

RECENTLY
FROM PAGE 1

Executive directors of some of our venerable local agencies meet regularly for support and collaboration.

“Like many organizations, we have seen pockets of funding dry up all while managing an ever-increasing case load,” said Shamecca Bryant of the Orange County Rape Crisis Center. “Our services for Spanish-speakers increased by 74 percent last fiscal year and is still growing. We are the only local agency providing support group-based healing services for survivors of sexual violence and this program has also seen an increase. Like many agencies in the commu-

nity, we carry a waitlist for individual therapy services.”

But there also seems to be a waitlist for reimbursement.

“A lot of times when we’re promised funding, it’s coming late. Funding was promised in July, but we didn’t receive reimbursements until November,” Bryant said.

Some agencies have had to worry about making payroll for staff.

“Generally, we wait five to seven months to receive grant money from one of our contracts,” said Ann Gerhardt of The Women’s Center. During that period staff salaries must still be paid so the programs are delivered to the community. “No other business would operate like this. We are expected to

‘coast’ and pay for our expenses while the state holds us fiscally accountable, yet the state’s fiscal responsibility to nonprofits does not seem to match our fiscal integrity to them.”

The Women’s Center recently announced its merger with the Family Violence Prevention Center, with which it has collaborated for more than a decade.

“From 1982 until 2009, Volunteers for Youth ran a mentoring program that received Governor’s One-on-One Volunteer funding from the state of North Carolina,” said Susan Worley of Volunteers for Youth. “This program provided hundreds of local kids with caring adult mentors.”

But in the summer of 2009, the state legislature eliminated funding for all those programs.

Two full-time staff positions were lost, and the mentoring program has been kept afloat through volunteers, interns and any funding available.

“Sadly, judges, court counselors, attorneys, mental health professionals and others who work with delinquent youth are constantly pointing out the need so many of these kids have for a positive adult role model,” Worley said. “It’s hugely frustrating to know that we have the tools and knowledge to provide mentors to at-risk kids but are limited by a lack of resources from doing all that needs to be done.”

Freedom House treats people with addictions and mental health issues. Its state funding is further complicated because it comes from the mental health

division of human services, which is undergoing radical changes.

“We’ve got a system that’s been in some level of disarray, in great part due to the recession,” said Trish Hussey, executive director of Freedom House. “We’re having to manage reduced funds to try to provide as many services as we can. But we’re seeing an increase for the needs, not a decrease.”

She said that in fiscal year 2008 Freedom House served 6,048 clients; by last year it had increased to 9,962.

The state has forced a reduction in the Freedom House six-month halfway house program to three months, which has drastically reduced its success rate from around 80 percent to

20 percent (part of which can be blamed on the lack of jobs, which clients need in order to establish themselves in the community).

“Almost all nonprofits are sitting on a financial line now that’s very different from where we were five or six years ago,” Hussey said. “We’re all having to struggle to sustain the good work we do, but we’re impassioned and committed to the missions of our agencies. We’re all people who don’t blink an eye over working 60 hours a week at what we are doing.”

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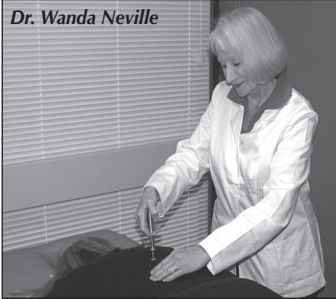
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