

MINNESOTA DAKOTA COUNTY VOUCHER PROJECT

The Voucher Project was a joint effort funded by the Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities and Dakota County, a county in the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota metropolitan area. The project was created in response to clientele desire and the planning council's goal "to build community capacity to support individuals with disabilities" and "to change the system so that it is more responsive to individuals". The project was meant to test the feasibility of families arranging for, locating and managing their own service networks using county funds in attempts to make the family stronger, more flexible, and keep them intact.

In year one of the project, 10/01/89 - 9/30/90, 12 families were chosen to participate based on their level of interest in and understanding of the project and willingness to do what it took to participate. Participation included completing 40 hours of training (about 20 hours of that was provided by the grant), submitting monthly journals of their experiences in the project, managing their financial accounts, locating, monitoring and paying all their own providers and submitting monthly expenditure reports. From the Governor's Council grant, families received \$20 for each completed journal and \$300 of individual training money for the year. The grant also helped pay for some of the social worker and planner salary in the county and for group training sessions. The total grant from the Council for Persons with Developmental Disabilities was \$14,400.00.

The funds families actually used to purchase goods and services were budgeted county dollars that the county receives from the Federal and State government as all States receive to provide social services as well as mostly from county property tax funds. The families received an amount which equaled what the county would have spent on them for a year under the "normal" Dakota County social service delivery system. Family funds in year one ranged from \$1,600 - \$14,400.

Guidelines were set up for how the funds were to be used. In general, they could be used for any expense which could be related to the health, safety, maintenance and enrichment of the child with developmental disabilities and reduce stress in the home as to prevent placement of the child out of the parental home. The families could choose to receive their funds in a lump sum, quarterly, monthly, on a reimbursement basis or any combination of the above.

Families felt a project like this could provide flexibility for them in what they could purchase, would allow them to pay relatives, friends, teenagers, etc. for child care,

could be responsive to family needs, empower parents since who knows the needs of their children better than them, challenges the systems to be more responsive to individual and family needs and presented opportunities for training and networking. The program also allowed for interagency participation since the county contracted with ARC Suburban (a local advocacy organization) to provide the group training sessions in year one as well as provide monthly mailings to families on upcoming training sessions, legislative information and other excellent networking tools.

The program, however, is not for everyone. Some cons to participating are that some families are happy with the current system, the project requires a large commitment of time and energy, there are liability issues with hiring your own providers into your home, and there are some families who have difficulty spending appropriately and budgeting and planning for a full year.

The project was considered extremely beneficial to the 12 families who participated in year one. A grant for a second year was requested and approved. In year two of the grant the project was expanded from 12 to 25 families including families with adults with developmental disabilities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

LINDA ROTHER, PARENT

**782 SUNSET DRIVE
EAGAN, MN 55123
(612) 454-3537**

DAKOTA COUNTY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT PROJECT PLAYERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

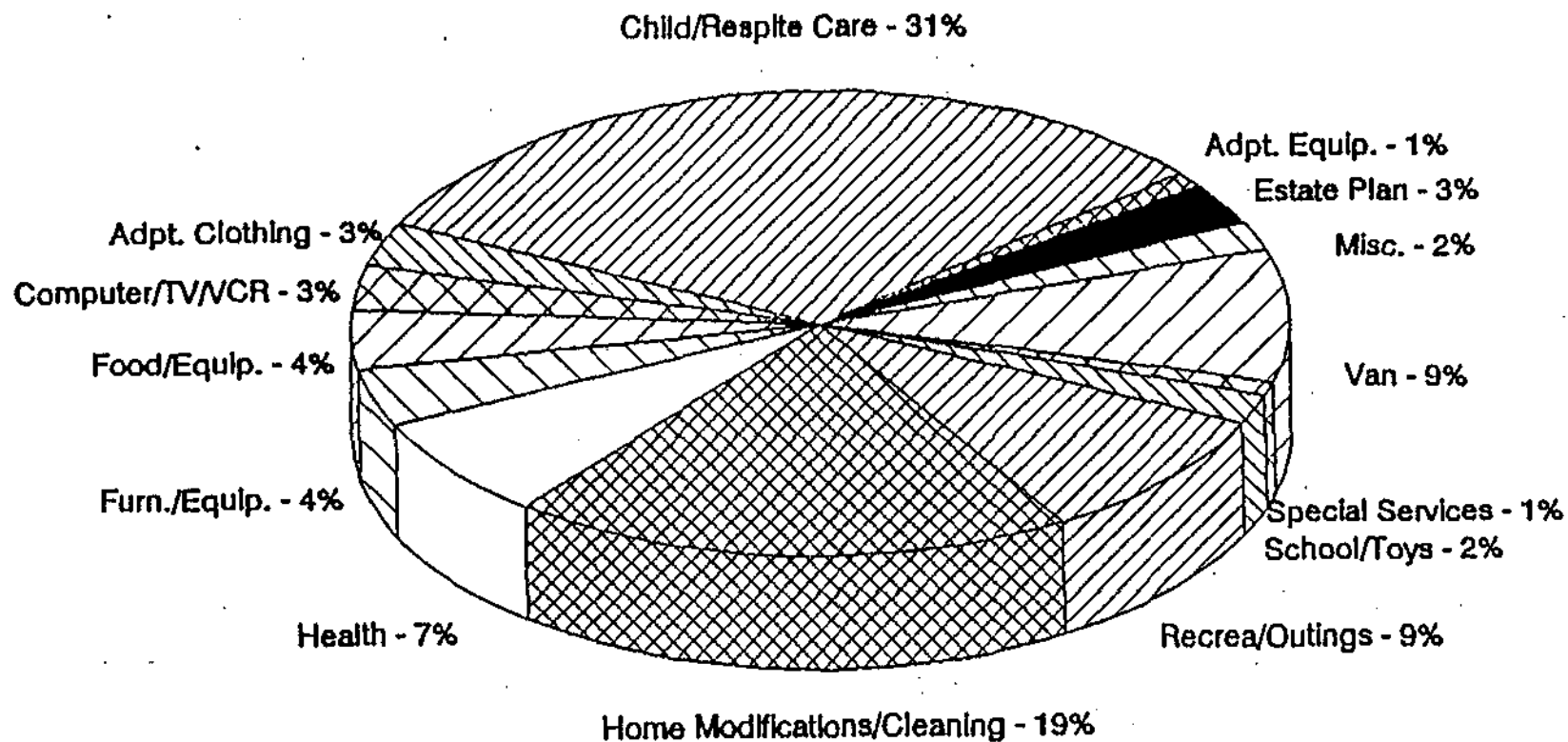
	Research potential for project	Develop project, proposal	Develop policies, forms	Recruit, select participants	Critique	Sit on Ad. Comm.	Fund project	Set up, run training	Create ex- pend. plans, monitor	Recruit, hire monitor, pay providers	Evaluate, report on project	Trouble- shoot
Families					X	X			X	X		X
Social Workers	X	X	X	X		X			X-monitor only			X
D.O. Council							X					
County Admin.	X	X	X	X		X		X			X	X
ARC-Suburban	X-Parent Case Mgr.				X	X		X by contract				
Advisory Committee					X							
County Board					X		X					

ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

1. Expenditures must be directly related to the individual's disability.
2. Funds cannot be used to pay TEFRA fees.
3. Up to 20% of funds can be used on outings, meals, recreation.
4. Funds must be immediately available.
5. Social Worker must approve Preliminary Annual Expenditure Plan

VOUCHER PROJECT

SUMMARY OF YEAR ONE EXPENDITURES



ITEMS

Weekly dinners at McDonalds

Weekend at St. Paul Radisson

Instant camera

Sewer service

Encyclopedia

Television

Mickey Mouse furniture

Storage shed

Long distance phone calls

Computer repair

Radio antenna

Health club membership

Deck swing

File cabinet and system

Walkman radio

Home waterproofing

Swimming lessons

Shaklee vitamins

Chiropractor (for parent)

Family counseling

Carpet cleaning

Bike helmet

Summer camp

Estate planning

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPANTS

- o Arrange for service purchase, delivery, payment
- o Monitor quality, do own problem-solving
- o Adhere to Expenditures Guidelines
- o Prepare and get approval for Preliminary Annual Expenditure Plan
- o Submit monthly journals, expenditure and training reports
- o Complete 40 hours of training
- o Keep lines of communication open with social worker

MONTHLY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

o JOURNALS answer these questions:

- Who provided services?
- What were the services?
- What was your biggest problem?
- What was your biggest success?
- How have things changed?

o TRAINING REPORTS answer these questions:

- What was the training?
- What was its impact?
- How many hours?

o EXPENDITURE REPORTS answer these questions:

- What was purchased?
- How much did it cost?
- How did you pay for it?

D R A F T

ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT POLICY

The goal of the account management funding option is to provide an alternative, flexible funding source to empower individuals and/or families to seek and select community and home support and/or adaptations.

In general account management seeks to:

- o Increase accountability to individuals with developmental disabilities by building community capacity to support these individuals
- o Improve individual planning processes that are based on informed decision making by the individual/family and enable the individual/family to hold the service provider(s) accountable
- o Assure the safety and enhance the independence of the individual
- o Enhance the capacity of the individual's natural support system(s) to meet his/her needs

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

1. Be a client of DCSS/DD Section and Dakota County financial responsibility.
2. Have County funds approved through the POS committee
3. Meet with the Social Worker and develop a Preliminary Plan for use of funds
4. Attend an Orientation session
5. Have no active involvement from Child Protection or Vulnerable Adult areas
6. Person with disabilities must live with parent or legal guardian
7. Must be willing to comply with program requirements (develop plan, turn in monthly expenditure report, quarterly summary, etc.)

EXPENDITURE GUIDELINES

1. As with all instances of encumbrance of County funds, other financial resources and options should be pursued prior to the use of these funds. Goods and services purchased should be prudent and cost effective.
2. All expenditures are expected to be directly related to the individual's disability. Expenses which would occur regardless of whether there are any disabilities will not be allowed. Consult the Social Worker if there are circumstances which are in question.
3. Account Management funds may not be used to pay life insurance premiums for any member of the family.

4. No Waiver or SILS Services may be funded through this option
5. Account Management funds cannot be used to pay TEFRA, Waiver or County fees. The TEFRA and Waiver programs are federally controlled and the fees have been set in order to have beneficiaries who are able to share in the cost burden of these programs. County fees are set by the County Board and are required for County funded services within established policy.
6. Funds to be used for recreation and leisure activities, family outings, personal improvement, meals, marital dates, etc. cannot exceed 25% of the expenditure plan and must be in the approved plan.
7. Funds must be available as the family need them. Certificates of deposit, Treasury bills/notes and other accounts which tie funds up will not be allowed.
8. Modifications to real property or structural adaptations must be directly related to the disability of the individual being served.

EXPENDITURE REPORTING

Required -- minimum of quarterly reports with frequency to be determined as a part of the Preliminary Plan developed with the Social Worker. Note: if reports are 60 or more days overdue no additional funds will be disbursed until these are submitted.

PRELIMINARY PLAN

Required -- must be developed with Social Worker before any monies are disbursed and must address frequency of expenditure reporting (minimum quarterly).

PARENT FEES

Same policy as for all other County funded services.

RECEIPT OF FUNDS

Funds may be received in various ways: equal monthly, quarterly or semi-annual payments; periodic reimbursement for actual expenditures; or lump sum.
?(need to limit amount of funds available in lump sum?)?

UNEXPENDED/UNACCOUNTED FOR MONIES

All funds disbursed must be accounted for before any new or additional monies will be disbursed

Unexpended funds -- 3 months will be allowed into a new fiscal or plan year to expend these on approved services or items. If they are still unexpended then monies for the current fiscal/plan year will be reduced by a like amount

Unaccounted funds -- must be repaid to the County or expended on approved services/items within 3 months or the approved funds for the next fiscal year will be reduced by a like amount. Other options may be pursued with the County Attorney.

EXITING ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

Participants may terminate their participation by notifying their Social Worker. Transition time for services and change of funding will be needed and determined on a case by case basis.

The County retains the right to rescind this funding option if it has reason to believe that funds are not being used in accordance with the approved plan and general program guidelines

Involvement of either Child Protection or Vulnerable Adult issues and personnel will be cause for the County to rescind this option.

TRAINING

Orientation sessions will be held quarterly for new participants or ongoing participants

A periodic newsletter re: training opportunities, policies, resources and items of possible interest will be sent out to individuals using this funding option.

APPEAL RIGHTS

Same as for any other county funded program or service.

DRAFT

DAKOTA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SECTION

SERVICE ALLOCATION GUIDELINES

CLIENT NAME: _____ DATE: _____

WORKER: _____

Please objectively evaluate the individual on the following items. Circle the most appropriate number under each heading. The total score will provide a guide to the maximum amount of service for the client.

I. BEHAVIOR

1. Does not present behavior challenges.
3. Infrequently presents behavior challenges of low intensity.
5. Presents behavior challenges at a level of frequency, intensity or duration that requires occasional staff/family intervention/supervision.
7. Presents behavior challenges at a level of frequency, intensity or duration that requires frequent staff/family intervention/supervision.
9. Presents behavior challenges at a level of frequency, intensity or duration that requires ongoing or nearly ongoing staff/family intervention/supervision.

II. MEDICAL

1. No medical problems.
3. Controlled chronic medical condition with or without medication (asthma, controlled seizure disorder, mild CP, etc.)
5. Uncontrolled minor medical conditions (seizures, CP, asthma, etc.)
7. Single major medical condition requiring excessive care and specialized training (tube feeding, catheterization, apnea monitoring, frequent seizures, etc.)
9. Multiple major medical conditions requiring frequent active care and intervention (tracheostomy care and frequent seizuring, etc.)

III. INDEPENDENT LIVING/SELF CARE SKILLS

1. Independent - does not need daily intervention or assistance.
2. Needs minimal supervision or assistance - verbal prompts.
3. Needs substantial supervision or assistance - physical prompts.
4. Total care and support needed.

IV. MOTOR ABILITY

1. Independent movement without assistance.
2. Basically mobile - limited help or special equipment
3. Basically immobile - requires special equipment or assistance for movement - able to assist with transfers or propel own wheelchair
4. Immobile -- not capable of independent movement.

V. FAMILY SITUATION

1. Two parent family -- 1 or 2 other normal children.
2. Two parent family -- 3 or more other children
3. One parent family -- 1 other child
4. One parent family -- 2 or more other children
5. More than one handicapped person in the home.

VI. DAY PROGRAM

1. Person is in a year round full day program or a year round public school program.
3. Person is in a partial-day, day program or a regular public school program.
5. Person is in no day program.

VII. OTHER SUPPORTS

1. TEFRA/MA and Family Support Program or client/family income exceeds income limits for these programs
3. Waiver or other MA eligible only - no Family Support Program or Family Support Program only and no MA eligibility.
5. No Family Support Program or MA and family income is within eligibility guidelines.

VIII. STRESS FACTORS WITHIN THE HOME

Rating of 1 to 7 (7 highest) -- examples: medical/psychological problems; age of parents; unemployment; risk of abuse or neglect; marital problems; no informal supports or networks; other extenuating circumstances.

TOTAL SCORE _____

DRAFT

SERVICE ALLOCATION GUIDELINES

CLIENT NAME: _____ DATE: _____

WORKER: _____ TOTAL SCORE _____

LEVEL OF SERVICE

The total score will indicate the service level for the individual client. The cap for each level is a Not To Exceed limit, not a minimum or automatic service amount.

Hourly and Daily services may be combined but will not be authorized for a total exceeding the level indicated.

Account Management is a funding option which will be available to families meeting the eligibility requirements (see Account Management Policy). The amount of monies indicated for each level is again a Not To Exceed limit and not a minimum or automatic amount of money.

POINTS	<u>A</u> 8 - 15	<u>B</u> 16 - 24	<u>C</u> 25 - 32	<u>D</u> 33 - 48
Hourly - up to	480 hr.	1,080 hr.	1,560 hr.	2,160 hr.
Daily - up to	20 days	45 days	65 days	90 days
(this level is equivalent to)	(4 wknd +8 dy)	(12 wknd +3 dy)	(21 wknd +2 dy)	(26 wknd +12 dy)
Account Management funding option - up to	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$10,000

EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES/PERMANENCY ISSUES

For a needed level of service which exceeds the points allowed for the client, separate justification and documentation will be required.

DRAFT

ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT OPTION

QUARTERLY JOURNAL

- 1.) Who have been your providers this past quarter and how did you locate them?

- 2.) Please describe any events in the past quarter that would be beneficial for your social worker to know (ex. changes in individuals' behavior/medication, job change, family illness, sibling or other family issues, etc.)

- 3.) Would you like anything to change from your preliminary plan?

- 4.) Is there any equipment or modification that you have identified that you are unable to pursue due to funding limitations?

JOURNAL COMMENTS

"Even the planning for this project has brought positive results. It's so exciting for me to see my husband at a point of participation in making arrangements for our son. Without the voucher projects' flexibility of choice, we would not be making the plans that suit the funds to our situations individual needs."

"People in charge of funding need to realize how the role of the parent changes with a child with special needs. Support is needed and can't complicate our lives anymore but allows flexibility."

"Informal resources tend to make family life flow the best and that is possible with the voucher program."

"Emergencies make extra cost. Thank goodness we are able to utilize our voucher funds for each emergency situations."

"The voucher project has given us a change to solve what could have resulted in drastic problems. I could have been forced to quit my job until the proper coverage was available for our daughter or our family could have suffered an undescrivable amount of stress. The voucher project in this instance alone has allowed our family to continue to function without interruption. We did not get trapped in a system which does not work adequately because of inflexibility and access to funding. With the voucher project, there are no losers, only winners."

"Today I really felt the empowerment of the voucher project as I had a private physical therapist come and provide therapy for our son for one hour. She's a very good therapist and a very encouraging positive person. It was so easy and so good! Sure I had to make a few phone calls, etc., but nothing compared to MA approval or school approval."

"I realized that yes, the voucher system does strengthen, enhance all of my families caregiving capacities. I feel stronger and I feel in control of a situation. It has taken away some of the guilt I feel in leaving our son with the other kids while I grocery shop, run errands, or relax. Now they know there are some monetary rewards for them also. It takes away the feelings of drudgery. I love feeling like a pioneer. I welcome the challenge to make a system better through the voucher program."

"In only one month, this project has made an immense difference in the life of our family. Being able to use the money as we wish has given us something to which we can look forward and added a little excitement to our lives. It has also stimulated our creativity. The 'old way' of receiving services was a 'take it or leave it' system. The voucher project is causing us to think about what we really need to maintain ourselves as a family. I don't know how you can factor in happiness in your list of positive results, but we are all definitely happier. That is really the bottom line for keeping our daughter at home, we have to be happy doing it, because she is really such a tremendously complicated child."

The Voucher Project: Families Know What They Need

by Linda Rother

Twelve families receiving services from Dakota County became "interdependent" this year. This means the county gives funds directly to families to supplement and support their specific needs. Families have the opportunity and responsibility to identify the needs and capacities, find and contract for services, as well as supervise and implement their own quality assurance measures.

There are choices on how, what, and when to use the money. And, as with all public programs, the "why" needs to be answered. Families write monthly journals to outline activities, expenditures, problems, and solutions and the effect voucherizing is having on their family.

The Voucher Project, as it is called, is an option that helps meet individual needs and requests that were traditionally difficult, if not impossible, for the county to help with because of rules and regulations. Services such as paying teenagers to be either baby-sitters or companions, paying relatives to help with respite care, or using traditional agency-delivered services are possible options for families participating in the Voucher Project.

Creativity and innovation are encouraged. Families use the funds for various goods and services, such as decorating a child's room; making an area more accessible; purchasing computer software for learning and recreation; or camp opportunities that are either specialized or integrated, such as the YMCA or Brownies. Specialized equipment, food, and protective or specialized clothing have also been purchased.

Support/training meetings are held every other month and emphasize that each family is unique and has specific needs.

With this opportunity also comes the responsibility for fiscal management. County funds are limited to the amount the family would have been eligible for during a year. Families are finding that the same amount of money, when used creatively, fulfills more needs.

"I find this experience exciting. We are in control of what is happening."

As a member of one of the participating families, I find this experience exciting. We are in control of what is happening. We have the right to be wrong. We have the opportunity to change. We also have the right to be right, using county funds to creatively meet our needs. For example, we have a teenage companion organize a group of teenagers willing and able to help our family. We set the rules and regulations for the providers we have chosen to meet our family's unique challenges.

We have as much opportunity to provide inclusive, interactive community integration and participation as we choose. We also have resources so we can take time away to rejuvenate.

The people we pay for services are accountable to us, not to an agency. We have found that our children are happier because their companions relate to their needs, playing with them, and taking them to places where they can interact, such as to the park or to a high school track meet.

The voucher system has been good for our family. We have grown closer because our challenges and capacities have been supported. It has not been easy, but there is a feeling of accomplishment and self-gratification.

We know we have a specific amount of money to supplement and support our family's specific needs. We also know that we have control over how to spend it.

(Editor's Note: Rother, along with Lura Jackson from Dakota County and Lory Perryman from ARC Suburban, will be presenting a workshop on the Voucher Project at the Association For Persons With Severe Handicaps' December conference in Chicago.)

This fall, the Voucher Project will expand to serve more families and will include adults with developmental disabilities. If you are interested, call Lory Perryman at 431-3700.)

VOUCHERS INCREASE FLEXIBILITY: STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS

(Note: Twelve families from Dakota County are purchasing products and services for their child using a voucher system. Vouchers implement a purchase of service system that is responsive to individual needs and often uses informal and alternative service providers. The project is coordinated by Dakota County and funded in part by a grant from the Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities.

"Throughout the year we will feature articles about the project. This month, Lura Jackson, Dakota County social worker, shares her viewpoint.)

by Lura Jackson
Dakota County Social Worker

When the voucher project was first mentioned as a possible option in Dakota County, I was very excited to be the social worker involved with the project. I really believed that vouchers were the "wave of the future" in service delivery to families of children with developmental disabilities. In a time when governmental financial support for programs is decreasing and contract costs for services is increasing, the voucher concept seemed to present unique opportunities.

Families, and many of us working for services for families, were becoming increasingly frustrated by bureaucratic regulations and shortages of resources. Governmental ideology that it knows what families need better than the family has an additional concern. As a social worker, I have been frustrated by the fact that even though I try to look at the total family when developing service plans, the financial and service systems in place do not allow funding for "family" needs, only for the needs of the child with disabilities.

After a few short months of use of the voucher system, I am clearly aware of the changes this program has made, not only for the 12 families participating, but also in how I interact with the families. The project has given me a new perspective and special appreciation for the issues families must deal with when they have a child/children with developmental disabilities.

One of the project's requirements is that families complete monthly journals noting their joys of the month, worst days, caretakers for their child/children, as well as listing monthly expenses. The journals address issues affecting the child with disabilities, as well as other daily issues involving siblings, marriage, jobs, single parenting, etc. as people try to live one day at a time in this hectic world.

I have been pleased with the personal nature of the journals and feel honored that the families seem to have enough trust to share these difficult issues with me. Through the journals I have learned invaluable information about family life and the complications that come with it. I feel a special bond with these families and believe our social worker/family relationship is stronger, more respectful and insightful than it has ever been before. Through these journals, I have been able to keep on top of day-to-day concerns much better.

Often, when a social worker meets with families, it is to complete specific paperwork tasks; the social work aspect of our jobs gets lost in the paper shuffle. Social workers tend to hear only about the most recent events, and usually only events that relate to the child with disabilities.

Through the training sessions, I have been able to have informal contact with the families in the project. I have been impressed by the amount of networking and support parents have provided to each other, as well as to me. I have gained much knowledge that I have been able to pass on to other families about resources and "system" issues.

I have already seen a reduction in the amount of time spent addressing problems with contracted vendors and in making referrals that often have ended up in provision of no services or services that do not effectively meet a family's needs.

"I...believe our social worker/family relationship is stronger, more respectful and insightful than it has ever been before."

In just two months, I have seen families become more satisfied because they have hired someone they know will do a good job in providing services. These services typically cost less than the county would normally pay. I have been very excited about some of the innovative ways families have planned to utilize their money and feel confident that as the program continues and as families continue networking, creativity will thrive.

Previously, a lot of my time was spent participating in pre-placement meetings and trying to monitor and "fix" problems caused by contracted agency representatives not showing up for a job, not being quite right of the particular child, or not following house rules. Now that the families are selecting their own staff, time has been freed up for me to have more informal contact. There is time to talk with families and get to know one an-

other better, rather than to merely focus on paperwork. Hopefully, this will lead to efforts for social workers and families to do more investigative resource work together.

I have thankfully been removed from the "adversarial" role that the bureaucratic system has developed with families to the "supportive" role I would much rather have.

I feel extremely fortunate to be the social worker involved in this project and on the "front line" of an exciting new approach to service delivery. I look forward to the rest of Year 1 and am hopeful there will be a Year 2.

**DAKOTA COUNTY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT PROJECT
KEY POINTS**

1. Families can successfully manage own services, providers, purchases, bill paying.

2. Despite this statement, the project is not appropriate for everyone.

3. Even if families are appropriate for account management, you cannot assume they all have strong personnel and financial management skills. In order to maximize families' chances for success, you should provide those tools and skills.

4. Encourage networking among the families.

5. Some form of recordkeeping is necessary for accountability purposes. The accountability is not necessarily directed at the participating families, but at the public.

6. You will not always be comfortable with the spending decisions participating families make.

7. Liability issues and extremely cautious attorneys can stifle the project.