



Preparing for Changes in Our Futures

*Alliance efforts, including public policy,
use proactive approach*



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One of our favorite mantras at the Alliance for Children and Families is “preparing for futures different from our pasts.”

There have been two transformative events since the last issue of this magazine that have a potential to make our immediate and intermediate futures very different from our immediate and intermediate pasts.

The first is the election of a new president, namely Barack Obama. We congratulate President-elect Obama and wish him well; his responsibilities are simply awesome. We look forward to understanding how his administration views and plans to work with the nonprofit human services sector.

Concurrently, we have a new makeup in the United States Senate and House of Representatives.

The range of issues these lawmakers may address—budget, economic stimulus, new tax policies, health care—suggest a significant impact on Alliance and United Neighborhood Centers of America (UNCA) member agencies. For now, we are all certainly concerned about the recession, how state tax revenues will be impacted, the affect on charitable giving, and even pension funds.

The second event is the meltdown of organizations in the banking sector and the related financial reverberations

throughout the world. This is clearly related to the economic downturn or recession, however it is being classified by economists at this time.

Individually and together, it’s hard to imagine any one of our organizations being immune to some kind of impact by these changes. Obviously, these two major events will somehow shape the future of the Alliance, UNCA, our member agencies, and most importantly, the children, families, and neighborhoods they, and we, serve.

Accordingly, the Alliance is constantly working to gain strategies and suggestions for how we can be proactive in best serving our members during this potentially difficult time.

Now, I cannot let the year 2008 close out without bringing your attention to some very good news.

With apologies to the Washington Capitals, Nationals, Redskins, and Wizards, you don’t get many victories in Washington, D.C. But this year, the Alliance and UNCA contributed meaningfully to five public policy victories.

Victories related to child welfare reform, President George W. Bush’s Medicaid regulations, mental health parity, mental health parity within SCHIP, and the diversion of after-school funds provided some great benefits to members of the Alliance and UNCA. (Read more at the Public Policy/Advocacy section of the Alliance website, alliance1.org.)

These victories laid the foundation for future success by building critical relationships with significant players on Capitol Hill and with other allied national organizations. We have now gotten to the point where the staff of

congressional leadership are noticing and contacting us, rather than the other way around. That is both a critical indicator and a major prerequisite for more success in the years ahead.

But now, we cannot rest on our laurels. Frankly, we expect more victories.

The Alliance and UNCA have worked creatively within the limitations set on nonprofits to carve out an effective way to make our voices strong. I am very thankful to those Alliance and UNCA members who have been an important part of that, and I strongly encourage others to get involved in these timely efforts.

We can all agree on this general proposition: social services advocacy has truly been, as it ought to be, a celebration of American democracy. We must treasure it, guard it diligently, and use it consistent with the principles of law under which it has been extended to us. I hope more Alliance and UNCA members take this to heart and get involved next year in your national association’s public policy and civic engagement activities, as well as your own on the local level.

What better way to reinforce or jump start your civic engagement and public policy efforts than by attending the UNCA Policy Summit, Dec. 8-10, in Washington, D.C.?

Both UNCA and Alliance member staff and board members are encouraged to attend this timely event, as together we—executives, staff, and board members—will strategize and plan for a new administration and Congress. Go to unca.org or contact Martha De La Rosa at mdelarosa@unca.org or 414-359-6576 for more information. ■