

Managing New Trends and Better Federation Relations: Comment on the Aizenberg-Rosen Proposals

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Jeffery Aizenberg and Harry Rosen in their thoughtful paper bring to the fore a series of issues which go well beyond a perspective of Center and Federation relations, rather they have significance for the entire field of Jewish communal service. When a major partner in the community's undertaking makes a significant change in its operational philosophy and functional direction, a reappraisal is called for. The changing philosophy of the Federation movement, coupled with the normal changes that are occurring in Centers and other communal institutions, may now require all of us to step back and take a look at what is happening in the community.

The authors raise issues of the Federations' funding of many similar types of organizations: synagogues and others who provide services similar to Centers. The Center just may not be a welcome change, but it follows the trend of a wide-open society in which there will be competition which Centers will face daily from service institutions, both public and private. In an open marketplace, those institutions or businesses which provide the highest quality product at the most reasonable price, and are therefore the best managed, will survive. This is not the case of institutions which are funded by Federation or other contributing dollars. Ordinary marketplace factors may not apply as strongly. Centers should hold their own in this arena of competition if they continue to operate in modern, business-like and humane ways.

Federations, at some point, will need to develop evaluation tools so they are funding not just "program," but quality Jewish program and quality human services. It is one of the areas that Federation and the American Jewish community will need to focus the most intense light.

Of major concern is the entry of Federations into direct program services. In the past, the Federation's role was to identify areas of need, then either developing the initial phase of the program, turning it over to a functional arm, or creating a functional agency to carry out the mission. Today we see evidence of Federations continuing to operate program and becoming operational agencies. This has to raise realistic questions. How can the fund-raiser and the allocator become one of the operators—a recipient of the funds? As a controller of the allocations apparatus, it is fraught with inherent dangers.

In recent history, Centers were called on by Federations to conduct those mass community events which lent themselves both to the staff expertise and the facility of the Center. Such events as the Holocaust celebrations Yom Ha'atzmaut and special events for Israel support utilize the expertise of Center staffs, trained and knowledgeable in dealing with masses of people. Community-wide committees were developed which took their lead from the Center and the Federation, but included the community. More and more, these events are becoming "in-house." Where Centers are involved, more and more they are be-

coming "contract operators," with nominal participation in the decision-making process and community process.

All of these are symptoms of a need for a review, discussion, and understanding. Whether a new statement detailing the relationship to replace the 1957 statement is the answer is still questionable. The fact there is a need for dialogue and open discussions between Federation and Center professionals and volunteers is becoming more apparent. This dialogue should not exclude the other functional agencies which also have growing concerns. The Center's concern is substantial in light of the investment in physical plant, staff, and a long history of service to the Jewish community.

The community needs to sit together, as do national agencies such as JWB and CJF, analyzing the role and function of the local institutions-how we got where we are; what changes have occurred; how to deal with changing situations. Negotiations, discussions, arguments and compromises need to take place. Since the goal of everyone involved is to serve the Jewish community in the best way, the time to discuss is clearly before problems evolve into crises.

We are indebted to Aizenberg and Rosen for bringing before us a critical community issue that needs the light of day to be discussed and resolved. The issues are on the table.