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"The torch has been passed to a new generation....."

John F. Kennedy

Dear Colleague:

Senator Obama's victory yesterday marks the beginning of a new chapter in American history and, hopefully, the beginning of our country's economic recovery. In the short term, however, the on-going impact of unemployment, home foreclosures and consumer debt will require human service organizations to serve more people at the very time that reimbursement rates, donations and income from endowments are shrinking.

As leaders, you are faced with the challenge of developing strategies to "do more with less" ... or even to simply survive. COA can play an important role as you strategize how to provide the high quality services with fewer resources.

Your COA accreditation - or even your pursuit of COA accreditation - tells funders a great deal about the credibility of your organization because COA has a 32 year track record of partnering with the human services field. It is also the only national accreditor chosen by the U.S. Department of State to accredit intercountry adoption providers and the only national accreditor designated by the U.S. Department of Defense to develop accreditation standards and processes for human service programs provided to military personnel and their families.

Though not a silver bullet, the following are some free and easy ways that COA can help you find "shelter from the storm":

- In your year-end fundraising materials, emphasize the fact that you are COA accredited and describe why being accredited validates your financial, administration and management integrity as well as the quality of the services you provide. If you wish, we will be pleased to send you draft language to use in your publicity materials.
- When applying for grants, reference your COA accreditation—being sure to explain to the funder what it means to be accredited (as opposed to being licensed). Here again we can provide draft language for you to include in responses to RFPs and grant requests to private foundations or corporations. In addition, we will be pleased to write a letter on your behalf to the granting entity describing the meaning and value of accreditation in terms of the credibility, integrity and achievement of your agency.

CELEBRATING OVER 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

- If you learn of proposed budget cuts from public agencies, contact us and we will prepare written testimony describing the impact funding reductions will have on maintaining nationally and internationally recognized standards of best practice and service delivery, as well as the present and future financial cost of poor outcomes.
- “Recognition” is one way to reduce your administrative burden and – in many instances – provide additional funding and relief from licensing requirements. If your state or municipality does not “recognize” accreditation, we will work with you, your national and state membership associations and other accrediting bodies to see that it does.

To take advantage of any of these opportunities or to propose other ways COA can assist you, please contact our Director of Client Relations, Joseph Seoane, at jseoane@coanet.org.

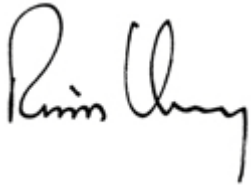
Another component of your “do more with less” strategy could be to diversify the services you provide in order to take advantage of previously untapped funding sources. In that regard, COA recently developed the following new standards. *Like all of COA’s standards, they are available at no cost by going to www.COAstandards.org.*

- Especially timely and relevant in today’s environment are the new Financial Education and Counseling (FEC) standards. They emphasize counseling and education practices and deemphasize debt management planning. Perhaps most importantly, the standards have been strengthened by a new core concept on housing counseling and education. Note also that organizations are no longer required to provide debt management planning services in order to be accredited.
- On September 1, COA assumed responsibility for accrediting after school programs previously accredited by the National AfterSchool Association. Our goal was to develop accreditation standards and processes that after school programs of every size and capacity can use to support their continuous quality improvement and long-term sustainability. Accordingly, we developed three distinct yet interrelated recognition opportunities for after school programs: COA Accreditation, Certification and Registration.
- As a result of problematic responses to recent disasters, COA partnered with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) and representatives from the wider disaster recovery community – including FEMA – to incorporate disaster recovery practice into our *8th Edition Standards* and released the Disaster Recovery Case Management Standards.
- In today’s environment of stringent fiscal accountability, service providers are increasingly partnering in the delivery of services. The Network Administration Standards (NET) apply to network management entities and address core administrative practices that contribute to the effective management and coordination of an integrated network of service providers.
- Our recently released public/private Juvenile Justice Standards are designed to promote public safety by helping youth overcome problems and develop the attitudes and skills needed to make responsible choices, avoid negative behaviors, and become productive, connected, and law-abiding citizens.

In addition to these standards, COA will be releasing its Adult Guardianship Standards in winter 2009. As the “graying of America” increases, court appointed guardianship is seen as an increasingly valuable way to maintain a level of independence and self-determination appropriate to the individual's functionality and minimize the risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

As these thoughts suggest, today’s challenges require that all of us in the human services field work together creatively and cost effectively. The staff and board of COA are committed to doing that and to supporting the valuable work that you do. Together we will weather this storm, and together we will continue to transform the lives of vulnerable individuals and families throughout our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Klarberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Richard Klarberg
President & CEO