

Running Head: ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

Understanding Setting and Context:

An Organizational Analysis

SW 843

University of Kansas

February 20, 2006

[An introduction to the paper would help the reader \(that would be me\) ease into the content better.](#)

### Organizational Setting

CASA of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties is a unique agency that focuses on giving children a voice in the court system. Once these children enter the court system, dozens of strangers come into their lives: foster parents, social workers, judges, lawyers and more. Hopefully, one of these strangers is a CASA volunteer. A CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) is a specially trained, community volunteer who investigates a child's situation by meeting with all individuals who can provide information. They work to build a trusting bond with the child, while also providing an invaluable service to the legal system. Once factual information is gathered, CASA volunteers provide their findings to the court through a written report. This information helps judges make better, more informed decisions regarding the life of a child. In Johnson County there are several different programs including divorce/custody, Family Ties, Kids Voice, and Child in Need of Care or CINC. [Good.](#)

The organization consists of ten female employees, two African-American and seven Caucasian, ranging in ages from mid-twenties to mid-fifties. The Executive Director oversees the administration of the organization and programs. Each program consists of one fulltime program coordinator. A fulltime volunteer coordinator facilitates the recruiting and training of volunteers for both counties. A resource development director raises funds and coordinates special events. There are two part-time administrative support personnel that assist with administrative duties.

[Good description,](#)

Judy Postmus 2/23/06 12:25 PM

Deleted: ..

CASA can currently only serve ten percent of the estimated 1,200 children that are

involved with the court system in the two counties because of limited resources to train more volunteers. A large majority of children that CASA serves are Caucasian. Children can receive services from birth to age eighteen. CINC CASA volunteers serve children who are involved in the court system because of physical or sexual abuse, neglect or abandonment. The CASA volunteer remains assigned until a permanent resolution and placement of the child is achieved. When a court decision is being made, the CASA volunteer meets with the numerous professionals involved and makes a written report to the court regarding actions in the best interest of the child. In the Divorce/Custody program, CASA volunteers serve children whose families are involved in court because of disputes over child custody and visitation. A trained volunteer is assigned to work one-on-one with the child and to gather objective information from all parties. The volunteer helps focus attention on the needs of the child, monitors court orders, and reports findings and concerns in a written report to the court. The Family Ties Program serves children whose parents are unable to agree on visitation. A trained volunteer is assigned to work one-on-one with a child to supervise visits between the child and the non-custodial parent. The goal of the program is to increase the number of families who successfully resolve their visitation disagreement without returning to court to continue the dispute. The Kids' Voice program is an educational support group for families going through separation or divorce. The program is designed to provide a safe place for kids to talk with other kids who are experiencing the same difficulties with their parents' divorce or separation. [Excellent description of CASA](#)

#### Management Practices

Based on Max Weber's management principles outlined in Weinbach's *The Social Worker as Manager: A Practical Guide to Success* (2003), it would be difficult not to categorize

CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties' theory as bureaucracy. CASA shares an ideal with Weber for superior efficiency and control. [Interesting.](#) This can be evidenced by the amount of responsibilities at the senior level of the organization. The executive director has decision power that far outweighs the employees that she manages. CASA also prides itself in being efficient with court interaction, taking extreme measures to ensure that court reports are accurate and on time. The executive director has taken steps to organize CASA in a logical and conservative way. There are few surprises and extreme caution when approaching change.

CASA maintains itself by following the widely used rules and policies that, according to Weinbach (2003), limit specific functions. The benefit of hierarchical, conservative rule following is that risk is minimized. However, a glaring negative is the impediment of creativity. The bureaucracy sets up a safe rigid blueprint for an uncreative executive director to hide behind. [Interesting.](#) CASA could dynamically improve the quality of its programming and resource acquisition techniques if it were willing to take creative steps that fall outside of what is deemed normal or appropriate. The certainty that is afforded within the bureaucratic system is a strength for the staff of CASA. Each employee is in no fear of losing their job, and job descriptions and responsibilities are clearly defined and measurable. Another advantage is the reliability of services offered to the court. The judges are able to depend on CASA to maintain strict guidelines and follow through with tasks. The challenge of the "putting it in writing" principle is one that CASA struggles with on many levels. With so much paperwork to fill out and reports to file, it is often difficult for the executive director to do the appropriate fundraising and program-enhancing planning that is necessary to stay current with best practices. Weinbach (2003) claims that while this principle is designed to promote efficiency, it hurts other crucial areas of the business. The CASA model also limits creativity, and, as Wienbach (2003) argues, breeds

conformity. This can be frustrating for the employee who doesn't exactly excel under rigid authority and control. [Excellent critique.](#)

Although the existing management theory for CASA has its limitations, if afforded the opportunity to keep or change it, I would choose to keep it. In my opinion, the theory of bureaucratic management suits CASA's current leadership style and employee roles. It seems that employees enjoy trying to maintain normalcy and not rock the boat. If the same organization were comprised of different individuals, as well as an innovative leadership style, programming and resource management could be altogether more exciting and cutting edge. [Good.](#) For now, CASA is on the path of conservative, cut and dry, inflexible success. My vision for CASA would include conservative decision-making, coupled with radical leadership and management changes, focusing on change and quality. [Good.](#)

#### Organizational Climate

Similar to CASA's management practices, the organizational climate is that of creating an environment of conformity. Taylor & Giannantonio (1993) argue that organizations that are the least likely to terminate, have extremely loyal employees, and value conformity are defined as clubs. In addition to sharing all of these requirements, CASA practices management in a bureaucratic style that compliments this type of organizational climate. CASA, like many clubs, is more likely to hire for positions within the agency and sees many of its employees reach retirement, and then come back to serve as volunteers or board members in the agency. Taylor & Giannantonio (1993) state that clubs rely on retention to promote reliability and consistency in their products and services. One of CASA's main objectives is to retain volunteers to see a child's case to completion, and provide consistent and reliable information to share with the

judge. The guiding philosophy at CASA is to provide safe, permanent homes for children. The value of permanency is stressed in every aspect of the agency, from volunteer and employee retention to building long-standing relationships with members of the court. Although not specifically stated, CASA's history of being consistent and reliable demonstrates its unstated value of predictability. [Good.](#)

Decision-making at CASA is solely the responsibility of the board of directors' authority over the executive director. Typically, if a change needs to be handled, the executive director will draft a proposal for the board of directors to approve. After approved, the Executive Director is responsible for delegating the change or new responsibility. Often times, support staff or coordinators need to make a decision about a client or how best to use a piece of information, and the executive director consults to make the best decision. [Good.](#)

It has been difficult to observe how relationships are formed at CASA. The physical nature of the office impedes communication, and the personality types are such that calling a coworker is more efficient than walking to their office. [Interesting.](#) There seems to be a mentality which allows the employees to shut themselves in their office and never come out. Staff interaction is dramatically poor; they do not eat lunch together, and seldom communicate in the hallway. Most of the time, staff members will clock in and clock out without leaving their office. This office behavior is consistent among the entire staff. The adaptation period, or organizational socialization process, as Taylor & Giannantonio (1993) call it, is defined by how employees experience pressure to learn values, policies, and procedures. At CASA, adaptation happens by watching the other members of the organizational environment. Termination rarely happens because of the staff's commitment to maintain long-term services. If termination were to

happen, a replacement would be hired within the organization long before outside help would be sought. [Good.](#)

The organizational climate of CASA is like that of many large organizations, in that once a person makes a commitment to an organization and adapts to its values, it is difficult to leave because it is comfortable to maintain the status quo. [Good analysis of the organization. I'm surprised to hear how bureaucratic it is – mainly since the organization is rather small.](#)

### Diversity Orientation

While understanding management theories and organizational climate is important, the area of diversity is often times neglected. In my opinion, the idea of developing models for diversity and actually creating an environment of diversity in the workplace are two completely different tasks. [Good.](#) Mor Barak (2000) states that diversity training varies from a one-hour lecture to a series of ongoing seminars. My experience with diversity orientation at CASA has been a lecture here a seminar there and very little substance. Mor Barak (2001) includes a comprehensive model for the “inclusive workplace,” which simply relies on using terms like “pluralistic”, “co-evolving”, and “collaboration based.” These terms are quite foreign to the majority of the staff members at CASA. According to Richard and Johnson (2001), the success or failure of an organization’s diversity orientation is the degree to which the entire organization views itself as committed to the notion of diversity. CASA, like many organizations, are reactive rather than proactive when it comes to diversity issues. Richard and Johnson (2001) argue that organizations naturally lean towards homogeneity; CASA is a prime example of following this pattern. [Good.](#)

According to Richard and Johnson (2001), creativity, consistent counter arguments, and the introduction of new perspectives enhances the decision making process. At CASA there is currently is no room for new perspectives in the decision making process. There is little room, if any, for an adequate diversity orientation. The reactive nature of CASA budgets a seminar once or twice a year. The emphasis does not impact policies, client outcomes, staff morale, and other important parts that diversity should be permeating into. A new strategy that has been only discussed is having an outside diversity specialist interview staff and recommend changes. CASA has not taken measures to be proactive in creating an environment where diversity is celebrated. However, CASA is creating an environment where there is open communication and the ability to share ideas freely, which can open the door for diversity discussion. [Any thoughts on how CASA could prioritize diversity? Good analysis.](#)

### Conclusion

The organizational analysis of CASA shows that its bureaucratic management style and club-like organization has presented an environment in which to provide dependable results to keep children safe and ensure their permanency in loving homes. While this style does not leave much room for thinking outside the box, the employees are loyal and provide consistent service. [Good.](#) This analysis has provided me the framework for creating a management style that produces an environment of communication and diversity orientation that can go far beyond the seminars and PowerPoint presentations. I have been given a sense of urgency to make changes in policy and agency practices that will affect not only the staff that I manage, but also the clients they serve. This assignment allowed me to connect theory, practice, and diversity into a complete and unique understanding of the challenges that many social work administrators face each day. I

feel equipped to start asking the right questions and be a change agent for clients in the near

future. [Good conclusion](#)

## References

- Milliken, F. & Martins, L. (1996). Searching for common threads: Understanding the multiple effects of diversity in organizational groups. *Academy of Management Review*, 21, 402-433.
- Mor Barak, M. (2000). The inclusive workplace: An Ecosystems approach to diversity management. *Social Work*, 45, 339-352.
- Richard, O. & Johnson, N. (2001). Understanding the impact of human resource diversity practices on firm performance. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 13, 177-195.
- Taylor, M. S., & Giannantonio, C. M. (1993). Forming, adapting, and terminating the employment relationship: A review of the literature from individual, organizational, and interactionist perspectives. *Journal of Management*, 19(2), p. 461 (443).
- Weinbach, R.W. (2003). *The Social Worker as Manager: A Practical Guide to Success* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

You did a great job with this analysis paper. It is clear from your writing that you learned much from this assignment by tying everything together – the readings, class discussion, and your own observations. Your observations of the organization were especially interesting, highlighting the strengths and limitations you've seen in the management style and the organizational setting. By adding a brief introduction, this paper would have been flawless. Excellent work. Grade = 98

5/26/06 3:27 PM

Deleted: Jay....