

REMARKS OF
NANCY WACKSTEIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES OF NEW YORK
NEW YORK CITY OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME SUMMIT
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Thank you for this opportunity to present the settlement house view of out of school time programming. I am privileged to serve as the Executive Director of United Neighborhood Houses, the federation of the City's settlement houses, a network of 35 different community-based agencies located throughout New York's diverse neighborhoods. I am delighted that the Executive Directors of so many of our member organizations also are here today, thank you for including us.

The very definition of a settlement house is to serve multiple generations in a particular geographic area with a variety of services. Although most settlement houses offer services in more than one location, all have a particular place – a building, a house, a center – which is seen as the hub of its activities. It is not uncommon for three generations of a single family to have used the services of one of our agencies. Indeed, it is common for the staff of the local settlement house to become the “second family” for children and teens.

Here's a typical (and true) settlement house story, which I hope will give a good picture of our work. Twenty years ago, Harriet enrolled her child in one of our settlement house's Head Start programs. A couple of years later, she was hired as one of the cooks in the child care program, a full-time union job with benefits, a job she still holds today. Her daughter Carol, the original Headstart student, also attended the settlement house's afterschool program and summer camp. Carol today is a working single mother of two children, still living with Harriet, her own mother, because her job in a retail store doesn't pay her enough to rent her own apartment. Carol now has one daughter enrolled in the agency's ACS-funded early childhood program and one in the settlement house's ACS-funded afterschool program. For both, she pays modest fees based on a sliding scale pegged to her low income, but feels that this is a wise investment in her children, and actually feels that because she is paying she has some say in the program, especially since there is an active Parent Council. The afterschool program operates year round and on school holidays, the same hours that her mother works, and her daughter then continues into the settlement house's summer camp program.

While Carol's daughter's public elementary school has an afterschool program run by the Parent Association, Carol chose the settlement house's program for two major reasons.

First is logistics: the program's hours of operation are the same as her own work schedule and because her younger daughter is enrolled in the preschool program at the same site, it makes pick-up at the end of the day much easier for her. And second is because she has a lot of trust in the settlement house's staff, whom she knows well because her daughter also attended preschool there.

The entire family has also benefited from other related settlement house services: the agency's consulting psychologist has seen the family regularly over the years, and Carol is a member of the settlement house's single parent support group, which runs at night after work while her daughter is in the agency's one-on-one tutoring program. The psychologist's time is paid for by the Headstart contract and the facilitator of the support group is paid by foundation funding, as is the tutoring program coordinator.

None of these services would have been available solely with afterschool program funding. If this family finds itself in crisis – job loss, housing loss, domestic violence - the first place they will turn is to their community settlement house, which, I hope you'll agree, is the type of safety net we want and need in our City for all families. We happen to think that this "single stop" model – piloted by settlement houses a century ago - offers the possibility of efficient, integrated and comprehensive services to children and their families.

It is extremely important that settlement houses and other community organizations be funded to continue providing comprehensive afterschool programs at their centers, because the value is multiplied several fold. When a child's parent or grandparent walks through the settlement house door, they know they can use a full complement of services without having to travel somewhere else, without having to fill out another form, without having to have another interpreter translate.

If Ms. Matsui's son Hideki is in the afterschool program, but she herself wants help learning English, she can get it right there. If Ms. Jeter's 83 year old mother is in need of home care, her son Derek's afterschool counselor can make an appointment with a case manager colleague on the fifth floor. If Mr. Rivera would like to learn computer skills while his son Mariano is in his afterschool tutoring session, the computer lab is the second door down from the classroom.

Known to their neighborhoods, community center-based after school programs give working parents a feeling of safety and security. During the blackout in August, for example, settlement house staff did not start to make their own ways home until every last child was picked up, in some cases not until 10 at night. And for young people, it's sometimes good to get out of the school setting, away from the struggles and tensions, even failure, they may be experiencing in the classroom and school yard.

Every settlement house in NYC serves children and youth as part of its core mission. Our 35 agencies today serve 70,000, or 5%, of the city's young people aged 6 to 18 years old. Our agencies contract with every one of the City agencies represented this morning at the summit. Settlement houses run youth programs in both school buildings and at

their community centers. While afterschool programs located in schools are necessary and meaningful for many families, they must not and cannot replace those offered in centers. Rather, the OST system in NYC must accommodate a variety of program activities which take place in a variety of settings. Working parents must have the choice of flexible programming offered at times that meet their needs: afternoons, evenings, weekends, holidays and summers.

While UNH's 35 member agencies are one of the most important networks of social and educational services for children in New York City today, the possibilities inherent in our model often are unrealized and unfulfilled, because of the confusing and complex array of funding sources and contradictory regulations. In the area of afterschool programming alone we have counted at least 25 funding sources administered by 11 different agencies at three levels of government.

While this cornucopia of government programs might seem to offer the promise of flexible and varied program models and innovative and creative approaches, sadly the reality is quite the opposite. If settlement houses are able to run creative and innovative youth programs it generally is despite the public funding sources, not because of them. Each of these funding sources requires its own reporting and promulgates its own programmatic guidelines – right down to how much the janitor can be paid and the hours of operation.

I sometimes wonder what is the point of government contracting with non-profit organizations, whose value added supposedly is the expertise, experience and creativity gained from years of doing this work, if the funding sources so rigidly dictate the parameters of the whole endeavor? I understand the need for program accountability, as the Mayor noted in his remarks this morning, but I am wary of a simplistic view of accountability which would promulgate another layer of reporting on a system already overly burdened by such requirements. Furthermore, any new accountability measures must be devised with the full participation of the provider community, which has not been the case in the past.

Settlement houses spend enormous numbers of hours struggling to juggle the administrative and programmatic burdens imposed by the funding agencies. Frankly, some of the staff's most creative juices flow around how to create a balanced afterschool program budget -- cobbling together the parent fees, the private foundation grants and the several disparate public contracts -- rather than where these creative energies truly should be directed: designing and delivering stimulating, fun, safe, educational and inclusive programming for kids.

Moreover, settlement houses are forced to use precious general operating funds and scarce foundation grants to address the new and disturbing trend which requires providers to match public dollars with privately-raised funds in order to win funding to run their youth programs. Community based agencies, especially smaller ones, having less access to these "private match" resources must therefore divert private dollars from other

programmatic or administrative priorities, or withdraw from providing this service altogether.

And, there is an increasing trend by both public and private funders to acknowledge openly that they are not supporting the full cost of care, in fact only a fraction. So my question is, if the sum of the available fractions is still only a fraction of the actual cost, how can we provide quality direct services for children?

Since I mentioned staff, I want to center my last comments on them. Staff who work in youth programs are generally part time. They often are not provided with benefits and make low wages. Generally, this line of work attracts either high school or college students, most without training in child development or education. There is no career path for them. It is very difficult to train the staff we have, because that requires money for substitutes or for additional staff development hours, which City contracts do not provide. Staff turn over rapidly, thus creating more unfunded costs, like staff recruitment and re-training. Business recognizes these costs and budgets for them; non-profits are not permitted to. Those settlement houses able to retain their youth staff and build into their budgets critical full-time, credentialed program supervisors are only able to do if they are successful in raising private funds which can be used for this purpose, but this is by no means the majority of our members.

The OST system, ultimately, must deliver quality services. In our business, as in education, that translates into being able to hire and retain good staff. There is no question that staff, the front line people who teach, mentor, tutor and play with the children, are the key to program quality and effectiveness. Unless these programs are funded at a level that allows non-profits to support their staff in new ways and to hire trained people, the dream of having afterschool and summer programs in which everyone in this room would be delighted to enroll their child ... will be only that, a dream. No matter which City agencies end up administering these programs and funding streams, adequate, complete funding is the prerequisite for delivering a quality program. Our children deserve no less. Thank you.