



Things to Think About!

Funding Sources: Finding Financial Assistance

By Linda Jorgensen

It goes without saying that current economic times have been hard on the agencies and programs, both public and private, which provide aid and assistance to those with special needs. Many programs find themselves with the expectation that they should continue to meet needs at pre-recession levels while functioning on a post-recession budget. The current outlook for individuals seeking funding and services seems rather grim.

Finding needed goods and services does not have to be an impossible task but rather incentive to be persistent and use both common sources and alternative resources many may not have thought of using previously. Knowing what programs are currently available and networking from there often results in finding lesser known resources. It is important to note there are many agencies and organizations that offer grant funding but very few actually advertise. Many sources are found through networking or word of mouth by others that have benefitted from available but unadvertised grant programs.

Many individuals fail in their funding search before they even begin thinking their needed goods or services are too costly. Cost is one reason such programs are in existence. If everyone could afford the goods and services they needed there would be no need for foundations and grant programs. It is common for individuals to qualify for funding assistance from more than one organization. Information and persistence are key to both the search for sources and applying for funds once you've found that source.

Where to Look ~ Public Programs

Start looking here. These are split into 3 main categories.

1. Medical Programs (Medicare, Medicaid, Medicaid Waiver programs)
2. Educational Programs (Special Education, School District Foundations, State University Departments of Disability Services)
3. Employment and Vocational Training programs (Company Attached Foundations, Independent Living offices and Other Programs)

These programs not only offer training they quite often provide funding assistance for related goods and services such as transportation or personal assistance. Many programs have foundations attached specifically for that reason. It is important to ask each agency what resources they have and request contact information.

Note: It is important to contact public aid programs FIRST! Be sure to properly apply and follow up. If, after you have followed proper procedure, you are denied assistance it is

important to keep your letters of decline. These will be important documents used in your quest for funding through private sources.

Where to Look ~ Private Programs

Once you have applied to available public foundations in your area you can begin applying to private sources. These may be a little more difficult to locate but with persistence, footwork and general enquiries many find the sources they need. These are split into 5 main categories.

1. Private Insurance policies (may be required to apply here BEFORE applying for Medicaid or Medicare assistance)
2. Educational Foundations (Alumni Organizations, Endowment Programs)
3. Community Service Groups (charities and public foundations such as Shiners' Children Hospitals, Easter Seals, United Way, etc.)
4. Equipment Vendors (NMEDA QAP certified vehicle dealers, wheelchair providers)
5. Corporate Foundations (Many mid-sized or larger companies have public foundations attached. Most are not advertised but can be found through direct company contact or referrals)

Sometimes finding private foundations feels a bit like detective work. Well, it is! Think creatively. Use your phone directory (check the yellow pages) and make phone calls. Use the internet, check with your local library and school district. Ask government program workers if they are aware of private sources you might contact. Quite often they are my best community resource.

When making phone contact ask for the information and referral desk if one is available. Keep notes regarding the companies you've contacted and information you've been given. Talk to care providers who have been in their area of expertise for a while. Ask for referrals from your physician, therapists, educators and others you receive services from. Talk to other parents, families, individuals. You may be surprised by the amount of information you can pull together just by asking around.

Now What?

Filing a request or proposal for assistance can seem impossible to some. With patience, perseverance and some assistance from the right individuals you'll be able to gain the goods and services you need.

Next Month: How to Apply for Private Funding