support staff, residential paraprofessionals, and foster parents.

Rayford reported that a number of issues appear to be contributing to retention difficulties. Although they provide salaries comparable to most facilities in the area for entry-level counselors, many of these employees report ongoing financial strain due to significant student loans. Additionally, Rayford reported that treatment caseloads are significantly higher than her supervising clinician would recommend for entry-level counselors, creating conditions ripe for early burnout. Rayford would like to create funding for at least one additional counselor in order to reduce caseload demands.

### **Technology Resources**

Current technology resources at Rural Rescue include DSL services available at the main office. The directors have phone line internet access from their homes, which provides limited or slower access. Rural Rescue does not retain an electronic patient record but may be interested in such if it provided assistance with treatment statistics. Rural Rescue does not currently have access to videoconferencing, but Rayford reported that the local hospital does have teleconferencing equipment. Rural Rescue does not receive Universal Services Funds. Rayford reported significant interest in connecting the residential homes to the main office and developing technological/record-keeping support sufficient to develop treatment and referral statistics for future planning and grant applications.

### **Recommendations**

- A technological database of demographics and services provided would facilitate closer tracking for the pursuit of organizational planning and grants.
- Access information regarding Universal Services Funds available in service areas to facilitate telecommunication expansions.
- Explore technology options for connecting residential homes and Rural Rescue's main office.
- Explore opportunities for accessing teleconferencing through existing hospital equipment.
- Explore options for additional assistance in rural service areas through AmeriCorp, Vista and/or SeniorCorp workers.
- Explore eligibility for federal student loan repayment programs (e.g., National Health Service Corps) to support professional retention.
- Explore funding development options through contracts with local state and county programs to support additional personnel needs.
- Explore grant funding options relevant to current services and populations served to facilitate additional personnel hiring needs.