SCOPE:

County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Administrators
Base Service Unit Directors
Family-Driven Family Support Services Project Directors

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to disseminate recommendations for the implementation of community resource development within the context of family-driven family support services. "Community resource development" should replace the term "community organization" in family-driven family support services projects.

DEFINITIONS:

The following definitions will be used for the purpose of this bulletin:

COMMUNITY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT is the development, enrichment and/or changing of social institutions through the planned action of individuals or groups.

INFORMAL SUPPORTS are unpaid, personal relationships which develop between community members and which result in reciprocal/mutual gains. Some of the people in our lives who might provide INFORMAL SUPPORTS are friends, family, roommates, classmates, co-workers, neighbors, clergy, and local business people. Some of the types of INFORMAL SUPPORTS we give each other are friendship, information, child care, companionship, transportation, help with housekeeping, yard care and errands.

GENERIC COMMUNITY RESOURCES are educational, recreational, social, cultural, spiritual and other organizations, programs, services, and facilities available to the general public. Examples of GENERIC COMMUNITY RESOURCES include, but are certainly not limited to the following:

REFER COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS TO:
Arthur R. Geisler, Office of Mental Retardation, Room 512, Health and Welfare Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120, Telephone: (717) 783-5770, Network: 8-443-5770
Educational resources - libraries, schools, colleges, universities, Elder Hostel and other travel, school-sponsored activities.

Recreational resources - YW/YMCAs, recreation centers, movie theaters, travel, playgrounds, parks, amusements, dances, Bingo, swimming pools, campgrounds, sports.

Cultural resources - live theater, concerts, art exhibits, museums, tours, recitals.

Social resources - sororities and fraternities, country clubs, service clubs, community centers, neighborhood associations, senior centers, scouts.

Spiritual resources - places of worship.

Other resources - public transportation, day care, fitness centers, health care, stores, restaurants, hair stylists, lawn care, postal and telephone services.

BACKGROUND:

The Office of Mental Retardation began funding family-driven family support services projects in Fiscal Year 1987-88. Since that time, most counties have converted all or part of their family support services initiative to family-driven service models.

Family-driven refers to a method of providing services whereby the family and person with mental retardation, rather than the service system, are given the primary responsibility for deciding which services will best address the family's specific needs. As families have assumed a greater degree of control over services they choose to use, they have recognized the need for access to generic community resources and informal supports in order to gain inclusion of their family members with mental retardation into the mainstream of community living.

DISCUSSION:

It is important that persons responsible for the planning, implementation, and management of family-driven family support services initiatives institute a community resource development process designed to assist persons with mental retardation and their families to gain access to generic community resources and informal supports. A commitment to family involvement and empowerment and a belief in the rights of persons with disabilities to live, work, and participate fully in their communities are the guiding principles for the implementation of a community resource development process within the context of family-driven family support services.
After the inception of the family-driven family support service initiative in Fiscal Year 1987-88, the Family Support Services Subcommittee of the Office of Mental Retardation was charged with the responsibilities of conducting an evaluation of each project and providing technical assistance to the projects during the early stages of their development. As a result of those evaluations, the subcommittee found that several of the projects either did not have a clear understanding of how to implement community resource development as they defined the function of a community organizer in their proposals or chose to use that individual as a Family Support Services Program Manager rather than as a community resource developer. The recommendations that follow were designed by the Family Supports Services Subcommittee to assist persons responsible for the planning, implementing, and management of family-driven family support services in designing a community resource development process that will assure that individuals with mental retardation and their families gain access to generic community resources and informal supports.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY-DRIVEN FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES**

1. Each family-driven family support services project should include a community resource development function which is designed specifically to address local needs.

2. Within the context of family-driven family support services, the primary function of community resource development should be to assist persons with mental retardation and their families in gaining access to generic community resources and informal supports.

3. Although the process of community resource development may be carried out by an individual or group, the function of community resource development should be clearly defined and specifically delegated to the individual(s) who have responsibility for it.

4. Members of Family Advisory Councils and other families involved in family-driven family support services projects should have significant involvement in the needs identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project's community resource development initiative.

5. Identifying existing community resources and educating families about those resources should be integral to each project's community resource development initiative.

6. The identification of gaps in the availability of community resources and the development of strategies to close those gaps should be integral functions of each project's community resource development initiative.
7. Information, training and support should be provided to persons with mental retardation and their families to assist them in accessing existing community resources and informal supports and in developing additional resource options.

8. Casemanagers should be provided with information and training regarding the importance of generic resources and informal supports for persons with mental retardation and their families and how to assist families and individuals in securing them.

9. Establishing local support groups and other opportunities for families and individuals with mental retardation to network should be a high priority for each family-driven family support services initiative.

10. Public and private education, recreation, social service and other human service agencies should be educated and sensitized about the rights of individuals with disabilities to access generic resources as well as their needs for both generic resources and informal supports.

11. Technical assistance and support should be provided to service organizations, service clubs and other community resources to promote the welcoming of people with mental retardation to those groups and to develop the strategies to secure their participation in them.

12. There should be a county-wide plan of action to assist persons with mental retardation and their families in accessing and using generic community resources and informal supports.

13. The effectiveness of a family-driven family support services initiative should be measured by the extent to which individuals

- have choice in decisions about life such as choice of jobs, friends, recreation, etc.;
- experience full citizenship in their communities;
- have relationships with friends, families and partners, and
- receive recognition of their abilities, capacities and gifts.