AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF
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Title: School-Community Collaboration As A Strategy for Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Youth: A Case Study of Selected Youth Services Teams

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The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the nature of local school-community human service agency collaboration undertaken to address the needs of at-risk youth. The study focused on the experience of four youth services teams in two Oregon counties.

A qualitative, multiple-case study approach was used as the research design. Inquiry was guided by four questions: 1) Why and how was the collaboration initiated?, 2) What is the structure of the collaboration?, 3) What are the characteristics of the process?, and 4) What are the outcomes of the process? Data were collected through interviewing, observation, and document review. The analysis of the data proceeded inductively using a content analysis strategy. Based on a preponderance of evidence, conclusions were drawn. They included:

1. Collaboration became a viable response strategy when organizations realized that unilateral solutions were ineffective.
2. Organizational support for collaboration at both the administrative and staff level was important.

3. The conveners of the collaboration exercised informal rather than formal authority.

4. In-kind contributions of a limited nature constituted the resource base of the collaboration.

5. Attention was paid to facilitating the process of collaboration itself.

6. Leadership of the collaboration rested primarily with the education sector.

7. While the broad vision of the collaboration was embraced by all members, at a more personal level the vision was translated into differing objectives.

8. Both direct and indirect benefits sustained members' commitment to the collaboration.

9. Generally, parent involvement was felt to be integral to the success of the collaborative effort.

10. The issue of confidentiality was addressed.

11. Collaboration resulted in improved communication among schools and agencies, but the increased understanding was largely confined to team members.

12. Collaboration appeared to facilitate access to services and service delivery for some at-risk students; however, limited documentation made it difficult to assess the team’s impact on student outcomes.
School-Community Collaboration As a Strategy for Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Youth: A Case Study of Selected Youth Services Teams

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This research was undertaken to add to our knowledge and understanding of how public schools and community human service agencies collaborate to provide more effective services for students considered to be at risk; at risk of leaving "school at any age without those skills (academic, social, and/or vocational) necessary to lead a productive and fulfilled life in society" (Davis & McCaul, 1990, p. 6).

Background of the Problem

The failure of public schools to educate all students is a major concern in our society. In the United States the dropout rate is estimated to be between 25% and 30% with some urban schools reporting dropout rates as high as 50% (Barber & McClellan, 1987). In 1990-1991, 8,624 students dropped out of school in Oregon alone (Oregon Department of Education, 1992).

Concern is also focused on those who complete high school but who lack skill development at levels sufficient to allow them to function successfully in society. In 1986 the National Assessment of Educational Progress released a report based on a national sample of 3,600 young adults...
(Venezky, Kaestle, and Sum, 1987). The report characterized the literacy levels of the young adults as limited, constraining both the potential of the individual and that of the nation to succeed in an increasingly technological environment. The Committee for Economic Development noted that many high school graduates lack skills in problem solving, decision making, and the work habits and attitudes that are needed for employment (Schorr, 1989). This point of view was reinforced by findings from a 1991 survey commissioned by the National Association of Manufacturers. Job applicants were found to lack not only general skills in reading, math, writing, and communication, but they also were found to lack motivation to work ("Factories Find," 1991).

It is estimated that a million or more adolescents annually drop out of school while another 700,000 merely mark time until graduation (Committee for Economic Development, 1987). Both groups leave school unprepared for a self-sufficient life. Projections regarding the future number of at-risk students, and in turn the number of poorly educated low-income workers, indicate that their population is rising rapidly and is expected to continue to do so under current practice (Levin, 1985).

The costs of failing to adequately educate students is detrimental to both the individual and society (Ramirez & Robledo, 1987). For the individual, failure to reach one’s
potential is to limit life’s opportunities, to deny prosperity, and to invite dependency and a life of despair. Dryfoos concluded from her studies that "early school failure is the single event that predicts almost insurmountable barriers to life’s opportunities" ("Successful Programs", 1991, p.255). For the country, an unskilled labor force translates into a loss of economic and political power, increased social welfare costs, and the potential for the development of a large underclass (Levin, 1985). Additionally, an undereducated citizenry challenges the viability of the democratic process that underpins our system of government (Venezky et al., 1987). There exists an urgent need to enable all of our youth to achieve an education that will allow them to succeed as adults in our society.

A number of studies have been conducted to determine the factors that place students at risk. Pallas, Natriello, and McDill (1989) found five key indicators: minority racial/ethnic group identity, living in a poverty household, living in a single-parent family, having a poorly educated mother, and having a primary language other than English. Similar factors were found by Rumberger (1983) who concluded that race and socioeconomic background were significant factors in the prediction of dropout behavior. Dropout rates were lowest for whites and highest for Hispanics, and
the percentage of dropouts for all races increased if the students came from a lower socioeconomic background.

In still other studies a host of factors have been associated with at-risk youth. Among them are substance abuse, teen pregnancy and parenting, delinquency, homelessness, child abuse, emotional problems, retention in grade, and learning handicaps. Frymier and Gansneder (1989) identified 45 factors associated with at-risk behaviors in an initial attempt to develop a scale to measure at-riskness. As these studies indicate, not only education, but also social and personal factors, may predispose students to be at risk.

Although no one factor is necessarily a predictor of at-risk behavior, the range of factors associated with at-risk students indicates the complexity of the issue. Meeting the needs of at-risk youth is a challenge that school reform efforts alone cannot address. The lives of at-risk students are filled with complications, many related to social and economic problems originating outside the educational arena. Schools cannot eliminate poverty or dysfunctional homes, prevent teen pregnancy or substance abuse, and yet these problems must be addressed if students are going to be able to learn. The complex problems demand comprehensive strategies (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1989) and these in turn may require resources beyond those available in schools.
Joining with community human service agencies in a collaborative effort is one strategy schools may pursue to confront the problems posed by at-risk youth. Collaboration refers to a joint effort undertaken by two or more agencies to solve a set of problems that no one agency can solve when acting alone (Gray, 1985). It may be viewed as an "ongoing meeting between and among schools, state agencies, state and local government and community organizations to resolve a common problem" (Rodriguez, McQuaid, & Rosauer, 1988, p.1), or more simply, as a group of individuals working together focused on common goals.

Increasingly, collaboration is being identified as a preferred strategy for involving the greater community in finding solutions to the problems of at-risk youth. In America’s Shame, America’s Hope (Smith, Lincoln, & Clark, 1988) we find stated:

It cannot be said too emphatically that the battle for the future of our at-risk youth must be won outside as well as inside the schools. In this battle the schools must realize that nothing less than a genuine collaboration will do. (p.37)

These sentiments were reiterated in the final report of the National Commission on Children (1991). The report concluded, "Now more than ever, schools and social agencies must work together on behalf of children with multiple and severe needs" (p.209).
Educators and other service providers are heeding the advice and encouragement to collaborate, and collaborations are proliferating (Kagan, Rivera, & Parker, 1991; Lieberman, 1986). Some are mandated by federal or state laws, others are voluntarily formed. However, despite the many ongoing efforts, there is only limited information about these collaborations: how they are initiated, what form they take, and how they carry out their tasks (Lieberman). Many school district personnel have limited knowledge of and little experience with collaboration (Fruchter, 1987). Between 1987 and 1990 more than 300 school boards across the United States were asked to rate themselves on 15 indicators of effectiveness. Among the five indicators on which they saw themselves as least effective were those pertaining to involving the community and relating with other government agencies ("Study Says," 1991). School board members, educators, and other service providers are in need of information about the process of collaboration. Beckard, as cited in Hord, (1986, p.23) argues that unless organizational leaders have the "knowledge and picture of some practical first steps" toward collaboration, the process cannot start.

Statement of the Problem

The primary question addressed by this study was how do selected public school agencies in Oregon collaborate with
community human service agencies to provide services for at-risk youth? Related questions included: 1) Why and how was the collaboration initiated?, 2) What is the structure of the collaboration?, 3) What are the characteristics of the process?, and 4) What are the outcomes of the process?

Approach to the Problem

The study focused on the collaboration of schools and community human service agencies as undertaken by four local youth services teams (YSTs). It was the intent of the study to provide an in-depth description of the characteristics of collaboration as found at the local level.

The nature of the research question called for an exploratory and descriptive approach. A qualitative multiple-case study design was chosen as the research design because the open-ended, inductive characteristics of the design, which emphasize understanding of process, matched the objectives of the study. The qualitative research approach provided a rich description of collaboration as derived from the context in which it occurred and as understood by those who were the collaborators.

Limitations

While the qualitative research paradigm was specifically suited to the study, it nevertheless imposed certain limitations inherent to the research design. First,
Generalization of the findings to other youth services teams and to other local collaborative undertakings was not possible. The cases used in the study were purposively selected and thus the findings were context bound. A second possible limitation was the fact that qualitative methods of data collection may also introduce bias. The researcher-as-instrument dominated the data collection and thus the reliability of the data depended on the skill and knowledge of the researcher. Throughout the study measures were taken to reduce researcher-introduced bias; however, the possibility of its presence remained.

Definition of Terms

In addition to the terms at-risk youth and collaboration which were defined in the text above, four other terms required definition.

Case management referred to an approach for providing education and human services to at-risk youth. The case manager acted as an advocate for the student as well as a broker of services. In addition, the case manager coordinated, monitored, and evaluated the services the student received.

Community human service agencies were defined as public organizations that provided one or more of the following services to youth and families: social services, mental health services, and law enforcement services.
Staffing referred to a process whereby YST members convened to discuss the problems or needs of a student and formulated a plan of action to address the problems.

Youth services teams referred to groups composed of education and community human service agency personnel who worked collaboratively to address the needs of at-risk youth. YSTs first appeared in Oregon in Marion County in the mid-1970's, primarily the result of efforts by the Marion County Juvenile Department to work more closely with schools. Since that time, the label "YST" has been adopted by groups throughout Oregon, although the groups vary widely from the Marion County model in membership, resource support, and the types of problems addressed. In essence, YSTs were found to represent a concept that is locally determined and applied.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter, a selected review of the literature, is divided into four sections. The first section examines the social/family, personal, and school factors that may place youth at risk and also reviews educational practices that have proven effective in promoting the academic achievement of at-risk youth. The literature review offered in the second section explores an interdisciplinary approach to meeting the needs of at-risk youth and families as undertaken through school-community human service agency collaboration. In section three, selected theoretical perspectives from the field of interorganizational collaboration are presented, and in section four, selected literature related to qualitative research methodology is reviewed.

At-Risk Youth

High dropout rates and large numbers of students exiting high schools with a diploma but few of the skills needed to enter the work force threaten our country's economic and political strength and portend a tragic future for the individuals themselves (Levin, 1985; Ramirez & Robledo, 1987). Who are the at-risk youth, what factors place them at risk, and what do we know about intervention and prevention programming?
There is no universal definition of the term at-risk youth. When it is used, it is important to ask, at risk of what? The economist might consider a minimum wage teenage employee as at risk of never gaining self-sufficiency. The health worker would view the nonimmunized child as at risk of disease, and the psychologist might see the depressed teen as one at risk of suicide. In this study the focus is centered on the educational arena and thus the term at risk is viewed from an educational perspective.

However, even delimiting the term to the field of education does not erase the ambiguity. Students may be defined as at risk because they exhibit low academic achievement, drop out of school, have learning disabilities, or erratic attendance. The list of possibilities is long. There appears, however, to be a common thread that prevails across definitions: poor academic performance ("Research Identifies", 1987). Thus for purposes of this study, at-risk youth are defined as "those children and youth who are likely to leave school at any age without those skills (academic, social, and/or vocational) necessary to lead a productive and fulfilled life in society" (Davis & McCaul, 1990, p. 6).

Factors That Place Youth at Risk

A number of research studies have been conducted to obtain data on school dropouts and other at-risk youth. One of the most comprehensive efforts was the "High School and
Beyond Study," a national longitudinal study that gathered data initially in 1980 on then tenth grade students (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1987). It employed a highly stratified national probability sample of approximately 30,000 tenth graders in over 1000 public and private high schools. Follow-up data were collected in 1982. The purpose of the study was to collect data on specific variables and to determine the significance of those variables as predictors of school dropouts. Other national studies, such as "Youth in Transition" and the "National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Labor Market Experience," and many more research efforts of a more limited nature have identified factors that may place a youth at risk (Wehlage & Rutter, 1987). These antecedent factors were often found to be interrelated, but for purposes of discussion they may be categorized under the following three headings: social/family factors, personal factors, and school factors.

Social/family factors. Poverty is perhaps the most pervasive factor associated with at-risk youth. Overwhelmingly, students categorized as at risk have been found to be children and youth living in poverty (Ekstrom, et al., 1987; McKinlay & Block, 1989; Rumberger, 1987). The significance of poverty as a risk factor prompted LaCrosse, Wisconsin, school officials to propose that schools be

Schorr (1989) observed that the impact of poverty was compounded by the fact that other risk factors were disproportionately found among the poor. More malnutrition and health problems were found to plague poor children and these often contributed to learning difficulties. There was a greater incidence of teen pregnancy, often accompanied by little if any prenatal care, and children of teen mothers were judged to be at greater risk of birth defects. Lower immunization rates have also been reported among poor preschoolers (Hodgkinson, 1989). The Children's Defense Fund (CDF, 1991) found that poor children were more often the victims of child abuse and neglect, and that poverty, more so than race, was a strong predictor of teen violent crime.

The negative impact of poverty on children and their chances of succeeding in school has been identified as a problem of increasing proportions. In several reports children were identified as the largest and fastest growing group of poor in the United States (Davis & McCaul, 1991, Levin, 1985). Hodgkinson (1989) estimated that 40% of the poor in the United States were children.

Poverty may lead to homelessness and transiency. Davis and McCaul (1991) reported that decreasing family incomes and a lack of affordable housing have increased the number of homeless families and that young children in families
comprised the fastest growing group among the homeless. The Children's Defense Fund (1991) estimated that one in five of those who were homeless was a child. Homelessness threatened both the physical and emotional health of the children as well as their cognitive development and thus placed them at risk of school failure (CDF). School attendance was made difficult not only because it was hard to develop a sense of belonging, but also because school procedures and policies presented barriers. Residency rules, record transfers, lack of transportation, and documentation requirements impeded school enrollment and attendance (Davis & McCaul, 1991; CDF).

Poverty cuts across all racial and ethnic groups, but research has indicated that belonging to a racial/ethnic minority can compound the disadvantages experienced (Davis & McCaul, 1991). Numerous studies have demonstrated that minority students, especially minority students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, were much more likely to drop out than were other students (Eckstrom et al., 1987; Fine, 1987; McDill et al., 1987; Wehlage and Rutter, 1986). O'Neil (1991) found that despite recent gains, black and Hispanic students continued to perform at levels below white students. These findings coupled with the fact that the population of minority students, particularly Hispanic students, was steadily rising, led Levin (1985) to conclude that schools will be faced with
greater numbers of at-risk students in the future. Overall, whereas 25% of children were minority children in 1982, it has been projected that 50% of all children in 2020 will be minority children (Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989).

Family instability may also place students at risk. Brodinsky and Keough (1989) found higher rates of absenteeism, tardiness, truancy, and disruptive classroom behavior associated with family dissolution. Living in a single-parent family, especially if that family was poor, increased the likelihood of school problems and of eventually dropping out. Children from these families tended to score lower on tests and to exhibit less classroom achievement (Davis & McCaul, 1991). Identified single parents were most often mothers, and increasingly they were poor. In 1983, 50% of children living in female-headed households were living in poverty (Hodgkinson, 1985). Pallas et al. (1989) predicted that between 1984 and the year 2020, the number of children not living with both parents would increase by 30%.

Evidence has also been provided that indicates that the level of education attained by parents may influence the school patterns of their children. In Rumberger’s (1983) analysis of data from the "National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Labor Market Experience" it was found that generally, the amount of education a student completed appeared to be linked to the education level of the like-sexed parent. For
females, the likelihood of completing school increased as the level of the mother's education increased, while higher education levels of fathers correlated with a reduced incidence of dropping out for males. Only among blacks did mother's education level appear related to the likelihood of dropping out for males, while father's education level did not appear to impact females in this regard among any racial group.

**Personal factors.** At risk youth have been found to engage in behaviors that limit their ability to profit from school. Early sexual activity was one such identified behavior. Unprotected sex placed adolescents at risk of HIV infection as well as other sexually transmitted diseases. It also placed them at risk of pregnancy and parenthood (CDF, 1991). It has been estimated that annually, approximately 1.5 million teenagers become pregnant; one in ten of all 15-19 year old females (Davis & McCaul, 1991). In 1988, both the actual number of births to teens and the rate of teen births increased dramatically among young women 15-17 years of age (CDF). While in the short term teen pregnancy and parenting limited normal social development, in the long term these young parents suffered from lower educational levels and reduced earning potential (Davis & McCaul). In their analysis of the "High School and Beyond" data, Wehlage and Rutter (1986) found that half of all female dropouts gave marriage or pregnancy as their reason
for leaving school. In her ethnographic study of dropouts in New York City, Fine (1987) found that 50% of teen mothers did not graduate from high school and teen fathers were 40% less likely to graduate than their nonparenting peers. The rates for Hispanic youth were even more dismal. It was estimated that only 33% of Hispanic teen mothers succeeded in earning a diploma (Davis & McCaul). In addition to the hardships teen parents faced, their children appeared to be at greater risk of poor health and developmental problems, thus having the potential to become the succeeding generation of at-risk youth (Hodgkinson, 1985).

Although the use of illegal drugs and alcohol has shown some decline in the last few years, the United States has continued to have the highest rate of teenage drug use of any of the industrialized nations (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1987). The physical, mental, and emotional impairments resulting from abuse have been noted to affect school performance (National School Boards Association [NSBA], 1989).

Like teen pregnancy, drug use may also impact future generations. Davis and McCaul (1991) cited fetal alcohol syndrome as the second leading cause of birth defects in the United States, and the number of drug-impaired babies has continued to increase markedly (National Commission on Children, 1991).
A factor often related to drug abuse and itself a risk factor is juvenile crime. Each year approximately 1.8 million adolescents are arrested for delinquent offenses, and the rate of incarceration of youth has risen steadily in recent years (National Commission on Children, 1991). In a survey of junior and senior high school students, Gottfredson (1988) found the prevalence and incidence of adolescent antisocial behavior astonishingly high.

Thirteen percent of the boys admitted damaging or destroying school property at least once in the past year, 19% admitted carrying a concealed weapon, 50% admitted hitting or threatening to hit another student, ... and 19% admitted stealing or trying to steal something worth more than $50. (p. 2)

Adolescents with problem behaviors were largely identified as males who engaged in a wide-range of antisocial behavior. In the school setting they exhibited poor attendance and disruptive behavior when in attendance. In his demographic studies, Hodgkinson (1989) noted that 82% of American prison inmates were high school dropouts.

A lack of self-esteem has been identified by researchers and educators as a major factor in students’ lack of motivation and poor attitude toward school (Brodinsky & Keough, 1989). In the analysis of the "High School and Beyond" data, researchers found that school dropouts had lower self-esteem than did those who stayed in
school (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Dropouts expressed less satisfaction with themselves and felt they did not have much of which to be proud. They tended to view their lives as being externally controlled (Ekstrom et al., 1987). Other investigators concluded that self-esteem was highly correlated with student performance (Nave, 1990), and therefore students with negative self-images were judged as more likely to be at risk of poor academic progress (Brodinsky & Keough).

Among other personal problems that appeared to place students at risk were long work hours (Mann, 1987) and family responsibilities. Fine (1987) noted that some students left school in order to care for relatives or to assist family members in accessing social services.

**School factors.** While it is possible to show a correlation between personal factors and a student's ability to succeed in the educational system, factors within the schools themselves must also be considered. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) and Fine (1987) urged researchers and educators to look beyond the apparent deficits of the individual and explore the attributes of schools that may negatively affect student progress.

In the "High School and Beyond Study" poor grades and a dislike for school emerged as the two most prevalent responses of students when they were asked their reasons for dropping out. Other reasons included not getting along with
teachers and feelings of rejection and alienation (Ekstrom et al., 1987). Across all groups of students there was a perceived lack of teacher interest in students and a belief that the discipline system was unfair and ineffective (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Within this context, dropouts were found to have cut classes more frequently, completed less homework, produced lower test scores, had more absenteeism and tardiness, exhibited lower levels of participation in school activities, and presented more discipline problems (Ekstrom, et al.).

Additional inhibiting school factors have been identified by a wide range of studies. Standardized testing used to determine promotion or grouping has been found to negatively impact the at-risk student. Mike Rose in Lives on the Boundary (Hakola, 1990) documented how the social problems associated with poverty may be misdiagnosed as learning handicaps and the students inappropriately placed in remedial or special education classes. Between 1976 and 1985, the number of students labeled as learning disabled increased 260% nationally while other special education populations remained fairly constant. Ninety percent of this increase was attributed to the placement of low achievers in special education (Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989). The cost of this practice was found to be high. Once students were labeled, the designation often was retained throughout their school years and had the potential
to negatively influence teacher expectations. Special education was also noted to be a financial drain on total school resources, and thus the more funds allocated for special education the less there was available for those at-risk students not placed in special education. Most importantly, research did not document that special education classes made a significant difference in the academic progress of low achievers (McPartland & Slavin, 1990).

Research has yielded conflicting conclusions on the effects of using pullout programs for remedial purposes other than special education. Archambault’s (1987) review of the literature on remedial pullout programs led him to conclude that rather than focus on compensatory education as a single strategy, it was more important to look at the design features of compensatory programs. He suggested that differences among such variables as the instructional setting, type of instructor, class size, and grouping procedures, may explain why such conflicting results have been found in the evaluation of compensatory education programs.

Using data collected from John Goodlad’s project, "A Study of Schooling," Oakes (1985) provided a comprehensive analysis of the practice of tracking and its effect on the education of students, particularly at-risk students. Based on her analysis of the data, she concluded that the practice
of tracking at both elementary and secondary levels produced unequal educational opportunities. Lower track classes were perceived negatively, and generally less-experienced teachers were assigned to teach them. Less time was allocated for instruction in the lower tracks, teacher behaviors were less likely to promote learning, the rapport between teachers and students and also that among students was less friendly and accepting, and teacher expectations were lower. The curriculum omitted much of what was found in upper tracks, thus making upward transfer almost impossible. In addition, placement in the lower tracks was correlated with low self-esteem, poor behavior, and dropping out. The way class was conducted also varied between tracks. Generally the upper tracks fostered autonomy and critical thinking while lower tracks imposed greater restraint and taught passivity, deference to authority, and following directions.

Gamoran’s (1990) study supported Oakes’ conclusions. Based on his findings and a review of the literature, Gamoran concluded that tracking actually served to widen the gap between students in upper and lower tracks. Homogeneous grouping in lower tracks did not promote the achievement of at-risk students. When at-risk students of similar socio-economic status and achievement were assigned to high and low tracks, those in the upper track classes demonstrated greater achievement than those assigned to
lower track classes. Tracking also appeared to segregate students based primarily on socio-economic status. Students of low socio-economic status with achievement equal to that of students of higher socio-economic status were less likely to be found in the college track.

Retention is yet another school practice that has been found to produce negative consequences for at-risk youth (Hahn, 1987; Slavin and Madden, 1989). While it has been suggested that some retention of students is used in an effort to provide extra help to the students and thus enable them to catch up, maintaining standards was more often found to be the motivation (McPartland & Slavin, 1990). Retention for any reason appeared to contradict the overwhelming research evidence that indicated retention did nothing to promote the long-term academic achievement of those retained. In their meta analysis of retention studies involving at-risk youth, Shepard and Smith (1989) found that when achievement was held constant, students who were promoted demonstrated subsequent achievement at the same or higher levels than those who were retained. Retained students did not reflect a more positive attitude toward school or greater self-esteem in later grades, and in fact, retention appeared to be strongly related to dropping out of school. Despite the research evidence, retention has remained one of the most entrenched practices in education, although it was noted that some school districts such as
Boston, New York City, and Chicago were rethinking their policies and searching for alternatives (Olson, 1990).

Concern that school reforms resulting from the excellence movement of the 1980's may actually hinder the school performance of at-risk youth has also been voiced. It is feared that longer school days, increased homework, higher standards, and a less varied curriculum may impose increased stress on those unable to meet pre-reform demands. Without additional support services, it was suggested that increased demands may mean increased school failure for at-risk youth (McDill, Natriello, & Pallas, 1987).

Although factors associated with at-risk youth have been discussed singularly, a number of authorities including Schorr (1989) and Wehlage and Rutter (1986) have suggested that it was usually a combination of risk factors rather than any one factor alone that predisposed students to school failure. At-risk youth appeared to be victims of multiple problems, a "nest of problems," to use Mann's (1987, p.7) terminology. It followed therefore, that programming for at-risk students should take into account these multiple problems and the way they interacted (Natriello, Pallas & McDill, 1987). Diverse student needs demanded diverse intervention and prevention strategies (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989).
Educational Programming for At-Risk Youth

Three decades of research and evaluation have provided substantial knowledge of what needs to be done to intervene and prevent children from growing up and leaving school without the skills necessary for a productive and satisfying life (Barr & Parrett, 1992; Schorr, 1989). It has been proposed that the multiple factors associated with at-risk youth demand a comprehensive and intensive response (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1989). Effective educational programming is one facet of the comprehensive approach that needs to be taken. While research has identified school factors that may contribute to placing a student at risk, research has also identified educational practices that lead to the improved academic achievement of at-risk students. It is programming for at-risk students from the perspective of the school that is the subject of the following section.

Early intervention and education. Early intervention and education has proven to be one of the most effective strategies undertaken to improve the chances of future success for children (Balasubramanian & Turnbill, 1988; McKinlay & Bloch, 1989; NSBA, 1989; Schorr, 1989). Follow-up studies of Head Start programs and the Perry Preschool Project demonstrated both positive short-term and long-term outcomes (National Commission on Children, 1991; McPartland & Slavin, 1990; Schorr, 1989). In the short term, preschool intervention helped to strengthen language
scores and improved general school readiness (NSBA). By second and third grade however, these effects were no longer detectable (Karweit, 1987; McPartland & Slavin, 1990; NSBA). On the other hand, positive effects surfaced again when the long-term outcomes were reviewed. Young adults who participated in the Perry Preschool Project showed less dependence on welfare, better employment records, increased income, and a lower incidence of teen pregnancy than those in the control group (National Commission on Children). An analysis of Head Start data provided similar findings in addition to noting fewer retentions and fewer referrals to special education among Head Start children. Higher graduation rates and lower delinquency rates have also been reported among Head Start children (Balasubramanian & Turnbull, 1988; McPartland & Slavin, 1990). Hodgkinson (1989) suggested that for every dollar that is invested in Head Start, seven dollars are saved in services that are not needed later: services such as those provided by welfare, prisons, and education.

Karweit's (1987) review of well-designed experimental studies of preschool programs for disadvantaged youngsters found significant effects in reduced retention, special education placement, and high school dropouts, but did not find a significant increase in academic achievement. The strong immediate impact on cognitive processing as measured by IQ was found to have minimal impact in the long term.
Karwait also cautioned that what we know about preschool programs has been learned primarily from model programs. What the effects are of preschool programs in general has not been well-documented.

Parent involvement was identified as a key factor in early intervention and preschool education by Balasubramanian and Turnbull (1988). The Missouri New Parents As Teachers Project was designed based on this assumption. As described, the project sent parent educators into the homes of high risk families to teach parents how to foster the development of their young, preschool children. It also sponsored monthly group parent meetings (NSBA, 1989).

Perkins and Mendel's (1989) description of the Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project indicated how the early intervention approach could be expanded. In an attempt to break the intergenerational cycle of undereducation and poverty, the project combined adult education, parent education, and preschool education. Through the process the parents and children were united in a positive educational experience. Among the project's objectives were an intent to increase the basic education and vocational skills of the parents, improve parenting skills, foster a positive attitude toward schools, and provide a stimulating, developmentally-appropriate preschool experience for disadvantaged three- and four-year olds.
Parent involvement. The evidence of the positive effects of parent involvement on student achievement has not been confined to the preschool level. Numerous studies have linked parent involvement with school success at all grade levels (Comer, 1986; Epstein, 1987; Peterson, 1989; Slavin & Madden, 1989). Parent involvement was a key factor in the success of the Comer Process as developed by James Comer of Yale University (Comer, 1986). This approach has documented remarkable results in increasing the academic achievement of at-risk students in some of the most disadvantaged schools in New Haven, Connecticut, and other metropolitan areas. Parents and teachers participated as members of the school management team, and under the direction of the principal developed the building master plan for school climate, academics, and staff development. Parents also worked in the classrooms and provided other support services. Through these activities a sense of trust was developed, mutual respect grew, and interest was fostered: all of which tied school and families closer together. Student success was the result.

Elementary school programs. Most of the research on effective instructional and organizational practice for at-risk students has been carried out at the elementary school level. McPartland and Slavin (1990) conducted an extensive review of the literature with regard to effective programs for elementary at-risk students and identified
three necessary program components: prevention, classroom change, and remediation.

Prevention as described by McPartland and Slavin involved intensive support services that were brought in at the first suggestion that a student was falling behind. At the first grade level, reading was the central focus. It was recommended that both small group instruction as well as tutoring be employed to guarantee that all children learn to read.

The researchers used the term "classroom change" (McPartland & Slavin, 1990, p. 10) to refer to the instructional practices of continuous progress and cooperative learning. At-risk students have been found to respond positively to self-paced learning that allows them to proceed through instructional sequences in an individualized manner, moving in and out of small instructional groups according to their skill level. Cooperative learning, based on small group learning that mixes students of varying ability levels and rewards the group on the basis of the progress made by the individual students, has also been identified as effective with at-risk students.

In their findings on remediation, McPartland and Slavin concluded that pullout remedial programs were ineffective unless they were based on one-to-one tutoring or computer assisted instruction. It was also proposed that they should
be of short duration and have as their goal the return of the student to regular classroom instruction as soon as possible.

Secondary school programs. Research at the secondary level for at-risk students was noted to be limited (McPartland & Slavin, 1990). However research and evaluation studies of alternative schools and dropout prevention programs and, more recently, findings from the effective schools research have identified essential program characteristics (Barr & Parrett, 1992; Hahn, 1987; McPartland & Slavin).

In their extensive review of the literature, McPartland and Slavin (1990) identified four areas that need to be addressed in developing a secondary program for at-risk youth: student success in school, positive student/adult relationships, the relevance of school, and outside factors that impact the student.

McPartland and Slavin noted that student success in school was enhanced through individualized instructional planning, the use of cooperative learning and tutoring, and the promotion of positive student/adult relationships. The latter was accomplished in a number of ways. Breaking large schools into smaller student units, decreasing the number of different teachers a student interacted with daily, assigning advisory teachers, and establishing mentor programs all served to personalize the student's school
experience and make it supportive. Additionally, Druian and Butler (1987) stressed that fair and consistent discipline also fostered positive student/adult relationships.

McPartland and Slavin (1991) found that understanding the relevance of school to one’s life in general was yet another key to the school success of at-risk youth. Work experience programs, vocational-technical classes, and making future job opportunities contingent on school performance all helped to link school to the student’s future adult role.

Lastly, McPartland and Slavin (1991) found that the importance of understanding the factors associated with the problems of at-risk youth cannot be understated. A holistic approach must be taken in addressing student needs and community resources called on as needed. Effective secondary prevention programs have been found to be comprehensive and integrated and to reflect the diversity of factors associated with at-risk students (Dryfoos, 1990). The abused student must have counseling; the pregnant teen, parenting classes; and the working student, flexible hours (Hahn, 1987; Wehlage et al., 1989).

The theme of effective practice for at-risk secondary students reached by Natriello et al. (1987) can be summarized by the term "school responsiveness" (p. 172). The authors observed that when schools responded to the needs of at-risk youth, these students were able to
progress. Smaller school/program size permitted more individualized attention. Individualized instruction and differentiated demonstration of mastery acknowledged differences in student learning styles. Sensitivity to cultural differences and the characteristics of the community also increased school responsiveness. The researchers noted that perhaps the most important component of school responsiveness was continuing self-evaluation. Knowing the impact of programs was deemed essential to developing effective practice.

Based on a study of fourteen schools identified as successful in their efforts to retain at-risk students in school, Wehlage et al. (1989) advanced a theory of effective schools for at-risk youth. The theory incorporated many of the same instructional and organizational practices that the preceding researchers identified, but the central concept of the theory rested on the social relationships within schools and the development of a sense of community. The major premise was that if schools are to retain students and foster their academic achievement and personal and social growth, then they must promote student membership and student engagement in school. Students must develop social and emotional ties to school and participate in activities as members of the larger group. They must also be involved in schoolwork, investing themselves in the completion of school tasks.
Instructional practices found to encourage school membership and engagement included small school/program size, cooperative learning, individualized instruction, a stimulating hands-on curriculum, continuous monitoring of student progress, and experiential learning opportunities. Additionally, the researchers noted the importance of a professional culture characterized by an extended teacher role, teacher accountability for student success, teacher and administrator shared decision making, and teacher authority to change programs to meet student needs.

Community partnerships/collaborations. To date, research on effective school programs for at-risk youth has largely centered on school curriculum, instruction, and organization. Recently however, as it has become evident that at-risk youth need services and programs that schools do not offer, the focus has broadened to include elements of the greater community. Dryfoos (1990) analyzed the characteristics of 100 successful prevention programs in the areas of teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, delinquency, and school failure and found the second most common characteristic of the programs to be their community-wide base. Through collaboration with other sectors of the greater community, schools have been able to facilitate the provision of varied services.

One manner in which schools have involved the greater community is through school-business partnerships. Levine
and Trachtman (1988) chronicled the growth of business participation, and through a series of case studies, documented the way schools and the business community collaborated. A summary of their findings follows.

Since the early 1980's, the involvement of the business community in education at the local, state, and national levels has increased substantially. The business sector has become greatly concerned about the quality of the work force and its impact on the ability of firms to remain competitive in world markets. Educational contributions have come to be viewed as long-term investments rather than philanthropy.

To enable schools to better meet the needs of at-risk youth, business support was offered in varying ways. At the local level, businesses contributed financial and material resources and often directly participated in school programs such as mentoring and tutoring programs. At the state and national levels, business contributed by taking an active part in the formation of educational policy. The Committee for Economic Development (CED) composed of 200 business executives and educators, played an active role in the analysis of educational issues and the design of strategies business could use to support education. Through its research activities and publications, CED fostered the dialogue between schools and business and demonstrated the need for community involvement in education.
Another outreach effort made by education on behalf of at-risk youth was found to be the formation of links with community human service agencies. Created at the local, state, and national levels, mandated and voluntary, these linkages further broadened the resource base that schools could call upon to address the needs of students. Further discussion of school-community human service agency linkages is found in the following section of the literature review.

The approach taken by educators to meet the needs of at-risk youth has gradually become more comprehensive. While continuing to develop and evaluate educational practices with regard to the organization and content of curriculum, instructional approaches, classroom management, and instructional grouping, schools have also broadened their efforts to provide support. The school-age population has been redefined to include youngsters below the age of five. Parents have been actively encouraged to become integral partners in the education process, and both the business sector and community agencies have been invited to join as partners in a community-based response.

School-Community Human Service Agency Collaboration for At-Risk Youth

The school as a participant in a multi-agency collaboration for the purpose of integrating educational and human services is a relatively recent development. The
newness of the phenomenon is reflected in the limited number of studies that describe, analyze, or evaluate such collaborative undertakings.

**Feasibility Study of Integrated Services**

A clear statement of the need for collaborative approaches to address the needs of at-risk students and their families emerged from the "New Beginnings Feasibility Study of Integrated Services for Children and Families" (Rodriguez et al., 1990). New Beginnings, an interagency collaborative, involved the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, San Diego City Schools and San Diego Community College District. In 1989 the collaborative undertook an action research project at Hamilton Elementary School to determine the feasibility of establishing a one-stop coordinated services center at the school. In the study, the needs of families and the impact of services provided by local agencies were assessed. Six research components made up the study: line worker focus group surveys, social action worker research, agency liaison action research, family interviews, data base match, and a migration study.

The findings of the study attested to the fragmentation of services and the barriers to effective service delivery created by the structure and operating procedures of individual agencies. Families were found to often be unaware of available services or how to qualify for them. When services were requested, families had to retell their
stories to multiple agencies in order to receive help. Each agency dealt with a piece of the picture: no holistic approach was available. Additionally, when a family left the area, they had to reapply for services all over again in their new location. Families were not the only ones found to be frustrated with the situation. Agency workers also expressed frustration and feelings of dehumanization in their roles.

Although the school was identified by the families as a place to get help, it could not adequately respond to the multiple needs of students and families. Like the other agencies, the school was structured to provide only particular services. Additionally, its focus was on the child, not the family, and thus its services were targeted for students. A lack of knowledge about other agencies hampered the school's ability to refer families for services.

As a result of the study's findings and an analysis of funds spent by each participating agency on services to families in the Hamilton area, the New Beginnings collaborative concluded that a more integrated approach to social service delivery was warranted and feasible. It was further recommended that a demonstration site of integrated social service delivery be located at Hamilton Elementary School. The program, a three-year pilot project, was initiated in July 1991, providing services to families with
children who lived in the Hamilton attendance area, including those with preschool children. Services were delivered at three levels: the school, the center, and the extended team. The latter was composed of agency workers who concentrated their work on Hamilton families but remained located in their home offices.

After the collaborative effort (including both the initial planning and the implementation of the pilot project) had been underway for a total of two years, the superintendent of the San Diego City Schools commented on the insight provided by the experience of collaboration (Payzant, 1992). Among his observations were the following:

1. There must be a catalyst for change, and leaders must provide it.

2. The amount of time necessary to work on issues surrounding the actual processes of collaboration should not be underestimated.

3. One government entity cannot have the major responsibility for planning and implementing the collaborative effort.

4. Policy makers and staff members must have patience.

5. Efforts have to be specific to each community.

6. No effort will succeed without regular opportunities for the users to inform the providers about their assessment of what is and is not working. (p. 145-146)
Mr. Payzant's comments reflected an informal evaluation of the collaborative effort underway in San Diego. A thorough evaluation of the project, supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, was planned to assess not only outcomes but the process as well.

**Surveys of School-Community Human Service Agency Collaboration**

The incidence of interagency collaboration for at-risk youth and discriminating characteristics of ongoing efforts have been the subject of several national surveys. In 1987, the Education Commission of the States surveyed the nation to collect information on state-initiated programs for at-risk youth (Rodriguez, McQuaid, & Rosauer, 1988). The programs surveyed covered a broad range of issues including teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and suicide prevention. From the survey responses, the authors determined that collaboration was happening in all states, though to varying degrees. There was consensus among respondents that collaboration was a feasible if not key approach to addressing the problems of at-risk youth; however, developing collaborations was found to be a difficult process with numerous barriers. Among the barriers identified were limited resources, inflexible policies, a lack of vision, and turf issues.

In 1988 the National Association of State Boards of Education (Levy & Copple, 1989) distributed a questionnaire
to all state education and human service departments and
some local officials, seeking information about interagency
groups, agreements, and programs that were concerned with
at-risk youth and their families. Information was also
collected about gubernatorial or state initiatives that
pertained to the issue of linking education and social
welfare services for at-risk youth and their families. The
findings from this survey provided information regarding the
choice of collaboration as a problem-solving approach to
meeting the needs of at-risk youth and families. The
findings also identified the achievements of such
collaborations and factors that facilitated successful
collaboration. A number of common factors emerged as the
impetus for collaborative action. Among them were:

1. the need to conserve scarce financial resources;
2. overlapping administrative responsibilities;
3. legal mandates;
4. new resources which are contingent on
   collaboration;
5. structured opportunities for people to work
together;
6. leadership of key officials; and
7. strong interest from the public or the
   advocacy/professional community in a
cross-cutting issue. (p. 5)
The accomplishments of the collaborations appeared to center around four outcomes:

1. support from a wider range of partners;
2. improvements in the delivery of existing services;
3. development of new kinds of services; and
4. creation of processes and structures that can support the evolution of broader-based collaboration. (p.8)

Factors identified as conducive to successful collaboration included commitment from top-level administrators/leaders, the involvement of all stakeholders early in the process, an initial focus on mutually recognized and agreed upon issues, and the setting of realistic time-frames.

Kagan, Rivera, and Parker (1991) conducted a study to identify and describe effective early care and education collaborations and to examine specific variables that impact the success of collaborations to improve services to young children. Key officials identified effective state and local collaborations that served young children, including young children deemed at risk. A stratified random sample was then used to select 72 collaborations for analysis. A telephone protocol strategy was employed to gather the data which centered on the collaborations themselves and did not include information on children or families.
No single model of collaboration emerged from the study as best. Successful collaborations were found to differ in type of mission, focus, origin, and structure, and these differences substantially impacted the way the collaborations undertook their tasks.

Although progress was not completely linear and sequential, the development of collaborations was found to progress through a number of predictable stages: "formation, conceptualization, development, implementation, evaluation, and termination/reformation" (Kagan et al., 1991, p. 5). At any one time, the collaboration might be involved in more than one stage of development and at times might return to a previous stage. The presence or absence of a supporting environment was noted to have a direct impact on the collaboration's development. It was also found that activities that occurred before the first delineated stage of formation were significant, suggesting that "preformation" (p.9) be added as a separate stage.

Other findings of the study concerned mediating variables. The need for a strong, objective, and effective leader was confirmed. Flexibility was determined to be absolutely necessary as was goal setting, and the availability of human and fiscal resources was found to vary depending on whether or not the collaboration was mandated or voluntary and whether the focus was that of systems change or service delivery.
With regard to outcomes, the authors concluded that the collaborations in the study had a positive impact on the early childhood care and education systems that served young children, including those at risk. The comprehensiveness of services and access to programs were increased, information was more available, and funds were more efficiently utilized.

Although collaboration was identified as a popular strategy and as meeting with some success, the authors noted the need for further research and evaluation and most importantly, the need for dissemination of the knowledge gained by these efforts.

**Case Studies of School-Community Human Service Agency Collaboration**

Several major case studies have been undertaken to explore the process of interagency collaboration for at-risk youth. Robinson and Mastny (1989) conducted a two-year study of the process used to establish collaborative links between middle schools and community social service agencies in two New Jersey pilot programs. Staff from both the schools and agencies designed the model used at the sites with technical assistance provided by Rutgers University faculty. Evaluation procedures were built into the model and involved a qualitative approach using participant observation. A content analysis strategy was used to
examine the data which consisted primarily of detailed logs kept by the observer.

Several repetitive themes in the collaborative process emerged from the data: (a) needs identification, or the social issues and problems which impact at-risk students; (b) resource identification, or the programs and services the school and agencies might bring to the collaboration; (c) organizational issues that create barriers to collaboration; and (d) project linkages, or the collaborative relationships established between the project participants. These themes and the information and experience gained from the project and related literature searches were incorporated into a handbook entitled *Linking Schools and Community Services* to guide those who desire to replicate the process.

In an effort to identify factors which facilitate the implementation of an interagency collaboration between schools and community agencies, Barron (1983) studied the Madison Park Collaborative, a collaborative involving one Boston public high school and public and private social service agencies which offered services at the school site. The qualitative case study relied on the review of internal and project documents, interviews, and personal participation for data collection.

As a result of the case study and a review of the associated literature, Barron advanced four propositions on
general factors which facilitate interorganizational relationships between schools and community agencies. First, the provision of direct services to students should be the motivation and focus of the collaborative. Second, the self-interests of both the involved organizations and key individuals within those organizations must be recognized and served during the implementation process. Third, there should be a clear definition of the activities associated with linking the organizational partners. No ambiguity should be present on either the school side or the organization side. Fourth, the role of the fixer or troubleshooter should be built into the implementation process.

Based on these propositions and the findings from the collaboration, Barron made a series of recommendations relative to the process of collaboration (modified from p. 175-176):

1. Schools should define the expected outcomes from a collaboration and should make sure the perspective partner(s) have the resources to fulfill the demands.

2. School information and access needed by agency staff to carry out their responsibilities should be provided.

3. Space for providing services to students should be made available within the school.
4. One person should have overall responsibility for program implementation at the school.

5. Financial support for the effort should be mutually shared among organizations.

6. Collaboration members should be formally linked.

7. It must be recognized that building trust among staff requires time.

The author closed her recommendations by noting the need for further research on collaborations that are built from the ground up, from the efforts of one school or school system.

Faddoul (1989) investigated the change process of the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, a collaborative effort involving the education, business, and local government sectors of Cincinnati, Ohio. In this case study, characteristics of the structure and processes of the collaboration were described and analyzed and implications for designing similar efforts noted. The findings emphasized the importance of six basic factors to the success of a collaboration: flexibility within the organizations, good working relationships, shared decision making, strong and dynamic leadership, skillful communication, and the availability of resources.

Similar factors emerged in an examination of coordination between education and other human service agencies conducted by Firestone and Drews (1987). In the
study, the researchers were interested in identifying the kinds of problems that developed and the reasons for them. Case studies of 15 local programs in three program areas (early intervention, student assistance, and teenage pregnancy and parenting) were developed based on interview data collected in telephone interviews. The interviews were conducted with personnel affiliated with each program, and at least four telephone interviews were conducted per program. Findings within program area and across program areas were then compared. The report of the study did not present findings at the level of the 15 local programs. A composite case of each program was presented instead.

Two distinct coordination problems were identified. One of the problems was interagency conflict, precipitated either by the survival concerns of the involved agencies or a difference in philosophy of service. Blockage of services was the second identified problem, brought about by the constraints of limited service capacity, difficult access, or lack of knowledge on the part of prospective clients about available services. To facilitate coordination, the authors made six recommendations: competition between agencies must be minimized, the members must share a similar philosophy and agree on common goals, regulations that block services must be changed, a coordinating council should be designated, the involved agencies must remain flexible
throughout the effort, and resources must be increased as demand for services increases.

Melaville and Blank (1991) analyzed 13 interagency initiatives identified, through an informal sampling process, as promising examples of efforts to create high quality comprehensive services for children and families. Each of the 13 local efforts, at a minimum, included one human service organization and one representative of the K-12 education sector. Data were collected primarily from document review of program materials and evaluation reports. In selected cases, telephone interviews were conducted to collect additional information.

Five variables, identified previously by Flynn and Harbin (1987) as key factors influencing the success or failure of interagency efforts, were used to analyze the 13 programs. These variables included climate, or the local, social and political environment; processes, the way in which communication among stakeholders is carried out and conflicts resolved; people, including the broad-based participation of community organizations, leadership of the effort, and program staff; policies, those associated with each of the participating organizations; and resource availability.

Based on their analysis and a review of selected literature in the field, Melaville and Blank offered 10
guideposts for those initiating interagency efforts to improve outcomes for children and families (modified from page 37):

1. Involve all key players. In addition to service delivery and systems level personnel, the families and children who are the recipients of the services should also be represented.

2. Choose a realistic strategy. Partners need to assess what kinds of changes the group can reasonably undertake.

3. Establish a shared vision. Agreement on the desired outcomes for children and families must be reached.

4. Agree to disagree in the process. Conflict must be resolved rather than avoided.

5. Make promises you can keep. Objectives should be realistic.

6. Keep your eye on the prize. Despite difficulties that are bound to arise, it is important to remain focused on the desired outcomes.

7. Build ownership at all levels. Management and staff must be involved in the planning as well as the implementation.

8. Avoid "red herrings". Take precautions to insure that perceived impediments do not become ready excuses for those looking for a way to bow out.
9. Institutionalize change. Changes in systems and service delivery will endure only if overall operating procedures of the involved organizations incorporate them.

10. Publicize your success. Funding, crucial for the maintenance and expansion of interagency efforts, will be more likely if improved outcomes for children and families are demonstrated.

The authors point out that while interagency efforts are each distinct and no one model may be proposed to fit all circumstances, these suggestions may, at least, provide guidance to those undertaking the creation of an interagency approach to improving services.

Evaluation of School-Community Human Service Agency Collaboration

Given the relatively recent development of school-agency collaborations, there were few evaluations of school-human service agency collaborations found in the literature. One of the earlier studies was conducted by Murray, Bourque, and Mileff (1981) to evaluate the Cities in Schools (CIS) Demonstration Project, 1977-1980. The CIS Project utilized a case management model designed to integrate social services within inner city schools. As conceptualized in the model, city government and local agencies would outstation existing staff in the schools, creating a new configuration of human services delivery.
The authors pointed out that the evaluation could never answer the question of whether or not the delivery of human services could be reconfigured because the model was not fully implemented. Thus, based on this study, no conclusions could be drawn about the CIS model as originally configured. However, the evaluation of the program as it was actually implemented identified some major problem areas. The relationship of CIS with the school system was ambiguous and viewed with suspicion by some. In several instances the program moved out of the school building because of a poor school-CIS relationship. At some sites the outstationing of social service staff never occurred. Funding problems also contributed to limiting the model as did some negative administrative decisions. One positive result was the finding that the daily presence of social service personnel at the school location facilitated screening for social services; however, provision of social services by on-site staff was not realized to the extent originally expected. In conclusion, it was noted that CIS did not show negative results. It simply was never fully implemented and did not meet expectations.

In 1991, a two-year national evaluation of the CIS Project was begun by the Urban Institute. A major component of the evaluation involved identifying ten successful programs which used the CIS model and describing how collaboration was achieved between public and private
sectors and how human services were repositioned (Program Evaluation, 1991).

A second evaluation study, Orr (1989), looked at the Focus on Youth Demonstration Project in the Los Angeles and Compton Unified School Districts. The program was designed to serve at-risk youth by integrating community human services with educational programs at the school site. A second program goal was to foster integration of the Focus service model with the day to day operating procedures of schools.

The goal-based evaluation design made use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data collected on students included demographic information and information related to unexcused absences, enrollment status, grade point average, source of and reason for referral to the Focus Project, the type of agency referred to, and student follow-through on that referral. All data were recorded on the Master Data Form by Focus on Youth coordinators.

Qualitative data consisted of questionnaires and interviews that were used to gain the perspectives of the various stakeholders: students, project staff, service providers, school administrators and staff, and district administrators.

All of the instruments used in the study, including the questionnaires and interview formats, were designed
specifically for this evaluation and all were pretested. Face and content validity were established as was reliability of subscales in survey instruments.

Orr concluded that the Focus on Youth model project was a remarkable success. The coordination of public and private agencies to provide services to at-risk youth was accomplished, the dropout rate was reduced, and the Focus on Youth model was refined and clarified for use in the maintenance phase. Several factors were identified as crucial to the program's success. First, the presence of a school principal who is strongly supportive and involved in the program was found to be a key element. The presence of a fully functioning school study team was also found to be important, although the author did not explain how other variables were ruled out in arriving at this conclusion. School teams consisted of administrative and counseling staff, school faculty, educational aides, community representatives, clerical staff and others. As the teams developed, they assumed the referral and outreach activities that were originally the responsibility of the Focus coordinators. Schools, with teams that regularly met once a week and which followed the progress of students and evaluated the effectiveness of the coordinated services, exhibited lower dropout rates than schools with teams that were underdeveloped or schools without teams.
Two new directions in the Focus Project were unanticipated but noted in the evaluation. First, the utilization of resources in the school service area seemed to create a neighborhood awareness of the problems of at-risk students and the need for local agencies to assume responsibility for service. Second, the involvement of community representatives on school study teams surpassed expectations. Both of these results would appear to further the evaluator's recommendation of the Focus on Youth Project as a desirable model for replication.

More recently, an evaluation was conducted of two of Missouri's Caring Communities Program sites (Philliber and Swift, 1991). Caring Communities, a state initiative begun in 1989, involved the Missouri Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Mental Health, and Health and Social Services. The goal was to restructure the way services were offered to families, overcoming barriers that impeded access and efficiency. The specific objectives of the initiative were to provide support that would enable families to stay together, improve the academic performance of children in school, and prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system.

At the time of the evaluation, one of the sites, the rural two-county Northeast Missouri site, was just beginning to provide services to families, and thus an evaluation of program outcomes was premature. The second site in the
urban Walbridge community had been operating about 18 months and thus an outcome evaluation was carried out, although it was noted that the evaluation constituted a preliminary examination of outcomes. The evaluation was focused on the three objectives of the program as stated above. Data for the assessment of school progress were available, although poor school records posed some problems. Data were either inconsistent or nonexistent with reference to the other two objectives, and thus the evaluation of outcomes centered on school progress.

The evaluators concluded that children at Walbridge who received the most intensive services of Families First or case management demonstrated "large and consistent improvements in academic performance" (p. 17). However, small sample sizes and age differences in the groups compared during analysis raised serious questions about the reliability of the conclusions drawn. The evaluators acknowledged the limitations of the study and suggested steps that should be taken to ensure that a reliable data base will be available for future evaluations.

Between September 1989 and August 1990, a process evaluation of three Connecticut Family Resource Centers was undertaken (Yale Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, 1991). The Family Resource Centers (FRCs), established by 1988 state legislation, represented a cooperative effort by the Department of Human Resources and
the State Department of Education to create a system of coordinated and comprehensive child care and family support services at the local level. The centers were located in public schools and combined the resources of both community programs and the public schools. The Department of Human Resources was designated as the oversight agency. Seven services were provided: full-day child care for preschool and school-age children, training and support for family day care providers, parent education and parent support services, and teen pregnancy prevention services.

The purpose of the process evaluation was to gather information about program implementation during the first year of operation in order to enhance program operation and facilitate replication. Specifically, the evaluation addressed the population and objectives of the program and the provision of a coordinated and comprehensive system of child and family support services.

A multi-method approach to data collection was employed. Interviews were conducted, meetings observed, documents reviewed, printed surveys were distributed, and meeting attendance and program enrollment statistics collected. The results of the study indicated that at each of the three sites satisfactory progress was made toward meeting program goals as established by the Department of Human Resources. The data indicated that children and families were being served successfully and that staff held
a positive attitude about the program. It was also found that germane to the implementation phase of the program was ongoing replanning and modification with resultant changes in both community programs and the public school system. In particular, the mission of the public school system was broadened to include child care and family support services. These changes were noted to cause some level of conflict, much of it stemming from a perception of roles in the new system as competitive rather than co-equal.

The study’s recommendations for continued effectiveness in implementing Family Resource Centers were:

1. develop a coordinated client management system;
2. establish a single entry point for parents accessing services;
3. increase the profile of the FRCs in the community; and
4. revise DHR guidelines for implementation. (p.37)

In summary, the program evaluators noted the program results as impressive considering the short duration of the program’s operation.

Several observations can be made about the research conducted to date on the topic of school and community human service agency collaboration for at-risk youth. The incidence of collaboration at the state and local level has been documented. While factors associated with successful collaborations have been identified in the research, few if
any studies have established a causal relationship. Likewise, factors that may hinder the collaborative process have also been identified. Some knowledge of the collaborative process has emerged, but more studies are needed to explain the process, particularly studies that would provide the description and analysis of the development and implementation of collaborations at the level of the local school/school district. Some effort has been made to identify the developmental stages of collaboration, and, while the popularity and prevalence of collaborations has been established, there have been few evaluations that attest to their effectiveness. As more research is planned of school-agency collaboration the growing body of literature on the more generalized topic of interorganizational collaboration may prove helpful in guiding the approach taken as well as in the interpretation of findings.

Interorganizational Collaboration

The working relationships between otherwise autonomous organizations have been the subject of study for a number of decades, beginning in the 1960’s. Research traditions of varying disciplines have framed the research, and a number of different forms of interorganizational linkage have been identified, collaboration being one of them (Whetten, 1981). However, the research to date has been criticized as too
narrowly focused, failing to capture the multiple effects of collaboration or to present the viewpoints of clients or staff members of the system under investigation. Additionally, it has been stated that the research has failed to reflect the evolutionary nature of the relationships (Flynn & Harbin, 1987; Rogers & Whetten, 1982).

In response to these criticisms, studies utilizing whole systems as the unit of analysis have begun to emerge in the field (Cummings, 1984; Lawless & Moore, 1989). Gray's (1985) domain-based, process-oriented model of interorganizational collaboration was developed to reflect the whole systems approach. The model differs from other perspectives on interorganizational relationships in four specific ways:

1. Rather than concentrating on a particular organization and its relationships with other organizations, the focus is on the problem domain or the "set of actors (individuals, groups, and/or organizations) that become joined by a common problem or interest" (Gray, 1985, p.912). As stated by McCann (1983), the problem domain exists independent of a particular organization and is "... in fact, a conceptual or cognitive unit..." (p. 179). The domain focus reflects the recent shift in emphasis in interorganizational relations research.
2. The problem domain represents an underorganized system that has the potential of developing more structure as a network or federation (Gray, 1985). Much of the previous interorganizational research concerned itself with highly structured relationships between organizations (Lawless & Moore, 1989; Rogers & Whetten, 1982).

3. The problem domain cannot be adequately addressed by any single organization: resources of other stakeholders are needed (Gray, 1985). The complexity of contemporary problems has changed the environment within which organizations function, and thus new strategies are required to deal with the turbulence or uncertainty that has resulted (Lawless & Moore, 1989; Miles & Snow, 1986). Interorganizational collaboration is one such strategy. As noted by Rogers (1982), interorganizational collaboration represents a collective rather than an individual response to a shared task environment.

4. The model, in contrast to other cross-sectional approaches, is process-oriented, concerned with "... the need for and development of collaborative relationships within organizational domains" (Gray, 1985, p. 913). Miles and Snow (1986) observed that "New organizational forms arise to cope with new environmental conditions. However no new means of organizing or managing arrives full-blown; usually it results from a variety of experimental actions ..." (p. 64). Interorganizational collaboration, like the
problems it addresses, has been described as dynamic and evolutionary.

In her model, Gray identified three phases in the process of developing collaboration: problem setting, direction setting, and structuring. The three phases were first proposed by McCann (1983) as the basic processes of social problem solving. Gray expanded McCann's framework, adding general propositions as to conditions which facilitate each phase. It is important to note that although the three phases appear to be sequentially ordered, in fact they overlap and interact as the social context changes (McCann).

Gray and Wood (1991) stated that a comprehensive theory of collaboration does not yet exist. Various existing organization theories with an orientation toward the individual organization offer some potential in developing a general theory of collaboration, if they can make the shift to the interorganizational domain. However, the authors noted the need for additional research, particularly case research, that addresses the preconditions that give rise to collaborative alliances, the process of collaboration, and the expected outcomes.
Qualitative inquiry as a way of approaching the empirical world has had a long tradition in the fields of anthropological and sociological research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). In education, where it is more commonly referred to as naturalistic inquiry, it has increasingly become accepted as an alternative or complement to quantitative inquiry (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). Rather than establish cause-effect relationships or test hypothesis, the intent of naturalistic inquiry is to understand social phenomena from the point of view of the actors as they relate to the situation in which they occur (Singleton, Strait, Strait, & McAllister, 1988). Naturalistic inquiry offers a nonpredictive, descriptive approach, one that pays attention to the particulars of the phenomenon rather than concentrating on general laws (Cziko, 1989). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed five key axioms they believe underpin naturalistic inquiry. They are:

1. Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic.
2. Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.
3. Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible.
4. All entities are in a state of mutual, simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
5. Inquiry is value-bound. (p. 37-38)

Acceptance of the axioms of the naturalistic paradigm has implications for the conduct of research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified the major characteristics of research undertaken from the naturalistic perspective to include the following (modified from p. 39-43):

1. Research is carried out in the natural setting. If reality is holistic and time- and context-bound, then understanding of a phenomenon can only be achieved in the natural setting. No manipulation or control of variables is undertaken.

2. The researcher is the primary data-gathering instrument. Man, adaptable and responsive, is best suited to the changing and interactive context of the study. While the investigator realizes that his presence will have an effect on the subject of study, steps are taken to minimize this influence. Critics have identified the subjectivity inherent in man as a weakness of qualitative study, but others, Wolcott (1990), have claimed it as a strength. Wolcott pointed out that he makes a special effort to reveal his feelings and personal reactions to the reader.

3. Tacit as well as propositional knowledge is valid. Tacit knowledge, as defined by Stake (1978), consists of "... all that is remembered somehow; minus that which is remembered in the form of words, symbols or other rhetorical forms" (p. 6). Goldenberg and Gallimore (1991) used the
term "local knowledge" (p.2), noting that it referred to understanding that emerges only through experience. In qualitative study, the direct experience of the researcher in the natural setting yields tacit knowledge or understandings that eventually are expressed through language and thus become propositional knowledge.

4. The focus of the research, the problem statement, guides the study; however, the design of the study remains flexible, evolving as the researcher uncovers new data. This is not to say that there is no preplanning in naturalistic inquiry. Like the conventional researcher, the naturalist must decide on an initial focus, select initial sampling units, and plan for data collection and analysis. The important difference is that these plans may change as the study progresses.

5. Qualitative methods are preferred to quantitative methods, although both may be used. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) described qualitative methods as reflecting the human side of life and judged them as especially suited to the qualitative researcher's search for subjective understanding. Observation, interviewing, and the review of documents are among the most common qualitative methods, and each is basically an extension of normal human behaviors. Their use reflects the researcher-as-instrument approach. Merriam (1988) observed that frequently a study employs
multiple methods which help to strengthen the reliability of findings.

6. Sampling is purposive, the decisions based on the need to provide a thick description of the relevant particulars of the context. Although the researcher may arbitrarily choose the first sampling unit, subsequent units are selected on the need to expand, test, or fill in information. Sampling is not representative; generalizability is not a concern. Miles and Huberman (1984) pointed out that processes, settings, and events are part of the sampling process as well as individuals.

7. The analysis of data proceeds in an inductive manner. Abstractions are built from particulars; data are not collected to prove or disprove a priori hypotheses (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

8. Theory emerges as the research is conducted and is grounded in the data collected. Only after data are collected and analyzed can theory be generated to describe and explain the phenomenon.

9. Meaning and interpretation are derived from the respondents in the situation or process. The naturalist seeks to represent the multiple realities perceived by the respondents in context, holding personal assumptions and impressions in abeyance. Only the respondents can determine the validity of the researcher's findings. Respondent feedback has been described as a source of "phenomenological
validity" (Bronfenbrenner in Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 242) as well as a sound ethical practice.

10. Data are interpreted based on the particulars of the case. Generalizations cannot be applied to specific cases. The naturalist seeks understanding based on experience. Since every situation is unique, applying lawlike generalizations to a phenomenon under investigation is useless. The researcher must become immersed in the particular context in order to gain understanding. Meaning is tied to context.

11. Generalizability or transferability of findings can only be made with great caution. Lincoln and Guba approached this issue conservatively. They felt it was the responsibility of the researcher to provide enough thick description so that others, equally knowledgeable about the new situation, could decide whether or not the findings could be transferred. Schofield (1990) basically agreed with Lincoln and Guba, but suggested that site selection may be used to enhance generalizability.

12. Establishing the trustworthiness of the research demands alternative criteria to those derived from the positivist paradigm. Lincoln and Guba used the term trustworthiness to mean the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of findings. These terms were offered as alternatives to the terms used in conventional research; that is, internal and external
validity, reliability, and objectivity. It was noted that there is no consensus in the field of qualitative research on the terminology associated with judging the value and applicability of qualitative research findings. For instance, Wolcott (1990) questioned the use of the term trustworthiness, but somewhat supported the four contributing terms. The field of qualitative inquiry is characterized by differences of opinion and debate. As Eisner and Peshkin (1990) noted:

No longer need we look over our shoulders to find antagonists; just looking around us in the qualitative camp suffices to identify sufficient spurs to reflection and debate to inspire a whirlwind of intellectual robustness. (p.303)

13. The results of the research are most often reported in the descriptive format of the case study.

Naturalistic inquiry can therefore be described as an approach that allows a flexible, open-ended, but nonetheless systematic exploration of social phenomena in the natural setting. To achieve the end goals of description and understanding, careful analysis of the data are necessary.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

Miles and Huberman (1984) developed a model of qualitative data analysis that featured three interrelated and concurrent components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing/verification.
Data reduction was explained as the "... process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the 'raw' data that appear in written-up field notes" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Coding, pattern coding, and memoing were three techniques cited that may be used in data reduction. The coding or categorizing of data could be carried out at a descriptive level involving no interpretation, or it could reflect inferences drawn by the investigator. Pattern coding, as its name implied, referred to the identification of trends or patterns that appeared in the data. Pattern codes are initially very tentative and are used to help the researcher make some sense of accumulating data and to guide subsequent data collection. They should be loosely held, subject to change as additional data are obtained. Memoing referred to the process of reflecting on the data and recording reactions.

The second component of the analytical process, data display, referred to the graphic illustration of data to facilitate data analysis. Both the generation as well as the interpretation of the displays required analytic and inductive processing.

The third analytic activity was conclusion drawing/verification. Throughout the study the researcher attempts to integrate the findings and discover the meaning inherent in them. Once a conclusion is drawn, it is necessary to verify or explain how it was reached.
Taylor and Bogdan (1984) noted that the analysis of data occurs during data collection as well as after; however, data analysis and interpretation usually become the main focus of the researcher near the completion of data collection. The two researchers outlined a basic approach to data analysis that is concerned with "developing an in-depth understanding of the settings or people under study" (p. 129). Three phases of analysis were identified: discovery, coding, and discounting.

The discovery phase may occur somewhat during data collection as well as after data collection is completed. It is characterized by several readings of all the data during which the researcher's reactions to the data are recorded, emerging themes in the data identified, and concepts developed. The coding phase entails the development of coding schemes and their application to the data. This is an iterative process as codes are revised to more accurately reflect the data, and the relationships between codes are analyzed. Gradually, through repeated handling of the data, the understanding of the subject is refined. In the final phase, discounting, the data are evaluated and interpreted taking into consideration how they were collected and from what sources, influences factors in the environment may have had on the data, and the affect the researcher's personal biases may have had on the analysis and interpretation.
The work of Miles and Huberman (1984) and Taylor and Bogdan (1984) represent significant contributions in the development of a bank of methods to be used in the analysis of qualitative data. However, as noted by Taylor and Bogdan, the approach used in any analysis of qualitative data is largely developed by the individual researcher.

The Contribution of Qualitative Research

The value of research conducted in the tradition of the naturalistic or qualitative research paradigm has been noted by authorities in a number of fields. Schorr (1988) in writing about public policy initiatives for the disadvantaged, commented on the value of qualitative research:

Judgments about what works should be based on a thoughtful appraisal of the many kinds of evidence available.... Relying on common sense, prudence, and understanding in interpreting evidence does not mean sacrificing rigor in assessing information. But applying human intelligence may bring us closer to policy relevant conclusions than reliance on numbers that have been manipulated in ways that ultimately conceal a basic ignorance of what is really going on. (p. 270)

Similarly, in the field of interorganizational relationships Whetten (1982) has called for the use of naturalistic or qualitative research to "... develop a deep
and sensitive understanding of the phenomena being measured" (p. 103). He noted that quantitative research has failed to address the complexity of interorganizational relationships, and therefore is limited in its ability to yield understanding.

In the field of education, Cziko (1989) pointed out the value of qualitative studies at the macro level:

Detailed descriptive studies of educational policies, practices, behaviors, feelings, and outcomes is of interest and value in that it leads to an appreciation of the complexity of education and suggests what is possible and what may not be. Most important, it provides ideas for innovations, a crucial source of variation for education to continue to grow and evolve creatively. (p. 23)

The value of qualitative or naturalistic research in the social sciences has been increasingly acknowledged and the field has evolved into an established and a defined, if somewhat loosely, entity. In the estimation of Eisner and Peshkin (1990) as qualitative research courses are taught, books written, and faculty appointments made based on qualitative research competency, the field will become institutionalized.

**Case Study Research**

As noted in the characteristics of naturalistic inquiry identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985), case study research
has been a commonly employed research strategy in qualitative work. Indeed, Herriott and Firestone (1983) referred to the case study as the "classical qualitative educational research design" (p. 14). Yin (1984) defined the case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). As such, the ability of the case study to present an holistic view of complex social phenomena has been noted as a unique strength. In Yin's opinion, "The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated" (p.19).

Stake (1978) defined the case as a "bounded system" in which the boundaries determine what the study is about rather than a priori hypotheses. Like Yin, Stake noted the strength of the case study in describing complex situations holistically, and further pointed out that it is the understanding generated by the study that is of primary importance. "Its best use appears ... to be for adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding" (p.7).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) found the fit between the case study and the naturalistic paradigm to be a good one. The case study provides the thick description that is a mainstay of qualitative research and also provides a format for
successfully communicating with the research consumer. Further, it is an approach that is able to reflect the idiosyncrasies of the study: the multiple realities, the interactions between researcher and respondents, the values inherent in the study, and the ongoing changes that occur. Donmoyer (1990) supported their thinking. He concluded that the value of the case study lies in its ability to provide vicarious experiences of the unique. He judged this to be an opportunity to see a situation through the filter of the researcher's personal theoretical position and also an opportunity to expand the range of interpretations and, in turn, the cognitive structure of the reader. In addition, Donmoyer expressed the opinion that case studies provide a less threatening way to introduce a new concept: the consumer being less apt to react defensively.

The use of the case study as a method of social inquiry has been a major approach in social science research for many years. Its popularity continues in qualitative or naturalistic research because of its ability to add to experience and to improve understanding (Stake, 1978).

Summary

The foregoing review of literature concerned with the factors that place youth at risk and the educational programming that is undertaken to address the needs of these youth provides a basis for the statement of the problem made
in Chapter 1. The subsequent review of the literature on school-community human service agency collaboration for at-risk youth demonstrates the limited number of studies upon which our knowledge and understanding of such collaborative efforts rest and has thus established the warrant for further research. Finally, the selected review of literature pertaining to interorganizational collaboration and research methodology provides support for the approach to research described in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The research question addressed by this study was how do selected public schools in Oregon collaborate with community human service agencies to provide services for at-risk youth? It was found that only limited research had been conducted in the field of school-human service agency collaboration, and a need for basic, descriptive information about these collaborative efforts existed. Thus an exploratory and descriptive research approach to the question motivating this study was warranted.

Research Design

A qualitative multiple-case study design was chosen as the research design. Qualitative case study research provides an holistic understanding of phenomena from the perspective of the participants. It is research that "... is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather then ends" (Merriam, 1988, p. 17). The result of a qualitative case study is a detailed examination of a subject with extensive data embedded in the context of the natural setting. These characteristics of qualitative case study design were found to be congruous with the study's purpose; that is, the exploration and description of local school-community agency collaboration. The decision
to use a multiple-case approach was based on a desire to enlarge the data base and thus increase the robustness of the study.

Selection of the Cases

The qualitative research paradigm specifies that sampling is not representative. Selection of the sample or case to be studied is done in a purposive manner to identify a case that is information rich. Nominations of school-community human resource agency collaborations to be used as cases for the study were solicited from selected state-level administrators of Oregon education and human service agencies. Personal interviews were also conducted with professionals associated with five different school-human service agency collaborations in an effort to gain an overall understanding of the models and to probe for other possible cases. In addition, the researcher conducted a telephone interview with educational service district (ESD) personnel in each of the Oregon educational service districts to identify ongoing school-community human service agency collaboration. Once the nominations were received and the interviews completed, cases as the units of analysis were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The effort had been ongoing for at least a year and entailed regular meetings that were held at least once a month during the school year.
year and entailed regular meetings that were held at least once a month during the school year.

2. At a minimum, one school and two community human services agencies were involved.

3. The collaboration was identifiable by name.

4. There was an identified core membership group.

5. Providing services to meet the needs of at-risk youth at the service delivery level was the focus of the effort.

6. The members of the collaboration were willing to participate in the study.

Eight youth services teams (YSTs) in two Oregon counties met the criteria outlined above and were initially selected as the cases for the study. In addition to meeting the basic criteria as ongoing, information-rich examples of school-community agency collaboration, the teams also enjoyed a positive statewide reputation and had received some national recognition. In brief, these youth services teams represented voluntary collaborations with no regulatory authority. They were composed of school and community human service agency representatives who periodically met to address the multiple needs of referred at-risk youth.

Once planning began for the conduct of the study, it became obvious that the demands of conducting eight case studies would far exceed the resources available for the
study. As a result, the number of teams was reduced to four. Selection of the four teams was based on incorporating as much of the variation that existed among the eight teams as was possible. Thus the four teams selected varied in age, one to six years; in location, two in each county with two in rural settings, two in cities; in coordinators, three were coordinated by school personnel, one by an agency representative; in the number of school districts served, one team was regional, the others served single school districts; and in case management, only one team had case management services (See Figure 1).

The four teams selected will be referred to as Teams A, B, C, and D throughout this manuscript; their respective counties, as County E and County F. Team A and Team C were both county seats and cities of comparable size. Similar numbers of students were enrolled in the public schools in both cities. The number of students enrolled in schools served by Team B was comparable to the number enrolled in Team C schools.

Data Collection Methods

The study was based on qualitative data. Patton defined qualitative data as follows:

detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>County E</th>
<th>County F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team A</td>
<td>Team B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Founded</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Rural Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Districts Served</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management Offered</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Variation among youth services teams as defined by selected criteria.
beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories. (Patton, quoted in Merriam, 1988, pp. 67-68)

To obtain such data, a multiple-method approach to data collection was employed which involved three techniques: interviewing, observation, and document review. Interviews comprised the majority of the data and both semi-structured and structured interview formats were used. A structured format involving six questions was used in telephone interviews with school counselors (see Appendix A). These interviews were initiated well into the study and were added to the overall design because of the need for a specific type of information. The structured format, in which the wording and the order of presentation of the questions was the same for all respondents, was appropriate for the purpose (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A semistructured interview format was used in the person-to-person interviews conducted with advisory board and YST members and selected school administrators. An interview guide (see Appendix B) which outlined the topics to be covered was used to offer some structure, but the exact wording of questions and their sequence were not defined. This approach offered the flexibility to pursue unanticipated lines of questioning that were suggested in the course of an interview. It also allowed the interview
to be personalized based on the background and youth services team experience of the respondent, thus capitalizing on the insight unique to a particular individual.

Two other primary sources of qualitative data were observation and document review. Observation of meetings was carried out to gather firsthand information. The observations centered on the activities and interactions of the individuals in attendance at the meetings, and field notes were used to systematically record the observations. Documents in the form of printed material and a video tape were reviewed to gain yet additional information and understanding. The documents were all produced independent of the research and consisted of the records of meetings, the formal agreements and bylaws of the teams and boards, and other miscellaneous documents associated with the YSTs.

The collection of data utilizing qualitative methods is highly dependent upon the researcher-as-instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and thus the proficiency of the researcher in carrying out data collection is of utmost importance. To hone the skills of the researcher in this study, a pilot study was conducted.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was carried out during February and early March of 1992. A youth services team that served yet
a third county in Oregon was the case selected for the study. The case was chosen based on information gathered in the identification of the cases for the main study, particularly the convenience of its location and the willingness of team members to participate. The primary purpose of the pilot study was to provide the researcher with an opportunity to refine data collection procedures. Overall data collection plans were evaluated, and methods of observing, interviewing, and document review were applied in a setting similar to that anticipated for the main study.

The pilot study represented a restricted version of the main study that followed. Only youth services team members were interviewed and only one team meeting was observed. The review of associated documents was also restricted, composed primarily of the interagency agreement that created the team, procedural forms used by the team, and information about services in the community for at-risk youth.

Although not as comprehensive as the effort undertaken in the main study, the pilot did provide valuable insight into a number of aspects of the proposed study. Additional issues/themes to explore in the interviews were suggested, and the interview guide was revised to reflect these. The pilot study also emphasized the value of observing the team in action, increased the researcher's sensitivity to the time factor involved in interviewing, and gave evidence that audio taping might prove to be an inhibiting influence for
some people. The pilot study also provided an opportunity for the researcher to self-evaluate her interviewing skills.

Data Collection

Data collection for the main study began in March of 1992 and was largely completed by the end of June 1992 with the exception that some documents were studied in later months. Interviews, observations, and document review were employed to gather the data. Access to respondents, meetings, and documents was achieved with the help of staff from the local education service district. The researcher initially contacted an ESD social services consultant, who worked closely with the youth services teams and advisory boards, and explained the proposed study. The consultant endorsed the proposed study and agreed to facilitate the researcher's entry. She and another staff member took the proposal to each advisory board and successfully asked for their support. In addition, she presented the proposal to each of the team coordinators. After each of the teams agreed to participate, she provided team and board member rosters and schedules of meetings to the researcher.

Interviews

Person-to-person interviews were conducted with members of the youth services teams and the advisory boards and also with selected school administrators who had played a significant role in the formation of a youth services team.
In total, 50 personal interviews were conducted: 30 with youth services team members, 11 with advisory board members, and 9 with selected school administrators/staff members.

The rosters of team and board members were used to identify potential respondents. Efforts were made to interview all team members on each team. In the case of the two advisory boards, members to be interviewed were selected to represent a cross-section of agencies, the education sector, and other involved community organizations. Interview appointments were arranged by telephone, and in four instances, prospective respondents requested that a shortened telephone interview be substituted for the longer person-to-person one.

Before an interview commenced, the respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured that their anonymity would be protected. In person-to-person interviews, respondents were presented with an informed consent form (See Appendix C) which contained this information. For telephone interviews, the researcher verbally reviewed the purpose of the study and addressed the issue of confidentiality. In the case of personal interviews, the researcher also requested permission to audio tape the conversation, and in all but one case, permission was granted. When interviews were not taped, handwritten notes were made.
The person-to-person interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes and were carried out at the respondent's office. An interview guide (see Appendix B) was used to provide a semi-structured format, but there was ample opportunity for respondents to suggest additional topics for discussion. At the end of each interview, with the tape recorder shut off, respondents were asked if they wished to make any other comments. In several instances, these last comments indicated that the respondents had been guarded in the taped portion of the interview and were much more willing to speak their mind when not being taped. Note of this fact was made and was included with the interview data.

As the study progressed, it became apparent that some school administrators had firsthand knowledge about the formation of particular YSTs and could offer insight that other respondents lacked. Thus, six additional interviews were scheduled with those individuals. In five of the cases, the interview guide was used and the interview was audio taped. In the sixth case, a brief telephone interview was conducted and notes made of the conversation.

Approximately halfway through the study it was found that the local school districts were by far the major source of referrals to all four of the YSTs. Counselors brought the majority of the referrals for staffing, and it was judged that those individuals would present yet another important perspective of the YST process. Therefore,
attempts were made to contact counselors in three of the school districts served by the YSTs for purposes of a short, structured telephone interview. The counselors in the two school districts served by Team B, were YST members and were interviewed in person using the interview guide. Those counselors who were reached by telephone were asked to respond to six questions regarding their experience with the local YST (see Appendix A), and their comments were recorded by the researcher onto response sheets. In all, 43 counselors were interviewed. All of the K-12 counselors in the school district served by Team D and 95% of the counselors (K-12) in the school district served by Team C responded. Eighty percent of the secondary counselors in the local school district served by Team A responded. The elementary counselors in that district were not contacted as many of them participated in the focus groups described below. The interviews usually took approximately ten minutes, although some were shorter, especially when the counselor had little or no experience with a YST. In several cases the interviews lasted close to twenty minutes.

The audio tapes made of the person-to-person interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher as soon after the actual interview as possible: in no case longer than five days afterward. The transcription process offered an opportunity to check initial perceptions of what was actually said and how it was said. As the material was
transcribed, researcher comments of a reflective nature were added, designated as separate from the actual dialogue of the interview. This procedure allowed the researcher to react to the content of the interview while it was still fresh in her mind. Once a transcription was completed, a contact summary sheet was filled out and attached to the folder containing the transcript. The contact summary sheet contained the code that identified the respondent, the date of the interview, a listing of the major themes arising from the conversation, and questions or topics to pursue further, either in a callback or with future respondents. Those callbacks that were made were done by telephone with the exception of two instances where a second person-to-person interview was conducted.

Observations

Observations were made of advisory board and team meetings and of two focus groups conducted in one of the school districts. The first time the researcher attended a board or team meeting and at each of the focus group meetings, she made brief comments about the purpose of the study. In addition, each participant received an informed consent form (see Appendix D) that restated the researcher's purpose and outlined procedures to be used to insure that the participants' identities would be protected. Thus at all meetings observed, those in attendance were aware of the purpose of the study and the observer role of the
researcher. The researcher did not participate in the meetings otherwise. The role assumed by the researcher was that of "observer as participant" (Junker in Merriam, 1988, p.93). In this role the primary task of the researcher was to collect data. Interaction with the setting and the participants was kept to a minimum, although it was recognized that the very presence of the researcher may have influenced what transpired.

The observation of advisory board and team meetings offered an opportunity to check the perceptions of team and board members with regard to the actual functioning of the two groups. Two meetings of each of the advisory boards were observed, each meeting lasting approximately two hours. Field notes were made of the advisory board meetings with an emphasis on the interaction of the participants. Among topics noted were the degree of members' active participation, the subjects covered in the meetings, the decision making process employed by the group, and evidence of team-board communication.

Observations of YST meetings were possible only when parent and/or student permission was granted for the researcher to be present. To gain permission, the researcher's name was added to the list of agency and school representatives on the authorization form for the release and exchange of information that had to be signed by the parent and/or student before a staffing could be held.
During the time frame of the study, there was only one meeting of Team B and the team coordinator failed to secure permission for the researcher to attend that meeting. Therefore, no meeting of Team B was observed by the researcher. In other cases, where access to a particular staffing was denied by the parent, the researcher left the meeting room for the duration of that particular staffing, returning for those to which access was permitted. Altogether, nine YST meetings were observed: two meetings of Team A, three meetings of Team C, and five meetings of Team D. Comprehensive field notes were made during all the meetings, each of which lasted approximately two hours. Again, the interactions of the participants were of primary importance. In the local school district served by Team A a series of three focus groups were convened consisting of elementary school principals and counselors and three representatives of the local YST and advisory board. The groups’ purpose was to share perceptions of the YST process from the viewpoint of the elementary schools. Two of these groups were observed and field notes recorded.

Document Review

Documents associated with the advisory boards and teams were reviewed for insight into the historical development of the boards and teams as well as for information regarding their functioning. YST meeting minutes, written prior to the study, contained confidential information for which no
release had been granted for sharing with the researcher, so these could not be reviewed. However, all board meeting minutes were publicly available and were therefore accessible to the researcher. In addition to these records, the interagency agreements for each team, the advisory board bylaws for each board, forms used by the teams, written records of communication between the boards and teams, and printed material written to explain the YST process to the general public were studied. A video produced by one team to provide information to school staff about the YST process was also reviewed. Either copies were made of printed material or notes were made regarding the content of documents.

Throughout the entire length of the study, as data were being collected, the researcher kept a research log in which reactions to interviews and observations were written immediately following their occurrence, reflections on developing trends were recorded, and suggestions for further interviews and topics to pursue were entered. Additionally, comments were entered that pertained to the research process itself. The research log became part of the data set for the study.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research it is somewhat difficult to differentiate data collection from data analysis as they
often occur simultaneously (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). In the course of the study, initial data analysis occurred as data were being gathered. The researcher's reactions and reflections recorded in the research log were part of data analysis. Likewise, the researcher's comments that were recorded during transcription of audio tapes and the completion of contact summary forms constituted part of the analytical process. It was necessary to take these steps in the field as they served to guide data collection. However, the more intensive, concentrated analysis and interpretation of the data were reserved until the data collection phase was largely completed. The procedures for data analysis outline by Taylor and Bogdan and by Miles and Huberman (1984) guided the analysis.

The initial step taken following the data collection phase of the study, was to reread all the data, including the reflective notes recorded by the researcher within transcripts and in the research log. As the data were read, the researcher recorded her reactions, if any, in the right hand margin of the text. She also made note of trends or patterns observed in the data. Next, the data generated from all sources were reread and coded according to topics or themes suggested by the research questions and the data themselves. As codes were assigned, an alphabetical list was kept of the codes and their meaning. Coding took approximately a week to accomplish, and the alphabetical
list provided a quick way to review coding decisions made from one day to the next. In addition to the thematic codes, interview data were also given identifying numbers that specified the identity of the respondent, and their team and organizational affiliation. Other data were coded by date, theme, and board/team affiliation.

Following this first coding, the data were set aside for several weeks. Before attempting a second coding, the list of codes was reviewed to see where the codes might overlap. The 96 codes which were generated on the first coding were reduced by approximately half. The data were then reread and recoded with some further revisions made to the coding scheme. In numerous instances, data were cross-coded as they supported more than one theme or pattern. During both the first and second reading and coding of the data, any reactions to the data that the researcher wished to record were entered in the right hand margin.

After the second coding, all the interview and observational data as well as the notes made during document review were photocopied. One set of data was maintained intact as a reference set. The other set was physically cut up and sorted by category, and, within categories, by advisory board or team. In cases where data belonged to more than one category, multiple copies were made to allow placement of the information in all appropriate categories. Some documents, such as the interagency agreements, were
easier to use intact as reference material and thus were not cut up and pieces assigned to groupings by categories. During the sorting process the data were reread and some further adjustments to the coding categories were made. At this point the data were divided among thirty-seven distinct categories.

The data within categories and within each team were then scrutinized further with the help of data displays. Miles and Huberman (1984) defined a display as "an organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking" (p.21). The data collection resulted in an overwhelming amount of text. The coding of data helped to break it down into more manageable pieces, but further strategies to facilitate interpretation were also found to be necessary. Thus matrices, maps, and charts were constructed to aid in the analysis. Conclusions were subsequently drawn and verified based on the preponderance of supporting data.

Validation of Findings

Throughout the study, a conscious effort was made to ensure the reliability of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested three activities that increase the likelihood that findings will be credible: triangulation, prolonged engagement, and persistent observation. Each of these techniques was used throughout the study.
Triangulation was applied with regard to both methods of data collection as well as sources of information within a method. The information gathered through interviews, observations, and document review were compared and used to confirm the findings as they emerged.

Within the interview approach to data collection, triangulation of sources was used. The large number of those interviewed (50 person-to-person interviews and 47 telephone interviews) provided abundant opportunity for cross checking information and verifying trends emerging in the interview data.

The intense involvement of the researcher in the field also helped to increase reliability. The researcher was immersed in the activities of the study on a daily bases for the three-month duration of the study. This prolonged engagement coupled with the frequency of contact, or persistent observation, allowed the researcher to understand the context of the study and to sort out issues that were relevant to the focus of the study.

Steps were also taken to eliminate bias in the selection of data sources within any one method. A saturation approach was used when interviews were scheduled with members of the YSTs and school counselors; that is, an attempt was made to interview all team members and all counselors. In the case of board members, those selected for interviewing represented each of the major sectors.
represented on the boards. The review of all available documentation related to the boards and teams and the observation of all board meetings and all team meetings, but one, that occurred during the time of the study further eliminated bias in selection of information sources.

Yet another technique employed was the conscious search for negative evidence. As patterns and themes began formulating, a search was made for disconfirming evidence. Thus, an initial theme that suggested a lack of perceived direct benefit was related to poor team attendance was discarded when in subsequent interviews it was found that other team members, who were consistent in their attendance, also indicated that they received no direct benefits from team participation. The conclusions drawn from this study were based on a preponderance of confirming evidence.

A final effort made to validate the findings was a formal member check. Three respondents who had experience with a number of the teams and boards for a total of thirteen years were asked to read the findings and comment. Their comments were seriously considered and evaluated with regard to the final conclusions drawn.

Summary

The choice of a qualitative research approach for the study was dictated by the nature of the research question and in turn had implications for the choices made with
regard to research design, the cases, data collection, data analysis, and the reporting of the findings. Throughout the study, efforts were made to ensure the reliability of the findings.
Each of the four youth services teams identified a different initial impetus that actually led to the formation of the team. Likewise, the steps taken to establish the teams also differed.

Youth Services Team A

Concerns that arose out of a series of middle school principals' meetings held during the 1985-1986 school year were the impetus for the formation of Youth Services Team (YST) A. The concerns focused on students and their families who were in need of mental health and/or social services but who were not technically eligible for any public agency's services. These at-risk children seemed to be "falling through the cracks," their needs unmet. The superintendent of the local school district heard these concerns and was interested in finding a way to address them through a community-based effort involving schools and human service agencies. He and his administrative assistant explored ways to bring about interagency collaboration, including a search of the literature and a visit with the coordinator of an existing Oregon youth services team.

The idea of agencies working cooperatively on children's issues was not a new idea in the region. A number of interagency teams existed that dealt with child-
related issues. These teams tended to be quite specific in
the type of problems they addressed, and none of them
routinely involved school representation. However, they did
require collaboration to some extent, and thus many of the
local agency administrators and service delivery staff were
accustomed to working with representatives of other agencies
in some capacity.

In this same time period (1985-1986) there were several
conferences/workshops held in the region that focused on
interagency collaboration by education, mental health, and
social service agencies for at-risk youth. Local school and
mental health staff as well as a behavior management
consultant from the regional educational service district
(ESD) attended one or more of these conferences.

Conversations regarding the possibility of such an effort in
the local community ensued, both among conference
participants and between the participants and others in
their respective agencies. As a result, the concept of
interagency collaboration received notice and consideration
in a number of local agencies and at both management and
staff levels.

In the spring of 1986, the school superintendent
decided to take the lead and explore the level of interest
among local human service agencies in joining together to
identify and address problems associated with the delivery
of services to at-risk youth and, in turn, to assess their
interest in attending a group meeting to further discuss these issues. The superintendent felt it was important to contact the people who were the decision makers in the organizations, the ones who could commit the agencies. He also felt that face to face contact, rather than written communication, was a better way to insure a response. Thus he, accompanied by his administrative assistant, personally contacted the CEO’s of human service agencies which dealt with at-risk youth.

Those identified as potential stakeholders, in addition to the public schools, included the juvenile department, the county mental health program, the county sheriff’s department, Children’s Services Division, local police services, and the district attorney’s office. In some cases, the superintendent knew the CEO from previous contacts; in other cases, the meeting represented an introduction.

Overall, the responses to the superintendent’s visit were positive although the degree of enthusiasm varied. However, given that the school district was willing to take responsibility for convening the group meeting, all those contacted agreed to participate.

The group meeting was held at one of the school district buildings in early June 1986. At that meeting the problems associated with serving at-risk youth were discussed and agency concerns were voiced by participants.
It was acknowledged that each agency dealt with clients from a limited perspective, and although clients might be shared among several agencies (joint accountability), lines of communication between agencies were not always present. There appeared to be consensus that the problems of at-risk youth were usually multi-faceted and demanded a community-based response. It was also noted that a team approach would provide broader input and facilitate the development of a more coordinated and comprehensive plan. Having mutually acknowledged that a problem existed that warranted an interagency approach, it was agreed that the planning for an interagency effort should go forward and should involve both administrators and line staff. The county board of commissioners, the judge of the circuit court, and the local ESD were also identified as additional potential stakeholders.

Planning took place throughout the summer of 1986. As part of that process, the varying perspectives of each of the involved agencies were revealed as well as the possibilities and limitations of service provision defined by each agency's policy and procedural guidelines. In addition, related issues such as demands on staff time and the handling of confidentiality were discussed.

Initially what emerged was the idea of an interagency team that would regularly meet to share information about students and to develop a plan of action that would result
in the coordination of services. Consultants from Florida, who were involved in a similar effort there, were brought in to conduct a training workshop on how to set up such a team. Given this information and the input of others in the planning group who had relevant experience and information, a plan for both the structure and operation of Youth Services Team A was drawn. The team’s statement of purpose (Team A, 1987) was as follows:

The goal of the Youth Services Team is to provide a coordinated community-based delivery of services for at-risk youth and their families through the collaboration of the participating agencies. This team is designed to promote cooperation and understanding between the participating agencies for at-risk youth. These at-risk youth are those whose needs are so complex that they are best served by the expertise and collaboration of multiple agencies. (p. 14)

Although it drew upon elements of teams already in existence, the plan was designed to reflect the needs and resources of the local community.

On September 16, 1986, administrative heads of the following agencies signed the Memorandum of Understanding for Youth Services Team A: the county board of commissioners, county district attorney’s office, the county juvenile department, the county mental health program, the county sheriff’s department, Children’s Services Division,
local police services, the local school district, and the judge of the circuit court. At this point the superintendent of schools bowed out of the leadership position of the YST effort; however, other school district personnel assumed leadership roles in the actual implementation of the plan.

Youth Services Team B

At the time of the formation of Youth Services Team A, the propriety of county-wide agencies devoting significant staff time to an effort that was limited to just one school district in the county was raised by some of the agencies involved. After extended discussion, it was decided to proceed with the limited focus on one school district and at some time in the future consider expanding the youth services team concept to cover the entire county.

In January of 1990, a letter from the superintendent of schools of a nearby school district within the county prompted the advisory board of Team A to revisit the issue of county-wide coverage. Although the nearby school district that proposed the expansion had utilized Team A on occasion, the superintendent, in his letter to the chairman of the board, asked that youth services teams be considered a county-wide process and the advisory board a county-wide board. The idea of expanding county-wide was supported by the advisory board; however, there were concerns about the
amount of additional staff time that would be required. No one wanted to expand at the expense of Team A. The board decided to appoint the superintendent, who had written the letter, to the advisory board for a period of one year and to invite the other school superintendents in the county to attend the advisory board meetings.

At about the same time that the board received the letter from the superintendent, the behavior management consultants of the ESD Student Services Program submitted a report to the board outlining the needs that existed among children and families in the rural areas of the county and the difficulty families had in gaining access to mental health and social services. It was also pointed out that schools in the rural areas felt little connection with county human service agencies and that administrators and counselors were not as apt to develop informal networks with service providers as were their counterparts in the county seat where services were located. As a result of this information and the superintendent’s proposal, the advisory board asked the ESD to survey the school superintendents in the outlying areas to assess their interest and support for participating in the YST process.

Interviews were carried out during the spring of 1990. In sum, varying levels of support were indicated and no opposition to the concept was voiced. Subsequently the ESD social services consultant drew up a proposed structure to
serve the area that included adding two new teams, one to serve southern county areas and one to serve western parts of the county. Youth Services Team B was to serve the school districts of two rural communities in the western area, one a small city and the other a much smaller unincorporated community. In the late fall of 1990 the interagency agreement and bylaws for Team A were revised to reflect the adopted plans for expansion, and Team B began its operation in February of 1991.

Youth Services Team C

The formation of Youth Services Team C in 1987 was described by one team member as a process of "spontaneous combustion." No one person or agency was identified as the primary leader in the effort to form a YST. There existed at the time an ongoing monthly process, in some ways similar to the YST process, whereby representatives from Children's Services Division, county alcohol and drug services, the juvenile department, county mental health services, and the ESD met to staff mental health child intakes. A number of agency and school staff also had knowledge of or experience with YSTs in other locales, and the ESD had made copies of the agreement, by-laws, and forms used by Team A available to schools and agencies in County F. As a result, there existed a good deal of knowledge about the YST process as well as interest in the concept within the community.
In early 1987, the mental health and Children's Services Division representatives on the mental health child intake team proposed to that group that a YST be developed to serve the city. Like the intake team, the YST would be a voluntary group with no regulatory authority, but it was argued that the YST would provide a broader interagency effort than the current intake team. It would address the needs of other at-risk youth in addition to those referred to mental health services, and the team would include representatives from the schools. The child intake teams lack of a direct link with schools had been repeatedly noted as a shortcoming. The other members of the intake team supported the proposal, and the group formed a working committee to identify stakeholders, outline the process, and draw up a memorandum of agreement. The local school district was brought on board by involving staff from the district's assessment center in the planning.

After four months, the group was ready to present the plan to agency administrators and the superintendent of the local school district. During the time the working committee met, school and agency administrators had been informed of the project. When the plan was completed, administrators signed the Memorandum of Agreement without further discussion. Agencies represented were: the city police department, Children's Services Division, the local school district, the ESD, the juvenile department, county
The purpose of the team was "to enhance service delivery to at-risk youth and their families through coordinating efforts of and facilitating access to cooperating agencies and community resources" (Team C, 1987, p. 1). In September 1987, the regular meetings of Youth Services Team C commenced.

Youth Services Team D

A more informal interagency collaborative effort preceded the formation of Team D. The Interagency Committee was composed of representatives of Children's Services Division, the ESD, the county juvenile, mental health, and sheriff's departments, the local city police department, and the local school district. The organization was based on the recognized need for agencies and schools to work together to address the needs of at-risk youth and their families. The committee's efforts to share information and coordinate services, however, were limited due to a loose organization and the lack of a procedure to secure permission for information sharing among members.

Looking for a way to improve the interagency concept of providing services to at-risk youth and their families, the school district psychologist, who chaired the Interagency Committee, along with the ESD behavior management consultant assigned to the school district,
presented the youth services team concept to the committee for consideration in early 1987. The model of a youth services team that was proposed was based on the experience of Team A. The committee adopted the idea and spent several subsequent sessions writing a document that outlined the problems faced by children in the area and the resultant need for services, and which also proposed school-human service agency collaboration as a viable approach to providing a comprehensive response to service needs. Additionally, a proposed memorandum of agreement was also drafted.

During the work, committee members kept their respective administrators appraised of their proposal. At that point the YST concept was a familiar one to those administrators, many of whom were associated with similar ongoing efforts in the county and in surrounding areas. Once the documents were completed, the Interagency Committee sent them, along with a letter explaining the youth services team concept and their proposal to form Team D, to the CEO's of the agencies which were represented on the Interagency Committee. In addition, the judge of the circuit court was included.

All of the administrators were invited to attend a general meeting for further discussion and the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement. On May 28, 1987, the administrators gathered and signed the agreement, and the
team began to meet the following September. Those who signed were the administrative heads of the following agencies: the circuit court, Children's Services Division, the ESD, the county juvenile department, county mental health services, the county sheriff's department, the city police department, and the local public schools. The purpose statement included in the Memorandum of Agreement was the same as that of Team C, namely, "... to enhance service delivery to at-risk youth and their families through coordinating efforts of and facilitating access to cooperating agencies and community resources" (Team D, 1987, p. 1). Youth Services Team D began to staff students the following September.

County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board

By 1989 there were four YSTs in County F, including Teams C and D. They shared a common basic structure and operational format, and team membership reflected a common core of agency representation. In January of 1990, the Student Services Program of the regional ESD sponsored a training for school administrators on the use of a recently published handbook. The handbook outlined the suggested procedures to be used by school staff, in collaboration with human service providers, to respond to student crises at school. The training, in addition to introducing the handbook, also addressed the issue of greater collaboration
between youth-serving agencies community-wide. One of the suggestions that came out of the meeting was that an advisory board be created for the YSTs of county F. The Student Services Program Coordinator offered to coordinate the process of forming such a board.

In March of 1990, a letter was sent to county agency CEOs, local school superintendents and some principals, the state police, YST coordinators, and a number of other youth-serving community organizations inviting them to participate in the process of establishing the County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board. The letter was signed by the facilitators of two of the YSTs in the county, the coordinator of the ESD Student Services Program, the branch manager of the county Children's Services Division, and the appointed staff person of the county Children and Youth Services Commission. The purpose for creating the proposed board, as stated in the letter, was two-fold. First, coordination of the local YSTs would be provided in an effort to promote efficient, coordinated services to the entire county. By dealing with logistical matters involving team process, the board would minimize duplication of organizational functions among the YSTs. Secondly, the board would act in an advocacy role, raising issues dealing with needed changes in existing services or the need to develop new resources.
The first organizational meeting was held on April 30, 1990, at the offices of the Children's Services Division. At the meeting, the identification of potential advisory board members and a time line for setting up the board were discussed. Also, a committee was appointed to draft bylaws and a September date set to reconvene for purposes of reviewing the bylaws and determining an agenda for the board. The bylaws committee was composed of the same individuals who had signed the March letter setting up the meeting, with the exception that the staff person from the Children and Youth Services Commission was replaced by a school superintendent. Subsequently a September and an October meeting were held for further discussion of the bylaws and the board's proposed agenda, and at the October meeting a board chair and vice-chair were elected for the 1990-1991 school year. A month later on November 30, 1990, the revised bylaws were approved and the County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board formally established.

Although the regional ESD did not take a leadership position on the board, the elected chair was a school superintendent, the Student Services Coordinator and his staff played a leading role in the formation of the board by providing information about the county YSTs, arranging meetings, working on the draft of the bylaws and the agenda, and promoting communication between the various people involved. In addition, at the November meeting establishing
the board, the ESD Student Services Program agreed to provide the needed support for creating an initial communication link between the board and the regional YSTs.

Summary of Findings

The youth services teams that were the subject of this study were voluntary organizations with no regulatory authority. Each was formed to either initiate or improve local school-human service agency collaboration to meet the needs of at-risk youth and their families. The multiple problems faced by at-risk youth demanded a comprehensive response, one that was often well beyond the resources of the schools or any one human service agency. It was believed that the establishment of youth services teams would allow the schools and agencies to work together to improve service delivery through the sharing of information and ideas and the coordination of services.

Both a "bottom-up" as well as a "top-down" approach was used to form the teams. In one county, County E, the teams were put together only after a school district superintendent had secured the support of agency CEOs. In County F, the teams originated through the efforts of direct service personnel who developed the proposals and then asked for administrative approval. However, in either case, endorsement of the youth services teams by the administrative heads of the schools and agencies involved
was considered crucial. Such recognition reinforced the commitment of individual agencies to the process and brought a sense of legitimacy to the teams.
CHAPTER 5
THE STRUCTURE OF THE COLLABORATION

While the overall structure of the County E and County F youth services team collaborations involved the same three organizations, it was found that the evolution of the collaborations differed. In addition, the functional relationships between the primary organizations of the two collaborations were not the same (See Figure 2).

Youth Services Team A

The initial organizational structure of Youth Services Team A was defined in the Memorandum of Understanding and the related bylaws adopted in September of 1986. The overall structure was three-tiered. At the first level was the advisory board of Youth Services Team A composed of the administrative heads or their designees from the agencies which were party to the memorandum. This group was not a board in the legal sense as it had no governing authority. In an advisory capacity the board was charged with overseeing the administration of the Memorandum of Understanding and with receiving reports from the policy and procedures committee and the chairperson of the YST. The advisory board was also given the authority to add new members to the board and the team, as it deemed appropriate, and was further charged to act as an advocate for the YST in
Figure 2. The three structural elements of the youth services team collaboration and their functional relationships as found in Counties E and F.
developing local support. Participation on the board and team could be terminated by a member simply by giving written notice to the board.

The policy and procedures committee of YST A comprised the second tier and was made up of agency heads or their designees with the exception that there was no representation from the judge of the circuit court nor the county board of commissioners. The committee's role was defined as follows (Team A, 1987):

The Committee will address issues such as improvement of existing services, continuous planning and implementation of education, human resource, and other services, advocating for additional services, development of inter-agency agreements, and other tasks defined by the advisory board. The Committee may also consider other problems for at-risk youth and address them through strategies such as in-service training, program development and other preventative measures. (p. 15)

Three of the agency administrators served on both the advisory board and the policy and procedures committee.

The third tier of the structure was Youth Services Team A itself, which was responsible for conducting semimonthly staffings of at-risk youth. It was composed of direct service providers, each appointed by an agency or department represented on the advisory board with the
exception of the county board of commissioners and the judge of the circuit court. As outlined by the Memorandum of Understanding and bylaws, all agencies were responsible for insuring that their appointed team members (or substitutes) attended meetings regularly and were prepared to share any relevant information for each case. Further, team members were responsible for follow-up procedures on any staffing matters that related to their respective agencies. The Memorandum of Understanding also stated that individual agency rules of confidentiality were to guide team members' participation.

A chairperson for the team was appointed by the policy and procedures committee and was expected to report to the advisory board and the policy and procedures committee at each of their meetings. At the team meetings, the chairperson provided meeting facilitation, directing and coordinating the team's efforts.

The Memorandum of Understanding and bylaws designated no specific funding for the team other than the in-kind contributions of personnel, their time and expertise. For most of the team members this meant the time involved in collecting agency information for the staffings, participating in the meetings, and providing follow-up on related matters. The time commitment of the team coordinator was greater, including additional hours needed to facilitate referrals, carry out record keeping and team
communication activities, and provide follow-through on team recommendations.

From the start, the local school district made the major in-kind resource contribution. The coordinator’s position for the team remained with the school district representative throughout the team’s history as did the provision of clerical support for the team. Although the resource commitment of the various agencies appeared to be limited, especially when compared with the coordinator’s time investment, staff time contributed by the human service agencies was deemed significant given the staff shortages and case overloads that agencies experienced.

During its first year of operation, the 1986-1987 school year, the advisory board and team structures remained in place as outlined above. However in December of 1987, a new interagency agreement was written and signed, reflecting some structural changes. First, the advisory board and the policy and procedures committee were combined to form one board. This was done in an effort to conserve administrator’s time. The new board assumed all the responsibilities previously assigned to both groups. There was some difference of opinion as to whether or not the advisory board should be purely advisory to the YST, helping it carry out its mission, or whether it should pursue its additional stated charge of looking more broadly at community service needs and acting as an advocate for
This difference of opinion was not resolved, and while the board seemed to concentrate most of its attention on administering the Memorandum of Understanding and supporting the YST process itself, other issues addressing broader community concerns were discussed.

Secondly, although it did not change group composition or function, there was a change in the way some of the language of the new agreement was structured. In the original Memorandum of Understanding (Team A, 1987), the agreement was made "by and between the following agencies" which included both the schools and other community human service agencies. In the second and subsequent agreements, the agreement was made by and between the school district(s) and community agencies. In a grammatical sense, at least, the schools were distinguished separately from the other community agencies on the advisory board.

The one structural change that was suggested in an evaluation survey carried out during the spring of 1987 by the YST evaluation subcommittee was the need for a paid position of YST coordinator. This recommendation persisted throughout the history of Team A, but the involved agencies never totally agreed on its merits nor found funding to support it.

With the exception of the withdrawal of the district attorney's office and the judge of the circuit court from participation on the advisory board, no major structural
changes occurred between December of 1987 and December of 1990. However in January of 1991, the agreement and bylaws were rewritten to reflect the new county-wide focus of the advisory board and the addition of two new youth services teams in the county. The advisory board was renamed as the County E Youth Services Teams Advisory Board. All county school districts were listed as members of a team, and one representative of western county school districts, one representative of southern county school districts, and one representative from other county police agencies were appointed to the advisory board for terms of one year.

In addition, the new agreement stipulated that a team coordinator would be appointed for each team. The local school district would provide the team coordinator for Team A and staff from the ESD would act as team coordinators for the other teams. Team coordinators were to report annually to the advisory board unless requested to report more often, and supervision of team coordinators and clerical support for the positions were designated as the responsibility of the agencies sponsoring the coordinators.

The new bylaws also addressed issues not mentioned in earlier versions. A provision for appointing ex officio advisory board members to one year terms was included as well as one for appointing ad hoc committees. A schedule of meeting intervals was set. The advisory board was to meet every other month, Team A would meet twice monthly, and the
western and southern teams would meet once every other month. A year later all three YSTs went to a meeting schedule of once a month. The bylaws specified that the chair and vice-chair of the advisory board should be elected annually with no one serving as chair for more than two years. Part of the chair's responsibility, in addition to presiding at the advisory board meetings, was to arrange clerical support for those meetings. The vice-chair position was described as that of presiding over meetings when the chair was absent.

The bylaws also put into writing the decision making process to be followed at the board level. Proposals put forward to the advisory board were to be voted on by the membership, each member having one vote. A majority of the appointed membership constituted a quorum, and attaining a majority of votes decided an issue.

In June of 1992, the membership of the advisory board was increased with the addition of four agencies. The county Youth Services Commission, a local residential school for troubled youth, local mediation services, and the county branch of Adult and Family Services were each invited to appoint a representative to the advisory board. At the same time, the local fire department added its representative to Team A. The community base of the YST process was thereby broadened. It should be noted that with these new
additions, not all advisory board members were represented at the team level and vice versa.

Individual membership on the team changed over its six years of meeting. Only the team members representing the school district and the Children's Services Division remained constant. In all cases, those appointed to sit on the team were direct service personnel who were non-supervisory.

Throughout Team A's six years of operation, the local school district or the ESD provided much of the leadership. Although the chairperson of the advisory board rotated among members, three out of the six years the position was filled by school staff. At the team level, the team coordinator position remained with the school district.

Youth Services Team B

The structure of Team B was outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding and the related bylaws adopted by the County E Youth Services Teams Advisory Board in January of 1991. The terms of these documents are discussed above under the heading of Team A.

Although there were many similarities between the way Teams A and B were organized, several differences were noted. Team B served two school districts, rather than a single district, and joint meetings were held. The position of team coordinator was not filled by a local school
district representative but by the behavior management consultant from the ESD who was assigned to those school districts. Clerical support as well was provided by the ESD. Thus local school ownership of the YST was not traceable to the team coordinator position as it was in Team A. However, the ESD was defined as a "school" organization and therefore an educational organization was still in the leadership position and made the major commitment of in-kind resource support.

The makeup of the team was also different in that it included four school staff representatives rather than one and all four were based directly in the schools. There was no addition of a fire department representative. With the exceptions of the mental health representation which alternated between two representatives and the change in the ESD team coordinator after the first six months, the appointed members remained the same.

Advisory Board and Youth Services Team Interaction, County E

The interagency agreement defined the advisory board and the YSTs as the two levels of organization and stipulated that the team coordinators would report to the advisory board at least on an annual basis. Beyond this connection, there was no mention of other board-team communication. Although team coordinators often attended board meetings more frequently than once a year, most team
members had very limited understanding of the board's function and how it related to the teams. It was felt that a lack of communication with the board contributed to the situation. It also contributed to some questioning of what the board's investment was in the collaboration and what its understanding of the team process and the needs of students and their families was.

In an effort to improve communication between both board and team members and to address concerns common to both groups, two joint meetings were held in the spring of 1992. The first meeting was the regularly scheduled March meeting of the advisory board to which the team members were invited. At this meeting, team members were primarily in an observer role, although several individuals did raise concerns about the scarcity of referrals from the school district served by Team A. On April 30, the advisory board held a special meeting to provide additional time to discuss issues. In an effort to make the meeting a "no-holds-barred" meeting, ex officio members of the advisory board and this researcher were not invited to attend. Notes made available after the meeting revealed that issues such as the role of the advisory board, communication between the board and teams, the commitment of board members, and the changing membership at the board level were raised and discussed. Although these and other issues were not resolved, the
meeting did offer an opportunity for dialogue and a follow-up meeting was scheduled for the following September.

Youth Services Team C

The Memorandum of Agreement which initiated Team C did not specify any organizational structure other than the fact that the school district and the agencies would designate personnel to serve on the team. However, the team brought organization to itself by establishing a semimonthly meeting schedule and by creating a coordinator’s position and providing for secretarial support. The coordinator’s role was to facilitate the actual meeting. Throughout the history of Team C, the same mental health representative filled the coordinator’s position, and the local school district provided the secretarial support, including preparing the meeting agendas, recording and disseminating the notes of each meeting, and writing the action plans. The school district’s main office was designated as the regular meeting place.

As part of the agreement, agency and school administrators made sure that their organizations had an appointed representative to the team. Initially the organizations represented on the team were those which originally signed the agreement in 1987. Later, representatives of the Oregon State Police, Oregon Adult Probation and Parole, and Adult and Family Services were
added to the team. The team member representative of the local schools was a staff member appointed from the assessment center. Only the representatives from the ESD, mental health, and the sheriff's department consistently sat on the team from its beginning. All other agencies either experienced changes in their representation or were added to the team at a later date. During the 1991-1992 school year, five of the team members held supervisory positions in their respective agencies.

In essence, Team C operated independently of other YSTs and of any advisory body until 1990. The team had the approval of those organizations signing the Memorandum of Agreement, but it reported to no one. It was a voluntary effort supported by in-kind resource contributions with no binding authority on its members.

With the formation of the County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board additional structure was created. The bylaws of the board did not establish a direct link between the team and board, but the liaison provided by the ESD Student Services Program allowed concerns of the team to be presented to the board, and likewise, policy and procedure recommendations from the board were transmitted to the team. In the spring of 1992, a case manager was added to Team C. Funding for the position was provided by a U. S. Department of Education grant awarded to the ESD Special Education
Department. Children staffed through the YST were eligible for the services of the case manager.

Youth Services Team D

As in the case of Team C, the Memorandum of Agreement that established Team D provided no specific information as to how the YST should be structured other than the fact that signing agencies could designate personnel to serve on the team. Therefore, on its own, the team set in place a minimal organizational framework. A semimonthly meeting schedule was established and a coordinator was appointed from among members to offer some leadership.

In-kind support from agencies and the school district provided the resource base of the team. In addition to the time contributed to prepare for and participate in meetings and to do any follow-up, most agency team members also contributed considerable travel time each month as the city where they met was a drive of approximately forty minutes from the site of county offices. The contribution of the school district was also considerable. The coordinator’s position was filled initially and consistently by the schools’ representative, and the school district also provided secretarial support and a meeting place. The substantial amount of support offered by the school district led to the perception of the district as the leader of the YST effort. It also led to the district’s wish to
relinquish responsibility for the coordinator's position. However, no other agency was willing to assume the position and increase its resource commitment.

Originally team membership reflected the organizations which signed the 1987 Memorandum of Agreement, and later the team was expanded to include representatives from Adult and Family Services, Oregon Adult Probation and Parole, and the Oregon State Police. The only team member who consistently served on the team from its beginning was the juvenile department representative.

All team members were direct service personnel and for most, the local area served by the team was a part of their geographic area of responsibility. Therefore, they were personally familiar with many of the students and families referred to the YST as well as being aware of the local environment in general. In addition, if the YST referred a case to an agency, it was likely that the team member representing that agency would become the case worker for that individual.

The team basically answered to no one person or organization, although individual members informed their immediate supervisors of their work with the team. It was not until the formation of the County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board, that a more formal tie existed between the team and an administrative group. Even then the link between the two was an indirect one. Neither the team
Coordinators nor any team members attended board meetings, and board members did not attend team meetings. It was the liaison provided by the ESD social services consultant which provided communication between the board and team.

County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board

The County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board was strictly an advisory group with no governing authority. The board’s structure was described in its bylaws (County F, 1991). Two types of membership were established on the board; voting and nonvoting membership. The voting members included: Adult and Family Services, Adult Probation & Parole, a community services consortium, the local community college, the ESD, the County Children and Youth Services Commission, the county Children’s Services Division, the department of health services, the county commissioners, the juvenile department, sheriff’s department, Oregon State Police, two parent representatives, and the victim-offender reconciliation program. In addition, each June five voting members were chosen by the regional superintendent’s association to represent the school districts. The non-voting membership was composed of a larger group that included all the county school districts, the county district attorney, United Way, and several police departments in addition to the voting members.
The bylaws also created the positions of an annually elected chair and vice-chair, and in both years of its operation, the board was chaired by a school superintendent. Interestingly, one agency administrator declined to be considered for the chair’s position because he felt the board’s leadership should come from the school community. The bylaws also outlined voting procedures and established quarterly meeting dates, giving the chair the prerogative of calling special board meetings. At the spring 1992 meeting of the board, the chairman suggested that the board needed to meet more often than quarterly, and the topic was scheduled for further discussion in September. Additionally, it was specified that the chair could, with board approval, appoint ad hoc committees as needed. The bylaws did not address the structure of the teams.

Advisory Board and Youth Services Team Interaction, County F

The bylaws of the County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board did not outline any direct connection between the board and the local YSTs. The purpose statement spoke of board support for the local YSTs, but no mechanism for regular communication between the two was specified. As noted earlier, the ESD Student Services Program offered to provide an initial link between the board and teams. This was accomplished through the efforts of the social services consultants who either met with the YSTs personally or
conveyed information through the ESD behavior management consultants assigned to the teams. The social services consultants attended the advisory board meetings and reported on the functioning of the teams, problems they were encountering, and needs and concerns they had voiced.

Overall, most team members did not feel that they had a clear understanding of the board's purpose and its impact on individual teams. There was recognition that since the board's formation, new forms had been developed and recommended additions in team membership made, but in general, the board-team relationship was unclear. Team members commented that they did not "feel connected," that a "communication gap" existed with the board. This gap, in one instance, resulted in a duplication of effort on the part of board and team members; the very thing the board and teams were trying to eliminate. Some members proposed that having the team coordinators attend the board meetings might improve the situation. In February of 1991, the board had invited the team coordinators to come and give status reports on the teams, but it was not a regular event.

Several of the board members also suggested a need to improve communication with the teams by allowing for direct feedback. Having team representatives attend the board meetings was suggested as one possible approach to take. Another idea was having a standardized form at YST meetings on which team members could write their ideas and concerns.
The forms would then be forwarded directly to the board. In the spring of 1992, the board chair took a direct step to keep himself apprised of the teams’ activities by asking that agendas and minutes from all the YSTs be sent to him monthly or more often, depending on the team’s meeting schedule.

Other board members felt that the board’s link with the teams was adequately provided by the efforts of ESD personnel. It was also pointed out that within agencies, the team representatives were in a position to keep the administrator well advised of the teams’ activities and related issues.

ESD Student Services Program

The ESD was listed as a member of each of the four YSTs and of the two county boards. The teams and boards were each locally developed, and the ESD had no assigned responsibility for their functioning. However, the extent of the ESD’s involvement was found to exceed that of simply a team or board member. In essence, it was possible to view the ESD Student Services Program as an integral part of the structure of the YSTs in both counties. In their attempts to help schools better serve students with behavioral problems, the ESD behavior management consultants, a part of the ESD Student Services Program, often found themselves going back and forth between schools and youth-serving
agencies in an attempt to gather all pertinent information and develop a comprehensive plan for services. The YST process seemed to offer a much more efficient way of planning and coordinating the school and agency efforts for these or any students in need, and it also reflected the program's philosophical commitment to interagency collaboration. Thus the behavior management consultants were anxious to support the teams. As one consultant explained, "...we have a real commitment to see that (the YST) happen because it is the one place where people come together and share information."

The coordinator of the ESD's Student Services Program described the YSTs as, "a cooperative effort, ... genuinely an interagency process not owned by the ESD, but given organizational support by it." This support was provided through the efforts of the coordinator, the social services consultants, and the behavior management consultants. The coordinator of the Student Services Program chaired the County E Youth Services Teams Advisory Board for two years. He was also instrumental in the formation of the County F Youth Services Team Advisory Board and sat on that board as a nonvoting member, providing organizational and procedural assistance. Behavior management consultants served as team coordinators, and also worked with local schools to clarify the YST process and help them understand how and when to make appropriate use of the teams. The social services
consultants provided liaison between the board and teams in County F and assisted individual teams with record keeping and other procedures at the teams' requests. They also worked to develop confidentiality guidelines for the teams, wrote and made available a YST process manual and associated forms, and planned and coordinated a training session for all County F YST members. Other efforts such as the mapping of all student-centered interagency efforts in each county, compiling a resource guide to services available in County F, and promoting the teams in general were more indirect but nevertheless important forms of support.

The Superintendent of the ESD reiterated the firm commitment of the ESD to the YST process at the May 1992 County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board meeting. At that meeting, he indicated that general fund money would remain committed to the YST process allowing the Student Services Program to continue providing administrative and programmatic assistance. In addition, the ESD would continue to seek federal dollars to support expansion of case management services to other YSTs. Through its commitment to the YST concept and the assistance it provided to the teams, the ESD was found to be a significant if not fundamental force in the overall structure of the YST process in both counties.
Summary of Findings

In both counties the organizational structure of the youth services teams was two-tiered. One tier was the advisory board, a body composed of administrators or their designees from the participating schools and agencies. This group met four or five times a year and discussed issues related to the teams and the provision of services in the community generally. The recommendations of the board were not binding on members or the YSTs.

The second tier was the team itself, composed of direct service providers appointed to serve on the team by school or agency administrators. The team conducted the staffings of referred students. Over time, school and agency membership at both the board and team levels changed reflecting a broader base of public agency involvement. The individuals representing schools and agencies also changed, especially at the team level. With the exception of Team B, the teams had only a few members who consistently served from year to year.

The bylaws of each board were quite specific as to the makeup of the board and its operating procedures. The bylaws were much less specific regarding the procedures that the teams should follow, and they provided little direction regarding communication between the boards and teams. Both board members and team members expressed a desire to have a more direct link between the two groups.
Schools (local districts or the ESD) were found to occupy positions of leadership at both the team and board levels. In County E, school staff were team coordinators of both teams, and school administrators chaired the advisory board three out of its six years. In County F, school superintendents chaired the board both years, and a school district representative coordinated Team D.

Although the bylaws and agreements only mentioned the ESD as a participant in the YST process and as the provider of team coordinators for two County E teams, the ESD Student Services Program made significant contributions in both the formation of youth services teams and in the ongoing processes associated with them. The willingness of the coordinator, social services consultants, and behavior management consultants to promote and support the youth services teams greatly facilitated the collaborative efforts.
CHAPTER 6
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROCESS

Each of the four youth services teams explored herein followed a common format in their efforts to address the needs of individual at-risk students (see Figure 3). The use of a common format however, did not restrict variation in the way team members and other participants interpreted and implemented the associated procedures. The findings of this study reflect the diversity that existed both within and between teams and are reported below under the three major steps in the process: referral, staffing, and implementation.

Step One: Referral

The referral process consisted of identifying a student whose needs would be served by an interagency approach, gaining parent permission for the release and exchange of information (See Appendix E for a sample parent authorization form), filling out a referral form, and sending the paperwork to the YST coordinator or person charged with developing the meeting agenda. Although the referral procedure appeared to be straight-forward, the questions of who should refer to the YST, what the definition of an appropriate referral was, and how to
Step 1: Referral
A. Student identified and referral form completed
B. Permission for the release and exchange of confidential information secured
C. Paperwork forwarded to the YST and student's name placed on meeting agenda

Step 2: Staffing
A. Problems/concerns identified by referral source
B. Additional information shared by team members
C. Service possibilities suggested
D. Action plan developed and date set for case review

Step 3: Implementation
A. Action plan implemented
B. Case periodically reviewed and action plan revised as needed

Figure 3. Sequence of steps in the youth services team process.
facilitate acquiring permission for the release and exchange of information presented issues each team had to address.

Who Should Refer?

The purpose statements for each of the YSTs defined the teams as collaborative or coordinating interagency efforts. It was understood that any member could bring a referral to the team, and further, that the referral could originate with a parent or other agency or school staff. As it turned out, the vast majority of referrals to each team came from the schools, a fact that caused some concern especially among school personnel.

Team A. The coordinator for Team A estimated that during the team’s six year history, approximately 99% of the referrals came from the schools. Schools as a major source of referrals was anticipated in that the schools had identified the precipitating problem and thus the need for the team. However, since the schools were essentially the only referral source, some school staff commented that rather than being a part of a team that addressed student and family needs at the community level, they felt as though the only ones with problems were the schools, and the only ones capable of providing ideas and guidance were the agencies. It was an uncomfortable balance and reinforced a general reluctance of school staff to expose their "in-house" problems before a community forum.
Counselors, and at the elementary level administrators and counselors, were usually the school staff who brought referrals to the YST. Thus to gain additional insight as to why schools did or did not refer to Team A, structured interviews were conducted with eleven out of fourteen secondary counselors, and focus groups convened to examine the elementary principals' and counselors' view of the YST process were observed.

Overall, it was found that these school counselors and administrators recognized that the YST process offered an opportunity for school representatives to regularly meet and work with agencies, to learn about the availability of services and how to access them, and to present the needs of at-risk students as a community problem. However, these were not usually the main objectives of a YST referral. By the time a school brought a referral to the YST, the school's resources were usually exhausted. The school expected the agencies to take some responsibility not only in designing a service plan but actually following through with it. Often what they wanted to have happen for children was more than the agencies could provide. What they usually got was information and advice, and many times they found the information very limited and the advice nothing new. One school administrator commented, "The school is sent back to do the obvious." Further, several counselors commented
that if a plan was developed and follow-through left up to the team, it often did not occur.

For counselors and administrators who had personal networks with agency staff and increasing district and building resources, the benefit to be gained by the YST process did not outweigh the cost involved in making the referral. Thus, although schools seemed in an ideal position to identify students with needs and to make referrals to the YST, by the spring of 1992 referrals from the schools were few in number.

The disappointment and dissatisfaction that the schools often felt as the result of a YST referral was understandable when their expectations were matched against the expectations team members held for the team. Team A, including its school-based team coordinator, viewed itself basically as a problem-solving and advisory group. Referrals were discussed, information shared, and ideas developed. The end result of the process was one or more recommendations as to how the referring person should proceed in addressing the problem. Direct service delivery or a guarantee of service was not offered by the team. The team attempted to convey its definition of service in a variety of ways. In-service presentations were made to teachers, a video explaining the YST process was available for check out, and an effort was made to establish better communication between schools and the team by having team
members provide liaison with specific schools. Despite these steps, the differences in expectations continued to exist.

The failure of agencies to use the YST process was attributed by agency team members to two factors very different from those associated with the decrease in school referrals. First, several of the agencies conducted their own staffings of clients, either totally within house or by inviting other agency representatives in as needed. Although the schools were not usually represented at these staffings, it was the perception of agency representatives that the YST largely duplicated the agency process. If school input was needed, the agencies could simply call the school or invite them to the staffing. Secondly, if an agency was involved with a youth, chances were great that the agency would already have information from other involved agencies. Agency personnel had both formal and informal networks developed among themselves that allowed them to get information more quickly and easily than if they referred to the YST.

Yet a third possible reason for the lack of agency referrals was proposed by several school staff members. It was suggested that the agencies failed to recognize the expertise of school staff as a resource in work with clients and this prevented them from appreciating the value of the YST school-agency team approach. Agencies seemed
uninterested in sharing information and asking advice from schools. As one school administrator reflected, "It is sort of like we can’t be trusted, we aren’t professionals. I don’t understand why they (agencies) feel they can help but we can’t."

Not all agency representatives on the team felt that the team had nothing to offer them. Two representatives endorsed the idea that agencies could benefit from use of the YST, however, neither of them brought a referral to the team.

With neither schools nor agencies feeling that the YST process offered the best approach for securing the assistance they needed to enable them to help at-risk youth and their families, referrals to the YST declined despite an increase in the number and severity of problems among school-age youth. The continuance of Team A was in doubt. One long-time team member reflected, "I don’t know where the team is, at this point." Although all those involved firmly supported the idea of a school-agency collaborative approach to problem-solving, it was questionable whether or not the YST format provided the best way to accomplish such collaboration.

Team B. In her verbal report to the advisory board in April of 1992, the Team B coordinator noted that the team, which had been meeting only a little over a year, was still very much concerned with working out procedures. Securing
referrals to the YST was one of the procedures which continued to need attention. Like Team A, Team B received referrals primarily from the schools. The team coordinator found it necessary to work with the school counselors and administrators to facilitate the referral process; that is, help to identify students who should be referred and explain the process.

The expectations of the school counselors and others who referred to the YST seemed to be within the realm of what the team provided; namely, information sharing and suggestions for a course of action the schools and/or parents should pursue. The four school representatives who brought the referrals from the two school districts did not express the same dissatisfaction with the process that was found among school staff referring to Team A. It was suggested by several respondents that perhaps this limited vision reflected the newness of the team and the fact that in outlying areas, just having regular contact with agency representatives was a major breakthrough.

However, as with Team A, there was serious questioning on the part of the school representatives as to why referrals originated exclusively from the schools. The fact that the agencies never referred created the feeling, for school representatives, that the YST was not a school-agency team, but a team of agency consultants who provided advice to school staff. For several school representatives it
created the uncomfortable feeling of always being in the position of the one who needed assistance to solve a problem. One of them expressed it this way:

The kids belong to everybody, they don’t belong to the school and everybody else tries to fix them. If the agencies brought referrals, then we (schools) could be resources to help, and it would make a different feel: that we are all on equal footing instead of us begging for help. That would be much more like a team.

The agency representatives interviewed affirmed their support of the YST and their personal commitment to attend meetings to support the effort, but for the most part they saw no particular benefit that the team could offer them directly. Given the information networks that existed among the agencies and their internal staffing procedures, the agency representatives did not feel the YST process was necessary to allow them to carry out their professional responsibilities. One agency representative on the team frankly explained, "I think for me to refer a kid, the team is going to have to do something that I can’t already do."

Despite these tensions, the team continued to receive referrals. One team member voiced the hope that as the team developed further, perhaps some of the issues raised regarding the referral process could be addressed.

**Team C.** Referrals to Team C were almost always made by the schools. Twenty-two of the twenty-three elementary and
secondary school counselors in the local school district were interviewed to learn of their experience with Team C, particularly with regard to the referral process. Of the twenty-two, six declined comment because of their lack of or limited experience with the process. Among the other sixteen counselors, there was recognition of the value of information sharing that occurred at the YST meetings, but the potential of the process for actually making services available to students was felt to be constrained by the lack of agency resources and the failure of agencies to take responsibility for following through with the action plan. Those who did bring referrals expected information to be shared and an action plan developed, but they also realized that the school would most likely be responsible for the follow-through.

During the 1991-1992 school year, referrals from some of the schools, particularly some of the elementary schools began to drop off. A feeling developed that if the main objective of a referral was not information sharing, there really wasn't any reason to refer. However, in the spring of 1992, case management services were added to Team C and this generated a sudden increase in elementary referrals at the end of the school year.

Infrequently an agency brought a referral to Team C. Interagency networks and internal staffing procedures seemed to eliminate the need to refer. Several agency team members
did suggest, however, that at times the YST process could be of direct benefit to them. Difficulty in coordinating a treatment plan, the need to bring a situation to the attention of a broader audience, and a need for new ideas were mentioned as possible reasons to refer to the YST. A law enforcement team member made the suggestion that the YST could perhaps become an initial step in dealing with first time juvenile offenders. Another potential use of the YST by agencies was demonstrated when, in 1992, the members of the County F Youth Services Teams Advisory Board agreed that all students returning from residential treatment placements would be staffed at the YST before re-entering school. This created the likelihood that, in the future, more referrals would be initiated by agencies. Despite limited referral to the YST, agency representatives supported participation in the YST as part of a larger community effort to address problems collaboratively.

In the course of the interviews that were conducted, school personnel did not reflect the opinion, found elsewhere, that the schools' expertise was not recognized or was undervalued by agency personnel, and several agency team members volunteered comments that acknowledged the expertise and resources available through the schools.

**Team D.** Referrals to Team D were plentiful in number, especially during the 1990-1991 and 1991-1992 school years. The referrals came primarily from the schools although
parents and agencies also made some referrals. The team coordinator made herself available to consult with teachers and counselors regarding appropriate referrals and she also facilitated the actual referral process if necessary.

Counselors and administrators generally expressed satisfaction with the YST process. All of those interviewed mentioned information sharing as a primary expectation of outcome when making a referral, and seventy percent also indicated they expected the team process to result in the development of an action plan with team members taking some responsibility for its implementation. As one counselor said, "I am willing to participate and do more if they have some good ideas, but I view them as participants and not as advisors." The counselors indicated that their expectation for action was usually met in some way by the team.

Referrals to the team by agencies were made substantially less frequently than those made by schools, but comments of agency representatives in the course of interviews did not reflect a lack of perceived benefit from the process. In fact, team representatives from the alcohol and drug program, mental health services, the juvenile department, Children's Services Division and the county sheriff's department all brought referrals at one time or another. The main motivating factors cited for their referrals were the need to gather information, particularly regarding who else was involved with the student and family
and what they were doing, and a desire to coordinate services. In interviews with school personnel, questions regarding the frequency and numbers of YST referrals made by agencies did not arise.

Definition of an Appropriate Referral

Tied closely to the issue of referrals and who does and does not make them, was the definition of an appropriate referral. This was found to be a controversial issue centered primarily on whether the team was viewed as a process for early intervention or one more oriented to crisis intervention.

**Team A.** Team A as envisioned by its founder, the superintendent of schools, was intended to address the needs of at-risk students who were not connected with any agency; "students who were falling through the cracks." The experience of the team, however, was very different.

From the start, the vast majority of cases referred to the YST were students who were often involved with multiple agencies and often in a state of crisis. The team felt the schools usually referred only those cases they could not solve alone, waiting until all of their ideas and resources were exhausted. A review of information acquired from interviews with school counselors verified this viewpoint. Involvement with multiple agencies or the failure of school resources to successfully address a problem were the two
criteria used most consistently to identify a case for referral to the YST.

Some of the comments made by counselors helped to explain their actions. Many felt that if contact was needed with just one agency, it was quicker to contact that agency directly than to go through the YST. The YST however was useful in getting multiple players together to coordinate services and thus was used for cases involving several agencies. Case referral also reflected the attitude that the schools should try everything possible to solve a problem before going for help outside the educational system and thus publicly admitting the need for assistance. Additionally, referrals made earlier might be interpreted as the counselor not doing his job. There was also the perception that the agencies, with limited funding and resources, rationed services based on severity of need. Thus only the most difficult of cases would receive services.

Team members pointed out the limitations placed on the YST process by having the predominant number of referrals deal with extreme or crisis situations. In many instances there was little else that the team could offer. The student was already receiving available services so other than sharing information, there was usually little new that was planned and thus the team appeared to be ineffective. Most of the YST members indicated that they felt the team
was more successful when students who were just beginning to show evidence of problems were referred. In such cases, steps for early intervention were taken. Agencies were made aware of potential problems, and the team offered suggestions of possible courses of action. This was more in keeping with how the team viewed its mission; that of an advisory or consulting body. The dichotomy that existed between the schools' definition of an appropriate YST referral and that held by the team itself created frustration with the YST process both for the schools who referred and the team.

**Team B.** With one exception, the counselors and administrators in the schools served by Team B more often used the YST process for less serious cases than did school personnel who referred to Team A. Although one counselor viewed the team as appropriate only for students who were already involved with multiple agencies, the other school personnel interviewed felt that students who gave evidence that they might be headed for more serious problems in the future were also appropriate cases for referral. Thus referrals were made to gain information and to plan strategies to prevent more serious problems from developing, as well as to address the needs of students with extreme problems.

**Team C.** Counselors in schools who referred to Team C tended most often, although not exclusively, to refer
students for whom the school's resources proved inadequate. In some instances, the YST was used just to gather information or new ideas, particularly if it was known that the student was involved with multiple agencies. Generally, however, school personnel felt competent in addressing the needs of students presenting less serious problems. Several comments reflected the feeling that in the early stages the YST would offer nothing different from what the school would normally do. However, when school efforts were unsuccessful in addressing the student's problems, the YST was the next step. These referrals were characterized as representing severe needs or significant problems.

Team members expressed concern about the predominance of serious cases among referrals. Under these circumstances, "The YST was used as a Band-Aid" and there weren't "many success stories." Intervening at much earlier stages was felt to be a better strategy, one that would allow the school and agencies to work together to resolve issues before the student committed a crime, ran away, or otherwise placed themself in danger. While the team did not hesitate to staff the more serious referrals, it encouraged schools to consider the YST as an early step in their process to address the needs of at-risk students.

Team D. From the interviews conducted with all the school counselors in the school district served by Team D, it was apparent that the YST was one of the last steps in
the school process used to meet the needs of at-risk students. By the time the school’s resources were exhausted, usually a significant amount of time had elapsed, and thus referrals were often of a crisis nature. One team member termed such referrals "brush fires" and commented:

Everyone tends to get frustrated with the brush fires because there is a sense of urgency and a lot of wheels don’t turn that fast. Or, it is so extreme, there is little or nothing that we can do.

Despite the often serious nature of the referrals, the team remained positive about its role. During the 1991-1992 school year there were several team plans that were highly successful in their outcomes for students in extreme need.

The team did receive some referrals that were seeking early intervention, especially ones hoping to coordinate efforts when multiple agencies were involved with a student and family. Team members discussed taking steps to encourage more of such referrals, but they hesitated to do so, afraid they would create an impossible overload for the team. Their meeting agenda was consistently full. There was also the additional reality that for some agencies, only the students or families most in need were able to receive services. Referrals for early intervention would not be able to qualify for some services. Team members thus found themselves supportive of early intervention, but confronted with the reality that the team was limited in its response,
both in available services and in the actual number of referrals it could handle.

**Consent for the Release and Exchange of Information**

Securing parental and student (if the student was 12 years of age or older) permission for the exchange of information was a cornerstone of the YST process. A family’s right to privacy is protected by federal and state legal confidentiality restrictions, and the YST had to abide by these rules. In addition, it was the unwritten intent of the youth services teams to have the parents, if not actually present in the staffing, at least aware of the process and involved in the implementation of the team’s recommendations. Therefore, once it was determined that a student should be referred to the YST, the next step was to secure the necessary permission for the exchange of information.

**Team A.** One of the major issues that Team A wrestled with during its formative period was that of confidentiality and the need to have permission for the release and sharing of information. Legal restrictions governing confidentiality varied from agency to agency and developing a release form that met everyone’s criteria proved difficult. Although a release form was developed, it needed several modifications as laws changed over the years.

Securing permission was not often found to be a problem. Although the list of agencies on the release form
might appear intimidating, careful explanation of the YST as a broad-based effort to help the student and family usually provided the needed reassurance. Most often the parent was contacted and the process explained by the person who wanted to make the referral. It was suggested by one team member that a representative of the team should also visit with the parent to connect and empower the family in the process, however this suggestion was not implemented.

In a minority of cases it was found to be difficult or impossible to secure the needed signature. Some parents feared or disliked a particular agency and would only agree to give permission if that agency was banned from the session. Many times the deleted agency was a critical one for the referral, but the staffing was done without them. Other parents/students flatly refused to give their permission. Under those circumstances, the only alternative was to do a John Doe staffing. The student's identity was not revealed when the concerns were presented to the team, discussion was very general, and of course team recommendations could not be presented to the families as such.

Team B. School representatives on Team B found acquiring parent/student permission to be a time-consuming process and one that was not always fruitful. Just contacting the parent could be a challenge. In one case, a school administrator made repeated appointments with the
parent, even tried weekend times, but the appointments were not kept. Finally, he was able to stop her as she left town one morning at 6:45 a.m. He explained, "She didn’t say no, she just didn’t make it easy."

Parents who were unwilling to sign the release form usually were apprehensive about involving one or more of the agencies listed as team participants. Working with parents to alleviate their fears and to get them to understand the YST process demanded time and skillful explanation. Since the team was relatively new, the experience of school personnel in this role was rather limited. On a number of occasions the team coordinator facilitated the referral process by taking responsibility for getting the needed signature.

Another issue raised with regard to securing permission for referral was that of maintaining student trust. One counselor always asked the student to sign the release as well as the parent. This caused some students to question their trust in the counselor, threatening the student-counselor relationship. The counselor found he had to weigh what he had to gain versus what he could lose: "To be honest, sometimes keeping the trust has been more important than referring to YST."

When permission was not secured for the referral, John Doe cases were staffed. Several team members expressed
dissatisfaction with such staffings, viewing them as essentially a waste of time.

Team C. It was the feeling of team members that Team C was very careful to observe confidentiality guidelines. The permission form was repeatedly revised to reflect the most restrictive of agency regulations and there was great care taken to make sure the parent/student understood what the discussion at the staffing would entail.

In recent years, John Doe staffings were not common. Rather than refusing to sign the release at all, parents with strong reservations more often chose to restrict the staffing to specific agencies. The success school staff had in obtaining the necessary permission was attributed to the way parents and students were approached about the referral. One ESD behavior management consultant commented, "Getting the permission signed is the art of the process." Having a person who had a positive relationship with the family ask for the signature was felt to be important. Also, explaining that the YST was a volunteer organization that could only make recommendations and emphasizing that the family would retain the right to agree or disagree with those recommendations eliminated much of the anxiety parents and students felt. Approached in a nonthreatening manner, most agreed to the staffing.

Team D. Obtaining permission for the release and exchange of information was sometimes a barrier to staffing.
One counselor expressed frustration with the fact that, "They won't give us permission to share information and thus allow us to help them." However, in most instances, permission was secured. The person primarily tasked with obtaining the signatures was the team coordinator. In many cases the coordinator, as school psychologist, had worked with the family and thus it was reasonable that she made the contact regarding the permission form. In other instances her help was requested by others who wanted to submit a referral but found securing permission to share information difficult. The coordinator was very successful in gaining parent support and involvement; however, it placed a substantial demand on her already overloaded schedule. During the 1991-1992 school year, the junior high school took greater responsibility for acquiring the needed permission; however, the high school and elementary schools continued to rely heavily on the team coordinator’s assistance.

Step Two: Staffing

The essence of the youth services team process was the staffing. Through a series of logical steps facilitated by the team coordinator, a plan of action was written to address the needs of the referred student. At the outset of the staffing, the referring person, and the parent if they were in attendance, presented pertinent information,
identifying the needs of the student, what had been tried previously to address those needs, and what the present concerns were. This was followed by team members contributing any related information they had. Team members were usually advised of the meeting agenda beforehand and were therefore able to review records and compile any information available from their organizations.

After the background of the case had been established, brainstorming occurred. At this point, ideas were generated and explored in open discussion, and through consensus, a plan of action was developed. The action plan stipulated not only what the proposed strategy encompassed, but it also established who was responsible for implementation.

All four of the teams followed this basic plan in conducting staffings, however the nature of the team process during staffings and the characteristics of the action plans that resulted were found to vary from team to team. In exploring this variation, two key components were identified that helped to define the differences. These were the attendance and participation responsibilities agency and school representatives assumed as team members and the involvement of parents in the staffing.

Responsibilities of Team Membership

The responsibilities that membership in the youth services teams entailed were nowhere specifically stated. The role an individual member fulfilled seemed to proceed
from the dynamics of the team process and the personal commitment team members were willing to make.

**Team A.** Youth services team members sat on the team as representatives of their organizations, organizations that had agreed to appoint personnel to attend and participate in the YST process. In almost all cases, team members viewed their assignment to the team as "extra duty," one added to schedules already full. As one team member succinctly commented, "I see it (YST) as providing service to the community. It has a value, but I don't see it as part of my job." Regular caseloads and other job responsibilities were not diminished when YST duty was added. This fact often resulted in conflicts between YST meetings and other job commitments, and as a result, attendance by many team members was inconsistent from meeting to meeting. In the opinion of several members, sporadic attendance prevented the group from coalescing into a team.

Members agreed that when they were in attendance their responsibilities included informing other team members of their organization's service possibilities and limitations, presenting the perspective of their profession, sharing any pertinent information they or their organization had about the cases staffed, assisting in the development of the action plan, and providing related follow-up within their agency. Sharing pertinent information about referrals required a search for information within one's agency,
reviewing records and talking with the caseworker if one was involved. Presenting this information, which was often highly confidential, occasionally created some tension within the team. Members who interpreted rules governing confidentiality in a conservative manner were more hesitant to share information than were others. This situation was noted not only by team members but also by school counselors who inferred that perhaps team members did not trust school staff with the information.

When the team developed the plan of action for a case, a major split in how members defined their YST responsibilities became evident. A majority of the team defined their responsibility as advisory in nature and their specific charge as that of recommending services that were already available. They believed it was up to the referring school personnel and/or the parents to access services through normal agency procedures. A few other team members believed the team should take some responsibility for facilitating implementation of the plan. The team plans reflected the former view in that they were composed of a series of recommendations to "plug in" existing services and they were presented to school staff and parents for implementation. The only significant follow-through on the team's part was that occasionally provided by the team coordinator.
Team B. The pattern of attendance at Team B meetings reflected the time demand of the YST and the fact that team members for the most part "squeezed" YST responsibilities into an already full schedule. While willing to serve on the YST, members still viewed it as extra duty rather than a part of normal procedures used to do their job. The attendance of agency representatives was inconsistent either in that sometimes no one attended to represent an agency or one of several different individuals came. School representatives limited their attendance to that part of the meeting devoted to staffings from their respective district. Normally the two hour meeting was divided in half between the two school districts. Rather than sit as team members for all cases, counselors and administrators limited their participation to just half of the meeting.

Team members described their responsibilities as centered on providing information about the student being staffed and about available services and how to access them. They also acknowledged their role in generating ideas for the action plan and providing related follow-up within their organizations. The plans developed by the team were based on existing services with no attempts made to reconfigure services and develop alternatives.

Only one agency representative on the team mentioned that a team member's responsibilities might include follow-through on any part of the action plan. With no provision
for the extra time required to connect with families and facilitate access to services, team members were generally unwilling to assume such extended roles unless they were already working with the student or family. Thus it fell to the school representatives, the ones who brought the referrals, or the parents to do most of the follow-through. Although this was not viewed as a problem at the time, some members expressed the concern that the failure of the team to shoulder some of the follow-through might lead to a decrease in referrals in the future.

**Team C.** At the final meeting of Team C for the 1991-1992 school year, team members were asked to reflect on the operation of the team during the past year. A number of members mentioned the growing sense of commitment by team members, specifically evidenced by consistent attendance. Like other team members, members of Team C represented the in-kind contribution of their organizations. The resource they provided stemmed primarily from the personal commitment members made to assume additional professional responsibilities. Despite the extra time demand, many of the team members made their responsibility to be in attendance a priority.

In addition to regular attendance, team members defined responsibilities to include providing information and participating in the development of the action plan. Members explained the charge of their agencies, the services
provided, and how students and families could access services. They also brought information about students to the team and carried team concerns and recommendations back to agency case workers. Some feeling was expressed by several team members that individual interpretations of confidentiality guidelines on occasion precluded the sharing of information and thus hampered the functioning of the team. It appeared that some people readily shared information, while others were very guarded, and the difference did not appear totally attributable to the guidelines themselves. Two team members suggested that perhaps the differences were in part a reflection of feelings of trust or lack thereof.

In the development of action plans, members contributed the perspective of their profession to the group and sometimes took responsibility for facilitating part of the follow-through. For the most part the team confined its recommendations in the plan to available services, although on occasion the collaborative effort went beyond the usual and created new options. While the YST had no authority to enforce its recommendations, five of the team members held supervisory positions and were able to commit their organizations to specific action, something line workers could not do.

Team D. Despite the fact that the meetings of Team D were held in a city located 40 minutes from the county seat
where most county agency personnel had their offices, attendance by members during the preceding two years had become quite consistent with the exception of law enforcement personnel. Local and county law enforcement officers willingly performed record searches and provided information to the YST, but often they did not feel they could afford to release an officer to attend the meetings. In the spring of 1992, both agencies were noticeably understaffed.

The roles assumed by members of Team D were found in most cases to be similar to those associated with other teams. Members listed representing their agency, sharing information about referred students, and participating in the development of action plans based on existing services as major responsibilities. However, when the needs of a student were not met by the usual approach, the team did not hesitate to search for a more creative solution. The team coordinator explained the process in this way:

There is a lot of creativity involved and we have to be creative because we are really pigeon-holed on what we can do individually. But collectively we can stimulate options. People will really go out of their way.

Creative solutions or alternatives often necessitated that team members assume additional responsibilities, and a number of instances were found that demonstrated such action. During the 1991-1992 school year the team
experienced noteworthy success with two very difficult cases. In both instances, the action plans involved several team members taking on unusual responsibilities and working closely together to create a service or action not previously possible. In two other instances, both observed in meetings during May of 1992, individual team members went out of their way to help students. At one meeting, the action plan for a student included one team member volunteering to bring a bicycle to a student who could then utilize his bicycle repair skills to fix it and keep it. In another instance, a team member planned to meet a student at a local bank and assist them in opening a savings account. In both of these situations, neither team member was linked through their agency with the student. They saw a way to help a student and offered to provide that assistance. Yet another example of the extended definition of responsibility held by the team was the advocacy role the team occasionally adopted. On several occasions the team, as a unit, sent a letter to appropriate officials regarding an issue relevant either to a particular student or to the larger community. From examples such as these, it was apparent that the members of the YST broadly defined the responsibilities of team membership.

Parent Involvement

The four teams represented different perspectives on the involvement of parents in the YST staffing process.
Both positive and negative consequences of parental involvement were noted, as well as the importance of supporting those parents who did participate.

**Team A.** Team A historically did not include parents in the staffing process except in a few instances. For the most part the position of the team was that the presence of parents constrained information sharing among members and generally parents had nothing to contribute to the staffing.

On several occasions when it was decided that the parent had important information to share or that the parent would be central to the implementation of the team’s recommendations, they were invited to attend. In one of the meetings observed, two of the cases presented involved the parent of the student. The team coordinator had requested the referring counselors to bring the parents because the meeting was held during the last week of school and any follow-through on the team’s recommendations would most likely be left up to the parents. In both cases observed, the parent sat alone, facing the team. Although the staffing process was explained for their benefit and at times positive remarks made about their efforts, it was obvious that both of the parents were uncomfortable. One openly expressed her sense of discomfort and feelings of intimidation and made it very clear that she was there on her own accord in an effort to get help for her son. At the end of each staffing, the parent simply got up and left with
no further contact with the referring counselor or another team member.

Team B. In its short history, Team B experienced little parent involvement although members voiced support of parent participation in the staffing process and some, in fact, suggested that the YST should be identified as a resource for parents as much as it was identified as one for schools. It was agreed that increasing parent participation, empowering the family to be part of the solution rather than viewing them as part of the problem, was one way to improve the functioning of the team. Plans were made for the 1992-1993 school year to encourage parents of referred students to attend the YST meetings and to support them if they chose to come. Realizing that appearing before the team could be an intimidating experience, it was planned that the referring person would explain the process beforehand, sit with the parent during the session, and debrief them afterwards.

Team C. Overall, the involvement of parents in the staffing process conducted by Team C was felt to strengthen the process in several ways. First, by adding the parent’s perspective both in the identification of needs and in the discussion of possible actions to meet those needs, a broader understanding of the case was achieved. Secondly, by attending the meeting, the parent was able to gather first hand information about available services, connect on
a personal level with agency representatives, and understand how the team's recommendations were developed. Although critical information would have been provided to the parent had they not been present, hearing it in person was felt to be much more meaningful. Finally, one team member noted that the presence of the parent seemed to elicit an emotional response that in turn resulted in more involvement by team members and a greater willingness of members to extend themselves.

The one drawback of parent participation that several team members noted was that it sometimes limited what information was shared. One example given was when information a member had contradicted the information the parent presented to the team. If the contradictory information had been provided, it would have led to a confrontation, hardly an event conducive to the staffing process and trying to support and involve the parent. In another instance, sensitive information emerged as important to the case only after the staffing was under way and there was no appropriate opportunity to share it with the team while the parent was present. Despite the recognition that the presence of the parent might constrain the discussion at times, the benefits to be gained by including parents were believed to outweigh any constraints their presence might impose.
To encourage parents to attend the staffings, steps were taken by the team and the persons initiating the referrals to make the parents as comfortable as possible throughout the process. Thus, prior to the meeting, the team was introduced to the parents as a resource for them, one that would offer support in their efforts to help their child. Parents were informed of the steps in the YST process and either the referring person or a person invited by the parent sat with the parent during the meeting to offer support. After the staffing, the referring person or another team member met with the parent to review what had happened and answer any further questions. Through these efforts the team hoped to make the staffing a positive experience for the parent and thus gain their support in implementing the action plan.

Team D. Team members viewed parent participation as a critical element of the YST staffing process. When the suggestion to staff a student was presented to parents by the referring person, the team was identified as a resource for families, an opportunity to access multiple services in one meeting. The process was explained and they were encouraged to participate.

Many parents did attend the staffings, and the team followed a definite procedure to help the parents feel comfortable and to keep the process on track. Before the parents came into the meeting, the team met briefly and
reviewed the facts of the case and shared relevant information. The parent was then invited in and the process once again explained, the reason for the staffing reviewed, and the parent’s input solicited. During the discussion of possible strategies to meet the identified needs, parents and team members interacted freely and a plan of action was agreed upon. After the staffing, the referring person or the team coordinator left with the parent for a few minutes of debriefing. The only problem with this process, as noted by team members, was keeping the discussion focused when a parent wanted to talk at length. Skillful facilitation by the team coordinator was a necessity in such cases.

In some of the meetings observed, team members made sure the parent was seated as a member of the group rather than alone, facing the team. At one meeting a parent advocate from the community accompanied the parent. Generally, the team expressed concern that the parent not feel isolated, but rather a part of the larger group working to help the student.

Step Three: Implementation

The action plan, written by the YST during the staffing, outlined a plan of services for the referred student and made recommendations as to how those services might be provided. The implementation of the plan, the follow-through, constituted the next and culminating step of
the YST process. The difference between having a plan and implementing it was explained by one team member: "Putting together the plan gives you something to hold on to. How it works out, day by day, week by week, is really the work." All four of the youth services teams struggled with the issue of how best to do that "work."

Team A. The need for more consistent follow-through on action plans was noted as a major concern by the team beginning with its first year-end report in the spring of 1987 and thereafter in several annual reports, team meetings, and advisory board meetings. Comments in the records noted that there was a need for increased effective follow-up and case management of clients after staffings, that more feedback should be given to school personnel with regard to the action plan and its follow-through, and that a paid position of team case manager should be funded. In the spring of 1991 a proposal was submitted by the advisory board to a local funding source to support a case manager position with the team, but it was not funded.

In interviews with team members and school staff, the lack of consistent follow-through was identified as a serious weakness of the YST process. A team member pointed out, "If you aren't going to follow through on the plan, then what is your purpose? You might have good ideas but if they aren't implemented, what good is it?" At the stage of plan implementation there were really two issues to be
addressed. First, there was the need for those individuals tasked with the responsibility for carrying out the action plan to actually follow through on those responsibilities. Second was the need for someone to check to see if the follow-through happened and provide assistance if needed.

Parents, school staff, and agency staff were all at one time or another charged with implementing part or all of an action plan. The chances of their following through depended on a variety of factors including the time available to do so, their understanding of the plan and agreement with its recommendations, and, in the case of parents, their ability to access agencies. Agency representatives on the team largely viewed their commitment as ending with the generation of the action plan. In some instances they were tasked with other specific duties, but these were limited in nature. Even so, minimal follow-through occurred, and in a number of cases the team coordinator found it necessary to step in and assume responsibility to get action taken.

School staff were most often the referring persons and the bulk of implementation was assigned to them. As noted in previous sections, most school-based referrals were made with the expectation that agency staff would take over responsibility for delivering services to students and families. School staff did not feel they had either the
time nor the resources to provide the follow-through outlined in the plan.

Finally, the success of any plan usually required the support of the family and their willingness to contact suggested service providers. For many parents, approaching community agencies was an intimidating as well as confusing process, and they resisted taking the necessary steps.

Implementing the action plan was indeed the "work" of the YST process and both referring school staff as well as team members overwhelmingly made the point that it was necessary for some one person to be given the time to provide the coordination and monitoring that were crucial to successfully carrying out an action plan. Someone needed to be available to work with those trying to follow through with the plan. Parents needed to be supported and encouraged, school personnel relieved of the coordination role, agency case workers consulted and the plan explained, and team members reminded of commitments. Further, someone needed to be responsible for bringing the case for review before the team.

During its first two years, the team tried to work with a process by which various team members were tasked with follow-up responsibilities for specific cases. However, the approach did not work; team members did not have the time to monitor cases. The team coordinator assumed much of the responsibility for follow-up, but as the amount of his time
allocated to YST duties decreased in successive years, follow-up became less routine. Although cases were periodically reviewed, there was often no one to work with parents and school and agency staff to assist and support their efforts in following through with the plan. As a result, Team A, with no authority to mandate implementation and few resources to assist with implementation, seriously questioned its ability to meet the needs of the students it staffed.

Team B. It was the limited experience of Team B that usually the school staff member making the referral to the YST was tasked with either following through on the team’s suggestions or explaining the plan to parents and encouraging them to follow through. Other team members occasionally had specific tasks to carry out, but they were usually very limited in scope. The team coordinator provided overall case coordination. She discussed the plan with agency caseworkers not present at the staffing and answered questions. She checked with the school staff and any other involved team members to determine whether the plan was being implemented, and she also scheduled the cases for team review.

For the most part, with the limited number of referrals the team received, the process worked satisfactorily. However as the team worked through the process, several problems that hindered follow-through were identified.
First, there were no outreach services sponsored by county agencies in the rural unincorporated area. Thus to access suggested services, families had to have transportation to the county seat, a drive of at least a half hour. The requirement of travel somewhat diminished the likelihood that parents would seek suggested services. Secondly, although the team review of cases identified any lack of follow-through that might have occurred on the part of team members, their agencies, and school staff, the team had no power to do anything about it other than to bring peer pressure to bear. There was no way to mandate follow-through and no one available to pick up loose ends. Last, follow-through proved especially difficult for families not previously connected with service agencies. It was the team's experience that families making initial contacts with agencies needed a good deal of personal support and assistance and that was not available through the team.

Two suggestions were made by team members to improve follow-through. First, attaching case management to the team was suggested as a way of improving follow-through of the action plan by families. School staff in most instances were charged with contacting the parents about the plan, but they did not have the time to assist them in actually taking the steps to carry out their responsibilities. Someone who could work as a family advocate and support the process was needed. To help with team member follow-through, it was
suggested that meeting minutes be mailed to all team members following each meeting with responsibilities for implementing the plans spelled out case by case and the dates for case reviews specified. The minutes would serve as a reminder of case responsibilities and hopefully increase follow-through. Neither suggestion was adopted.

Team C. Lack of follow-through on team recommendations, primarily the failure of families to link up with support services as suggested by the team, was an ongoing concern of Team C. The action plan generally relied heavily on parental follow-through for implementation and yet the team provided little support for their efforts. School staff, as the persons who brought most of the referrals, conveyed the plans back to parents, if the parents did not attend the staffing, but they were not willing to assume intensive work with families to help them access services. In fact, the majority of counselors interviewed said that they expected the team to provide the link between families and services, to take responsibility for ensuring follow-through. With no one providing family support, team recommendations were often ignored.

In addition to the failure of families to follow through on team plans, several team members made the comment that agency follow-through was also a weakness of the process. Time demands were cited as the usual reason team members did not carry out tasks they volunteered to do. The
only element of accountability was peer review through periodic case updates and that, according to one team member, did not seem to be a motivating influence: "... if someone hasn’t followed through, it is just passed over. It is not uncomfortable enough for people who don’t do their piece."

In an attempt to improve follow-through, the team adopted two new strategies during the 1991-1992 school year. Both strategies were developed under the leadership of the Social Services Consultants of the ESD in collaboration with representatives of various county agencies and schools. The first approach involved the designation of a family resource team (FRT) for each student staffed. As explained in the written description of the FRT, each agency/school staff member involved with the student/family was included on the FRT and a team leader was chosen. Team members were asked to report any significant changes in the student/family situation to the team leader, including changes in school/home placement, service/treatment status, and behavior. The FRT leader was responsible then for keeping all members informed of any changes. As the center of communication for the FRT, the team leader, although not officially asked to check-up on the implementation of the action plan, was in a position to know what was and what was not done. When a plan was not working for whatever reason,
the team leader was expected to bring the case back to the YST for review.

The family resource team was thus a strategy aimed at tightening the coordination of the action plans and indirectly providing for some follow-up of the plan's implementation. Although the FRT was identified for many of the cases staffed in the winter and spring of 1992, it was rarely used. Team members reported few instances of when they were contacted by the leader of a family resource team or when they themselves contacted the team leader to share new information.

The addition of case management to the team occurred several months after the introduction of the family resource team. Unlike the FRT, the case management piece was funded with additional resources. In the fall of 1991, the ESD received a U.S. Department of Education grant to design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive interagency model for serving children with serious emotional disturbance and their families. As part of the project, Team C was chosen to pilot the addition of case management to the YST process.

When assigned to a case, the case manager provided a broad array of services for the student and family. The case manager assisted the family in broadening the YST action plan to incorporate family goals. Assistance was also provided to enable families to access needed medical, social, educational and other services. Emergency
intervention, advocacy/support, counseling if unavailable elsewhere, and monitoring of student and family progress were also provided.

The concentrated, personal support and follow-up provided by the case manager was exactly what school referral sources and team members alike believed many families needed. It constituted the services the school looked to the team to provide to ensure follow-through, and it simultaneously relieved team members from time demanding assignments that they often failed to carry out. Although available on a limited basis, case management renewed interest in the YST. One of the ESD behavior management consultants explained:

Sometimes ... there isn't much more to be done at the YST except for the case manager position. That is what I have been able to offer, staffing it because case management may be offered. This has brought back interest in the YST on the part of some who were burned out with it.

**Team D.** As found in the other three YSTs, the lack of follow-through on action plans by families, team members, and school staff was of concern to Team D members and the school counselors and administrators who brought referrals. The lack of adequate time to devote to YST commitments was cited by agency and school personnel as the primary reason for their own lack of follow-through. In the case of
families, team members and school staff believed families resisted following team recommendations for a number of different reasons, but they felt that if someone had the time to devote to assist families in their efforts, follow-through would be improved. One school counselor summed up his feelings:

I wish there was more time for follow-through. Some folks you have to pretty much take through the process, a pretty much social worker role. I usually feel real good about the teaming of the situation and then I guess I feel as alienated as the child and the family does. When push comes to shove, there really isn’t enough time and resources to see it through.

To address the follow-through issue, the team adapted the family resource team model to fit its needs. For most cases staffed by the YST, a family resource team, consisting of representatives from the agencies and the school involved in the plan, was identified, and a team leader was chosen. Usually the team leader had the most involvement with the student, although this was not necessarily so. The team leader was responsible for keeping FRT members informed of any additional information that might emerge after the staffing. Additional responsibilities included explaining the plan to the family, if they were not present at the staffing, and encouraging them to follow through, and checking on the progress of team members in carrying out any
tasks they had agreed to do. Accountability by team members occurred at the periodic reviews held for each case. During the reviews, the YST coordinator asked each FRT member to report the current status of their efforts, and the functioning of the student/family were also discussed. Changes in the action plan were made as needed.

The 1991-1992 school year was the first year the family resource team was used and several problems remained to be worked out as noted by team members. First, because there was no written documentation of the team plan other than notes each member took for themself, it was difficult to hold people accountable to the team. At the case review there was not necessarily an agreement by all as to exactly what the plan had been. This created what one team member called the "slop factor," tasks left undone because members didn’t remember they were suppose to do them. The YST coordinator resisted disseminating minutes of each meeting because of a desire to keep the proceedings highly confidential, but other members argued that the records would promote more responsibility on the part of the team.

A second problem was the fact that assuming the position of team leader for the FRT proved difficult for some team members. In one instance, the team member would only assume that role if they were the case worker within their agency for the student. Otherwise they felt the role might put them in the position of telling one of their peers
how to do their job, and they were unwilling to be in that position. Another team member commented that the time demands of the team leader were more than they could handle, and thus they were unwilling to take on the extra duty. It was noted that in many cases the team coordinator ended up assuming the role of team leader.

A final aspect to the FRT process that needed further attention involved the case reviews. The YST coordinator, although not necessarily a part of a particular FRT, was tasked with facilitating all case reviews. It was suggested that this role really belonged to the team leader of each case who should have the most detailed information about the follow-through.

Although the FRT process was not perfected and although school and agency personnel would have welcomed the addition of a paid case manager position to the team, most of the school and agency staff interviewed felt the FRT was working to provide increased coordination of the action plan and some follow-up on its implementation.

Summary of Findings

All four teams were found to follow the same basic process to address the needs of at-risk students. This process consisted of the submission of a referral to the team, the staffing of the case by the team, and the implementation of the team’s recommendations. At each of
these steps, varying perspectives as to how the team should carry out the process were held by team members and involved school personnel.

At the referral stage it was found that schools referred the overwhelming majority of students to the teams and that there was some concern raised as to why agency representatives did not refer more often. The question of the team’s benefit for agency personnel and suspicion that agency personnel did not appreciate the expertise available through the schools surfaced as related issues. It was also found that the expectations of the team held by school staff sometimes did not match the team’s definition of its function. School staff usually referred only their most difficult cases to the YSTs, ones that had not responded to any of the school’s efforts, and in most cases they usually expected community agencies to assume an active role in providing needed services. The teams, on the other hand, felt they could be most helpful when referrals were made early on. Early intervention best fit the team’s perceived role as primarily a coordinating and advisory body. The need to have permission for the release and exchange of information sometimes hindered the referral process. In general however, it was found that presenting the YST in a positive manner and encouraging parents to be involved decreased their apprehension and secured their permission for the referral.
The staffing process consisted of the presentation of the student’s needs and concerns about his situation, the sharing of relevant information by team members, the consideration of ideas as to how student needs might be addressed, and finally the formation of team recommendations for action. The teams arrived at their recommendations through a process of consensus building. Action plans usually reflected the availability of existing services, although on occasion more creative plans were devised. The degree of parent involvement in the staffing process varied among the teams with some teams making a conscious effort to encourage and support parent participation.

Implementation of the action plan was a perceived weakness of the YST process. With some exceptions, team members and school staff were unwilling to assume the additional responsibilities incurred during implementation, and parents often were unable to follow through with the team’s recommendations on their own. Depending upon the team, various efforts were made to provide follow-through. Attaching case management to the teams was one suggestion made for improving the situation.
The results of the youth services team process were centered, primarily, in two areas of achievement: communication and service delivery. Factors which limited progress in these two areas were also identified.

Team A

Without exception, team members cited improved communication as the predominate positive outcome of the YST process. It was also the one positive outcome that at least half of the secondary school counselors identified, and it was mentioned in the elementary administrators/counselors focus groups as one of the purposes for making a referral. Improved communication encompassed increased knowledge and understanding of agencies, schools, and clients and the development of positive relationships between team members. Its impact was noted to extend beyond the immediate staffings of the youth services team.

Increasing the knowledge and understanding held by schools and agencies of each others procedures, programs, and mandates was an initial and continuing focus of the YST. A team member remarked:

There are some unrealistic expectations from school people in terms of what it is really like getting social services. I think there are some very
unrealistic expectations among people who work in social services about just what it looks like working in a school and what that reality is. I guess I have some energy advocating that there be someone bridging that gap and part of it can get done by sitting down and having face to face contact.

While some team members, who were agency representatives, indicated that they came to the YST process with a good understanding of the possibilities and limitations of agencies, other agency representatives and school staff found the process particularly valuable in providing this information. Schools were not regularly included in other interagency efforts and, previous to the YST, had little chance of learning first hand about the agencies. In fact, they had much misinformation derived from incomplete knowledge. One school representative explained the difference serving on the YST had made in her understanding: "Prior to the YST I knew the agencies were out there, but I didn’t have as clear an understanding of who they are and the piece of the pie they work with."

Likewise, agency members noted that participating in the YST had increased their understanding and knowledge of what services schools offered and of how they worked with students and families.

The increased understanding of agencies and schools developed as an indirect outcome of the collaborative
process and as the result of some direct educational efforts undertaken by the team. Team members on a number of occasions were asked to either explain their agency’s mission and associated processes or to update the team on any changes in programs, access procedures, etc. While it was clear that some clarification of the possibilities as well as limitations associated with service provision by agencies and schools had occurred as a result of the YST, it remained an ongoing need, especially as agencies, schools, and the team experienced staff changes.

Sharing information about students referred for staffing was also a part of the increased communication among agencies and schools. Under the auspices of the YST, up-to-date student information that might not be otherwise available to team members, was shared and discussed. The schools and agencies developed a more complete picture of what was going on in a student’s life: what problems existed, who was involved with the student/family, and what services were being provided. The sharing of current information and being able to put the pieces together as a group provided the basis for development of the action plan.

The development of personal relationships between team members and, to a limited extent, between referring school personnel and the team was an additional positive outcome of the face to face communication characteristic of the staffings. Within the team, members described the level of
interaction as one that allowed members to speak frankly and to reveal themselves as individuals. The trust level increased and, in turn, it facilitated working relationships not only within the team but outside as well. Members commented that they felt comfortable approaching one another outside of the YST: "We have those relationships. We can pick up the phone and say...."

Improvement in communication seemed to apply largely to team membership, which included only one school district representative. The effect of the process was not transferred to other school staff because of the infrequency of their participation in a YST staffing. Most teachers, counselors, and administrators participated in a staffing once or twice a year, if at all. There was no ongoing contact as there was for team members and thus the opportunity to gain knowledge and information about agencies and the chances of getting to know agency representatives better was limited. From the perspective of staff in the various schools, a lack of communication between agencies and schools remained a serious problem.

Although increased communication was considered a worthwhile outcome of the YST process, team members and school staff were quick to point out that it was not enough to sustain the team. The overriding purpose of the team was to address the needs of the referred students. With respect to this objective, calling attention to the needs of
students and families as well as taking steps to address those needs were identified as yet other positive outcomes of the YST process.

Several team members remarked that if the YST process did nothing else, it at least provided a forum for discussion of the needs of at-risk students and their families. In so doing, the need for a community-based response was demonstrated and the gaps in existing services clearly identified, putting pressure on the system to take action.

It was also noted that the YST process was successful in connecting some students with the services they needed. In the opinion of most school counselors, the YST had limited success in accomplishing this, but it was acknowledged that the team was effective in addressing the needs of some students. The process did bring multiple perspectives to bear on a problem and did provide an efficient way to coordinate services.

Evaluation of team accomplishments with regard to student outcomes was a subjective judgement. No systematic effort was made to collect data regarding the types of problems brought before the team or the effect team plans had on student outcomes, other than information embedded in team meeting notes. Thus opinions of the team’s efficacy were based on individual perceptions rather than a summary of experience over time.
In contrast to the positive outcomes of the YST process, noted above, feelings of frustration were identified as the negative outcome of the process; frustration borne of the process' limited ability to adequately respond to the needs of all at-risk students. First, although it was theorized that by coordinating services the YST process would reduce duplication and thus the demand for services, just the opposite resulted. In addition to coordinating services, the YST process increased access to them, and thus service demands were not reduced. As a result, overloaded systems remained limited in their ability to respond quickly or intensively, if at all.

Frustration also developed when there were no existing services that expressly met the needs presented, and for many school personnel, there was the frustration of wanting the team to be something other than what it was. Despite the success of the team in promoting understanding and building working relationships among participants and in providing appropriate services to some students, the frustration associated with the limited capacity of systems and in turn with the YST process itself seemed to overshadow the positive and placed the future of the team in doubt.

Team B

Team B was described by one team member as a "step in the right direction" toward increasing communication between
schools and agencies. Members new to the area or their job found the information learned about agency and school operating procedures very helpful. Others, who had a longer history within their professional role, generally felt the YST did not noticeably increase either their knowledge or understanding in this regard.

While members of the team had differing opinions as to the value of the YST in promoting their understanding of how agencies operated, all agreed that the team offered a chance to share information about students that was not provided anywhere else. For agencies already involved with a student, the YST offered a chance to hear of the school’s experience, information they would not necessarily hear from the student or parent. For the school, it offered the opportunity to meet with professionals outside of education and listen to their viewpoint. For all, the YST provided an opportunity to put the pieces of information together and to increase understanding of the student’s situation. In some cases, a referral was made to the YST simply for purposes of sharing information.

The most strongly felt positive outcome of the YST process was the development of personal relationships among team members, putting a face with a name and a person with an agency. Both school and agency team members acknowledged the increased level of trust that developed and its impact on contacts outside the YST meeting. An agency team member
offered, "I have grown closer to some of the group. Before, when I called them, I was just the representative of the agency. Now there is a personal relationship." A school representative explained:

It was easy for me to call a person involved with an accident case that I was involved with as an EMT, because I knew her from the YST. She was a real person, not just an agency that I wouldn't have called before.

School staff also indicated feeling more confident in their decision to refer parents for services: "We have a greater comfort level, more trust that the agency will help that person and not mismanage them and add to their problems."

The generalization of more positive communication and increased levels of trust to situations outside of the YST allowed students, other than those referred to the YST, to receive assistance.

The strengthening of the relationship between the schools and the agencies was helped by the fact that the four school representatives that sat on the team were direct service personnel in their schools. Thus, the schools' link with the team was ongoing and direct, and from the individual school's perspective, communication with agencies was improved.

In addition to improved communication, which seemed to be the initial objective of the rural team, other positive
outcomes were identified. In its limited number of staffings, team members indicated that they felt students had been well served. Students and families had been connected with services and a positive difference made in their lives. The team was also able to discuss broader issues, and additional knowledge was gained about how to deal with them. For instance, one team meeting was devoted to training on the use of crisis teams in the schools.

Overall, team members evaluated the YST process as a positive experience, one that produced outcomes that improved the working relationship of education and human service personnel within the communities and as a result brought direct benefits to students and families in need. Although there were individual complaints about the time demand or some of the steps in the process, there was no sense of pervasive frustration or any other indication of negative outcomes.

Team C

As found in the two teams in County E, Team C members noted improved communication between agencies and schools and to a limited extent improved communication among agencies as a primary result of the YST process. For the most part, agency representatives considered themselves well informed about other agency programs and ways to access them, however, they acknowledged that participation as YST
members increased their knowledge and understanding of the schools' role and also served to update them on changes in agency operations. Representatives from the school district and the ESD indicated that the YST process resulted in greater understanding of agencies by school personnel and improved the way some agencies were perceived by the schools.

Both schools and agencies recognized the advantage the YST provided in making information about students available. The one positive outcome of the YST repeatedly mentioned by school counselors was information sharing about students. Through participation in the process, schools achieved access to the information loop that previously only existed among agencies. The YST provided the one opportunity for school representatives to meet regularly with representatives of other community agencies to discuss students. Agency representatives likewise commented on the advantage of being able to gain the school's perspective:

Those of us who have been around know everybody in every agency pretty much. It is this other facet we have never been hooked into: people who probably have even better information than the social services, the school. Being able to use that expertise to deal with things you see in case loads is pretty exciting to me. We have never had that.
Agencies and schools profited from each others information, and everyone gained a more complete picture of the student which led to a better plan of services.

Another positive outcome of the YST process was networking and development of trust among members. In the course of the meeting process, members lost their identity as agency representatives and were recognized more as individuals. This fostered the collaborative effort of the team and had significant impact on situations outside the YST. Several members commented as follows:

It is the personal relationships that get developed that are a real strength, and that affects kids not staffed at YST as well. People are more willing to respond and work together for all kids.

It is nice being on the team because now I have someone I can call. It is a name, a connection. They know who you are, and that makes it easier to approach an agency.

As in the school district associated with Team A, school counselors and other school staff, except for the district’s representative to the team, were less likely to develop more personal working relationships with agency representatives because of their relatively infrequent participation in staffings. A few of the teachers who taught classrooms designed specifically for high risk
students were more frequently participants in the YST process, but other teachers and most counselors had no ongoing contact with the team. This fact limited the impact information sharing and the experience of working collaboratively had on individual schools.

Other positive outcomes associated with the YST process related to meeting student needs. The YST placed the student at the center of discussion. It presented an opportunity for their needs to be discussed from a community perspective and for a plan of service to be developed based on the input of many people. It allowed for the identification of appropriate services and for the coordination of multiple services, and students and families did receive assistance. However, the actual effect of team action on student outcomes, especially over time, was difficult to determine given the team’s minimum record keeping procedures.

The negative impact of the YST originated primarily from the inability of the process to provide the services needed by all of the students referred. The limited capacity of agencies to offer services and the inability of the team to provide follow-through on many of their suggestions created a good deal of frustration, primarily for school staff. However, the positive results associated with the YST process encouraged a steady number of
referrals, indicating that although the process was not perfect, it was valued.

Team D

Team D members identified many of the same outcomes as did members of the other three teams. The benefits of sharing information about clients, agencies, and schools was most often noted. Current information provided in a group setting enhanced communication and the ability of the group to address student needs as a team. Agency and school representatives developed a fuller appreciation of each other’s capabilities and limitations and this helped to dissolve turf issues and promoted the development of a team perspective. Greater understanding of the student’s situation was also brought about by the presentation of information from multiple sources. In particular, the school’s information was included in the information loop that existed among agencies. As noted by an agency team representative, "Often that is the one chance the school has to be heard. We tend to talk to each other and to parents and not always go to the school for information."

The opportunity to network was also mentioned as an outcome of the YST process. The development of positive relationships among team members and the resultant increased level of trust promoted the group’s ability to function as a
team and had a beneficial impact on member contacts outside of the YST.

The improved communication developed among team members extended somewhat to school staff located in the individual school buildings. Those administrators and counselors and in some cases, teachers, who attended staffings on a regular basis were able to increase their understanding of agencies and to make more personal contact with agency representatives. In addition, the team scheduled several special YST meetings each year to which they invited school administrators and counselors. At these "Policy and Potluck" meetings, agency representatives described and explained the services they provided and how these might be accessed.

Yet another outcome that members identified was the fact that some students and/or their families received services as a result of the team’s efforts. The YST was described as a forum where information from multiple sources was shared and a comprehensive picture of the student was presented. Access to services was streamlined and coordination of efforts achieved. As in the case of the other teams, minimum record keeping procedures made it difficult to determine the impact of team action on student outcomes.

An additional outcome that was noted by Team D, but not by other teams, was the support that the team provided for
parents, team members, and school staff. Team members and some school staff members expressed the fact that being able to voice concerns about students in front of a group of helping professionals dispelled the sense of isolation they sometimes felt. A school counselor described the support: "I like the sense that you do not feel alienated and alone here. I really do like the idea that there are other folks on the same team." Team members also received the impression that parents who attended staffings felt supported by the process. They left the meeting feeling a part of a larger team, "not in it by themselves."

No negative outcomes were identified in the course of interviews. Shortcomings of the YST approach were mentioned, but no adverse effects.

Summary of Findings

There were found to be two primary positive outcomes of the YST process. One was the improved communication between the participants in the YST process; that is, agencies and schools. Information and understanding of agencies, schools, and students were increased and more trusting working relationships developed. The second positive outcome was the provision of services to students and families. Although limitations were noted in the teams' ability to address all needs presented, many students and their families were connected with appropriate services.
A third positive outcome was noted by one team. Team D found that the team provided support to members, persons bringing referrals, and parents in their attempts to help a student. The team approach provided an opportunity to share concerns and reinforce each other's efforts.

Feelings of frustration were the only negative results of the process that team members or school personnel named. The YST staffings plainly put the needs of the students "on the table" and in many instances blatantly demonstrated the limited capability of schools and human service systems to meet those needs. The inability of the YST to solve such problems caused some individuals to question its value.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The complex nature of the problems of at-risk youth has been documented in numerous studies and reports over the last decade. Equally well documented are the dismal outcomes that result when these problems are either not addressed or are ineffectively addressed: school dropouts, chronic unemployment, and welfare dependency. Increasingly the need for a comprehensive response to these complex problems has been acknowledged and collaboration viewed as a viable approach for achieving one.

Collaboration may be defined as a joint effort undertaken by two or more agencies to solve a set of problems that no one agency can solve unilaterally. Educators are confronted daily with children who are at risk for complex reasons, and they have limited resources to use in trying to help them. Moreover, human service agencies that are primarily responsible for addressing social problems respond in piecemeal ways, constrained by too few resources and mandates that narrowly define mission. What is needed is a holistic approach that recognizes the complexity of the problems and brings a multiple resource base to bear on these problems. To this end schools and community human service agencies have begun to work together
to achieve the vision of improved services for at-risk youth.

A selected review of the literature revealed that there was a wealth of data documenting the factors associated with at-risk youth. Also identified were effective instructional strategies related to the academic needs of at-risk students. However, the available research literature on school-human service agency collaboration was found to be sparse. In particular, few case studies have been conducted to provide an in-depth description of local efforts: to describe the experience as seen from the perspective of those involved and to provide insight into the practical, applied use of collaboration.

This study was conducted to add to our knowledge and understanding of how public schools and community human service agencies collaborate to provide more effective services for at-risk youth. More specifically it sought to answer the following questions: Why and how was the collaboration initiated?, How is the collaboration structured?, What are the characteristics of the process?, and What are the outcomes?

Four Oregon youth services teams (YSTs) were chosen as the cases for this study. Data were collected through observation, interviewing, and document review. The analysis of the data proceeded inductively using a content analysis strategy that resulted in emergent patterns or
themes. Themes were developed within each case and then compared across cases. Based on a preponderance of data, the following conclusions were drawn in answer to the research questions.

Conclusions

Why and How Was the Collaboration Initiated?

The impetus. The youth services team represented a collaborative strategy implemented to bring about a community-based response to the multi-faceted needs of at-risk youth.

Both schools and agencies recognized the inability of the traditional systems approach to meet the complex needs of at-risk youth. Students were either falling through the cracks, unable to qualify for any services, or they presented needs that far outstripped the resources of any one school or agency. As explained by Gray (1985), collaboration is a warranted response in such situations. Organizations realize they cannot manage a problem unilaterally and seek to join with others, who are also concerned with the problem, to engage in collaborative problem-solving.

Formation. Formation of the collaboration was initiated at either the direct service level or the administrative level. In either case, administrative
approval and support for the YST was demonstrated through the signing of an interagency agreement.

Although all four of the teams were remarkably similar in their structure and functioning, they represented the outcomes of two different approaches to team formation. In two of the cases, a group of direct service personnel took responsibility for creating the YST and there was no direct involvement of administrators until the signing of the interagency agreement. In the other two cases, efforts were initiated at the administrative level and direct service personnel subsequently involved. In neither of the approaches did the convener(s) possess formal authority to form the collaboration. Instead, position held and/or knowledge and experience provided credibility for the convener(s) in their role. This supports Gray's (1991) observations that either formal or informal authority may support the efforts of conveners.

There was nothing in the findings to suggest that either a top-down or bottom-up approach was more advantageous in terms of either team formation or function. It was acknowledged, however, that both administrative and line staff support were necessary to implement the collaborative effort.

Official organizational endorsement of the YST effort was achieved through the signing of interagency agreements by the CEOs of the involved schools and agencies. These
agreements were broad statements that acknowledged a shared vision and the desire to collaborate, but they provided little guidance for the actual operation of the teams. Thus, team members for the most part individually determined their roles and responsibilities, and the team process evolved to accommodate these.

Kagan (1991) noted that the definition of the roles and responsibilities of collaborators is fundamental to the success of the collaboration. Through such definition, boundaries are clearly identified, thus eliminating many issues of turf protection. The YSTs in this study proceeded to function without benefit of clear definitions, and the ambiguity contributed to an unequal sharing of responsibility and a lack of accountability as was demonstrated in the implementation phase of the YST process. Team members individually chose what degree of responsibility they would assume, if any, for implementing the plan of action developed by the team. Often the bulk of the responsibility fell to the team coordinator. Further, since individuals determined their own contribution, it was difficult to hold anyone accountable for specific action.

**What Is the Structure of the Collaboration?**

**Two levels.** The overall structure of the collaborative effort was two-tiered: an advisory board consisting of school and agency administrators and a team consisting of direct service personnel.
The structure reflected some attempt to address both direct service delivery and systems change. The team targeted its efforts at the service delivery level and the advisory board spent most of its time dealing with issues in support of the team's operations. However, the advisory board did expend some energy discussing broader issues related to organizational rules and regulations and established institutional mandates. Achieving fundamental systems change, however, was not an advisory board objective.

Communication between the boards and teams was found to be inadequate by most team members and some board members. Although provision was made for board-team information exchange, it was indirect and infrequent. This limited the feeling of partnership between the two groups. Team members in particular seemed to need reassurance that the board was aware of and understood the limitations organizational mandates and procedures placed on a team's ability to serve at-risk youth. In County E, many team members also needed reassurance that the advisory board members were committed to a collaborative approach as a way of better meeting the needs of at-risk youth. Unless communication between the board and teams was made more direct, the need for the advisory board was questionable.
Resource base. The resource base of the YST was limited, relying primarily on in-kind contributions of personnel.

Overall, the in-kind resource support for the teams proved inadequate. The in-kind contributions of personnel more accurately represented the personal contributions of individuals. With the exception of some coordinator positions, no team members had time dedicated to YST duties; rather, it was an extra responsibility they assumed. Thus, the YST had to compete with other job responsibilities in terms of team members' time. Even in the case of three of the coordinators who had dedicated time for the YST, the time available was found to be far from sufficient. Additionally, clerical support for the teams was minimal in three of the four cases. Although the teams were well supplied with expertise, they were resource poor in terms of the amount of time available to take advantage of that expertise.

The limited resource base of the teams negatively affected the implementation of team action plans in particular. With no resources to support a position devoted to the coordination and monitoring of a plan's implementation, the efficacy of the team was severely constrained. Attempts to deal with the problem internally met with limited success. The addition of externally funded case management services to one team appeared to offer the
most hope for providing the necessary support for follow through.

Support. The education service district (ESD) provided significant support to the collaborative process.

The ESD served as a facilitator of the collaborative process at the board and team levels. Through both direct and indirect means, the ESD was able to smooth the process. ESD staff who participated as team members and board members were directly involved. Indirectly, ESD staff aided the process by offering administrative support to teams and boards. The role filled by the ESD was similar to that Barron (1983) described as "the fixer", a person(s) who acts as a "... troubleshooter, who can smooth the way ... and make things happen" (p. 170). The ESD staff had training and experience in both the social service and education sectors. This understanding of both arenas placed them in a unique position to facilitate the collaborative process.

Leadership. Leadership of the collaborative effort rested primarily with the education sector.

Together, local schools and the ESD provided much of the leadership for the YST effort by filling coordinator and board chair positions, providing clerical support and meeting places, and by providing auxiliary services. As the teams were conceived, leadership was not necessarily delegated to any one organization. In fact, shared leadership is one of the distinguishing characteristics of
collaboration (Kagan, 1991). However, interest in the leadership role was minimal among advisory board and team members. The advisory boards and teams were voluntary organizations with no regulatory authority. Thus, leadership was not related to power or control. Essentially leadership roles simply meant increased responsibility, and most organizations, other than the schools, were unwilling to invest the additional resources that leadership positions required. It was suggested by several respondents that over the long term, leadership by just one organization might result in limited involvement by others.

What Are the Characteristics of the Process?

The vision. While schools and agencies embraced the overarching vision of improved service delivery to at-risk youth and their families, at a more personal level the vision was translated into differing objectives.

As the teams worked to provide better services for at-risk youth and their families, differences in how the vision was to be achieved surfaced. Whether the team should provide advice and/or services, whether it was a part of agency processes as well as school processes, and whether crisis intervention or early intervention should receive priority were some of the questions that remained unsettled among the various teams. The lack of a clear definition of objectives resulted in some of the dissatisfaction voiced about the process both by team members and referring school
staff. In a few instances in one county, it fostered second
guessing about the motives of team members which was not
conducive to team cohesiveness. Barron (1983) noted that a
clear agreement on objectives and associated activities at
the service-delivery level facilitated the smooth
functioning of the collaboration. It appeared that a lack
of such clear agreement, impeded the teams’ functioning.

While the lack of agreement on specific objectives
among team members somewhat hindered a team’s functioning,
the existence of such differences between a team and the
source of its referrals, the schools, had even greater
consequences. Collaboration is a means to an end, not an
end in and of itself. Therefore, even though a particular
team exemplified the collaborative process, if it failed to
meet the expectations of those bringing the referrals, its
value was questioned. This was demonstrated by the
experience of Team A. Team A defined itself as an advisory
group while the schools usually made a referral in order to
gain direct services for a student. When the collaboration
did not deliver what the schools wanted, referrals declined.
The schools were only interested in a collaboration that
answered their needs. Collaboration in and of itself could
not sustain the team.

The other three teams involved in the study came closer
to meeting the expectations held by the schools. With
regard to Team B, both the team and the referring schools
agreed on the team's primary role as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas. The schools associated with Teams C and D wanted the teams to assume at least partial responsibility for providing services, and the teams met that expectation by redefining objectives and adopting new procedures. The match of objectives and activities between teams and schools resulted in consistent referrals to the teams. The need for teams to match expectations of the "users" demonstrated the importance of regularly assessing the environment to accurately identify those expectations.

**Perceived benefits for team members.** The self-interests of team members were served in differing ways by the YST process.

The perceived benefits of YST membership were not the same for all members. For some members, there were direct benefits that assisted them in carrying out job responsibilities: information related to clients, knowledge about agencies and services, and a sharing of responsibility for meeting the needs of clients. Indirect benefits were accrued by others: contributing to a plan to help a student, assisting another organization in its work, and representing one's organization in a collaborative effort. Both direct and indirect benefits helped to sustain the YSTs. Gray (1985) proposed that while collaboration depends on stakeholders perceiving that their interests will be served
(benefits of participating exceed the costs), it is not necessary that stakeholders share common interests. The results of this study confirmed that proposition and further suggested that indirect benefits may be as motivating of participation as are direct benefits.

**Parent involvement.** The degree of parent involvement in the collaborative effort varied significantly among the teams.

Minimal parent involvement in the YST process was present simply because parents were informed of the proposed referral, and they gave their consent for the staffing to be held. The extent of parent involvement in the staffing process, however, was found to vary dramatically among the four teams. One team only rarely encouraged parents to participate in the staffing and had no preset procedures for supporting the parent if they were present. A second, more recently formed team, had not yet involved parents in the staffing, but took action to plan procedures that would encourage and support parent involvement for the following school year.

The remaining two teams felt that parent participation was a primary factor in the success of the team process. They consistently encouraged parents to participate in the YST staffing and instituted procedures to support them through the process. In addition, one county advisory board demonstrated its recognition of the importance of parents as
partners in the collaboration by seating two parent representatives as voting members of the board. Steps taken to include parents reflected an appreciation of the contributions parents could make and a philosophical orientation supportive of family empowerment. Indeed, the power of the YST as a vehicle to guide and support the efforts of parents was a definite strength of the process. Fortunately, some teams realized this fact and took advantage of the opportunity.

Confidentiality. The youth services teams made a conscious effort to protect the individual’s right to privacy.

Issues surrounding the release and exchange of confidential information were of ongoing concern to all teams. While it was recognized that the YST process depended on the sharing of pertinent information among members, the teams were committed to protecting the right to privacy for each individual. Therefore, substantial effort was put into developing and subsequently updating a standard form for the release and exchange of confidential information that reflected the most restrictive of professional codes. Before a staffing was conducted, parent and/or student permission for the release had to be acquired. While some school personnel found acquiring consent for the staffing to be problematic, others noted that a supportive, nonthreatening approach to parents
usually allayed their apprehension and anxiety and in turn gained their support.

The sharing of confidential information was also influenced by the personal ethics of the individual team member. Even though the release form met every agency’s restrictions, in the final analysis, the individual team member made the decision regarding what to share and what not to share.

**What Are the Outcomes of the Process?**

**Communication.** Communication between agencies and between schools and agencies was improved, and a strong communication process remained critical to the functioning of the collaboration.

There was some indication that the YST fostered improved communication between human service agencies, particularly when new agency representatives joined a YST; however, the major improvement in communication occurred between schools and agencies. The YST represented the only regularly occurring opportunity for school and agency staff to meet as a larger body. For the most part, outside of the YST, school and agency staff communicated one to one, focused on a single issue. The YST offered an opportunity to learn more generalized information about agencies, schools, services, and clients, and also permitted professional relationships to develop. These outcomes
promoted understanding and the development of trust which facilitated the collaborative process and established a foundation upon which to base other similar efforts.

Although the majority of respondents cited improved communication as a direct outcome of the YST process, there were indications that communication issues required ongoing attention. For instance, the failure of agencies to bring referrals to the YST was interpreted by some school personnel in County E as a reflection of the agencies' lack of respect for the expertise of school staff. Agency representatives, on the other hand, explained their failure to refer as simply based on a preference for alternative approaches to acquiring information. The teams also seemed to have difficulty communicating to the schools their preference for referrals designed to produce early intervention rather than crisis intervention. Even within teams, communication was not optimal. Instances were found of team members second guessing the motives of fellow members. Specifically, it was inferred by some that team members who interpreted confidentiality guidelines in a very narrow sense, did so because they did not trust other team members with the information. Clearly, there was a need for further dialogue.

There was yet another limitation to the improved communication fostered by the collaboration and that was the fact that the improved communication between schools and
Agencies seemed largely confined to the team itself. For the most part, school personnel, other than the school representative(s) on the team, did not regularly attend YST meetings; in fact, most were present at only one or two, if any, YST meetings in a given year. Thus counselors, teachers, and administrators who did not serve as team members, did not have an opportunity to either gain the insights or develop the working relationships with agency representatives that evolved from team membership. A communication gap between individual schools and community agencies remained, perhaps with the exception of Team B schools which each had its school counselor sitting as a permanent team member. The limited ability of the YST process to impact school and agency personnel who were not team members needed to be recognized, and consequently, other efforts made by schools and agencies to address the need for increased communication between them.

Services and service delivery. Access to services and service delivery were improved for at-risk students and their families.

While team members and referring school staff would be quick to point out the lack of sufficient services to address the needs of all at-risk youth and the limitations this fact placed on the potential of the teams, they would also note that in many cases the YST process resulted in direct benefits for students and families. The
collaborative effort did result in a plan of coordinated services for many students, and many families were helped to gain access to available services. In other instances where the needed resources were lacking, the YST process at least served to bring the deficiencies to the attention of a broad, community audience.

The sense of accomplishment or failure felt by team members with regard to linking students with appropriate services varied and was based on personal evaluation of and experience with the team. No records of student outcomes were kept systematically and thus hard data was not available to use in evaluating the impact of the YST process on student outcomes.

The YST process functioned outside of normal school and agency operations. Thus, for the most part, it did not change the fundamental way that schools and agencies provided services. Its contribution lay in making more efficient use of existing systems. Frustration arose when, for whatever reason, the team's efforts within the system were not able to satisfactorily address the needs presented and the team declined to search for or create alternatives.

Recommendations for Practice

Conclusions drawn from this study suggest action that should be taken when implementing local school-agency collaborative efforts.
1. The collaborative team should clearly define its goals and objectives and procedures for accomplishing them as well as the corresponding roles and responsibilities of team members. These should all be periodically reviewed, particularly with reference to changes in the environment.

2. Where advisory boards exist, steps should be taken to provide opportunities for direct communication between advisory boards and teams.

3. Attention should be paid to fostering communication between the organizations involved and to promoting such communication beyond the confines of team membership.

4. Adequate resources must be provided to the team. Specifically, reasonable time allowances should be made to enable members to carry out their responsibilities.

5. Leadership roles should be shared among all organizations.

6. Parents should be encouraged to participate in all phases of the process. The collaborative environment should be one that supports parent involvement and demonstrates respect for the contributions they make.

7. One person should be held responsible for overseeing the implementation of team action plans. The necessary authority and resources should be attached to the position to support its function.

8. Systematic record keeping should be undertaken to document the types of problems presented to the team, the
ability of the team to address each type, and the impact of team action plans on student outcomes.

9. Administrators and team members should work together to move beyond the coordination of existing services, finding ways to reconfigure services and their delivery and to ultimately create new service options.

Yet another factor that teams should consider when appraising team functioning is the atmosphere that surrounds the team meeting. Differences along this dimension were noted among the three teams which were observed during staffings. Team A’s meetings proceeded in a subdued although cordial fashion. Team members addressed the problems presented, but they seemed to lack energy and enthusiasm. Team C meetings were conducted in a business-like manner. Cases were handled expeditiously, the pace of discussion did not falter, and the group remained very much focused on the task at hand. Team D meetings seemed to be somewhat more relaxed than those of the other two teams. To a greater extent than was noticed for the other two teams, Team D members made it a point to greet each other as they arrived, and usually entered into brief conversations, some of which were of a professional nature, others being more personal. Coffee and bakery treats were always provided by the team coordinator during this brief socialization time. It was also noticed that during the staffings, humor was sometimes interjected, not to detract
from the seriousness of an issue but to perhaps make a point or loosen tensions when a case was particularly worrisome or difficult. Although this investigation did not establish the reasons for the differences in atmosphere nor their direct effects, consideration of the influence atmosphere has on the functioning of a team is warranted.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the foregoing study and a selected review of the literature, the following recommendations for further research are made:

1. Ways to provide pre-service training to education and human service personnel for future collaborative roles should be identified. Both the content of the training as well as appropriate methods of delivery should be delineated.

2. Additional field studies of local collaborative efforts should be conducted to increase our knowledge of the varying circumstances that lead to the implementation of collaboration and the variables that affect the process. Collaborations are unique, reflective of the conditions in a specific context. Therefore, a broad range of studies is needed to understand the dynamics of collaboration at the local level.

3. Evaluation studies of ongoing collaborations should be conducted to assess student outcomes. There is no
doubt that the collaborative approach to problem solving is being adopted widely in the fields of education and human services. It makes intuitive sense. However, there is limited solid evidence as to the effectiveness of such an approach as it pertains to education-human service collaboration. To date, most evaluations of such collaborations are highly informal, often based on the opinions of a few individuals. Rigorous study should be applied to provide information regarding the nature of the problems the collaboration attempts to solve and also to provide substantiated evidence of the difference education-human service collaboration does or does not make in the lives of at-risk students.

4. The impact of local collaborative efforts on systems change should be explored. Many local collaborative efforts are undertaken without benefit of more global organizational change. It is important to identify what effect, if any, these collaborations have on bringing about change within and between systems and the implications this might have for a general theory of systems change.

5. The nature of leadership in voluntary collaborative structures which have no regulatory authority should be investigated. Specifically, the factors that motivate members to assume leadership roles should be identified.
Final Remarks

Collaborative undertakings involving schools and human service agencies offer a promising approach to increasing our ability to meet the needs of at-risk youth. It is important that the adoption of the collaborative approach be guided by understanding and knowledge of what the process entails and what outcomes may be expected. Research is needed to inform practice. To that end, this study has provided a description and analysis of four school-community human service agency collaborations and identified related implications for both practice and further research.
REFERENCES


*Education USA*, p. 255.


Team C Memorandum of Agreement. (1987).

Team D Memorandum of Agreement. (1987).


Wisconsin district may be first to consider controversial plan assigning pupils to primary schools based on parental income. (1991, May 11). Education USA, p. 71.


APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

Interview Guide for School Counselors

Name ___________________ School ___________________

No. of years in position ____

1. Are you familiar with the YST?

2. If so, what do you understand its purpose to be?

3. What is your understanding of the guidelines for making a referral to the YST?

4. Have you ever made a referral to the YST?

5. When, or if, you made a referral, what expectations of the YST did you have?

6. What is your evaluation of the YST process?
APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Introduction

Explanation of the study
Respondent's questions
Relationship of respondent with YST

Definition and Description of the YST

Goals and objectives
Stages in development
Present structure
Operating procedures
Resources
Evaluation mechanisms

Respondent's Evaluation of the YST

Strengths and weaknesses
Costs
Barriers to collaboration
Future directions

Closing

Recommendations for additional sources of information
Further contact/host verification
Collaboration between schools and community human service agencies is becoming a popular strategy for addressing the multiple needs of at-risk youth. To date, research on such collaboration is very limited. In particular, we need to know more about the actual processes involved in both the formation of such collaborations and the way they work to meet the needs of at-risk youth. The present study is being conducted to answer this research need. As a result of the research, an in-depth description of the structural, procedural, and relational factors that characterize four youth services teams will be drawn. This description will help others to understand the youth services teams as well as provide more general information about the collaborative process.

The interview I have requested should take approximately 60-90 minutes and it will focus on the ________________ Youth Services Team. Your participation is purely voluntary. Your comments will be held in strict confidence, and steps will be taken to insure anonymity. If the interview is recorded, the tapes will be erased after transcription and the transcriptions will be coded to protect your identity. If only notes are taken during the interview, these too will be coded. The final report of this study will not include the true identity of
individuals, teams, agencies, schools, and counties.

If you should have further questions or comments about this research in general or your participation in particular, please call Beverly Hobbs at 737-5969. Thank you.
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form B

Collaboration between schools and community human service agencies is becoming a popular strategy for addressing the multiple needs of at-risk youth. To date, research on such collaboration is very limited. In particular, we need to know more about the actual processes involved in both the formation of such collaborations and the way they work to meet the needs of at-risk youth.

I am presently conducting a study to explore the way schools and community human service agencies collaborate through youth services teams. As a part of this study, I will be observing a meeting of the __________ __________. For purposes of this observation, it is the interaction of team participants, the collaborative process, that is of interest. During the meeting I will take notes; however, the identity of participants and represented agencies will be treated as confidential and identities protected. Notes will be coded in such a way that anonymity will be assured. Furthermore, in the final report the true identity of individuals, teams, agencies, schools, and counties will not be revealed.

If you should have further questions or comments about this research in general or your participation in particular, please call Beverly Hobbs at 737-5969. Thank you.
APPENDIX E

(Sample) Youth Services Team

Authorization for Release and Exchange of Information

I ________________________________, authorize the release of information between and among the identified Youth Services Team members who will be planning services for________________________.

The purpose of the Authorization Form is to enable agencies identified as members of the Youth Services Team to better serve your child through coordinated service planning and delivery. Representatives of these agencies will meet and share information regarding your child at scheduled planning and review meetings.

The Youth Services Team for your child shall include the following agencies:

* Public Schools
* Children's Services Division
* County Alcohol & Drug Treatment Program
* Adult and Family Services
* Education Service District
* Police Department
* County Juvenile Department
* County Mental Health Services
* County Sheriff's Department
* Oregon State Police
* Oregon State Parole & Probation
To assist in determining the availability of resources, please check if your child has a ____ medical card or ____ private insurance.

The information to be disclosed/exchanged may include: presence in the program and school, legal and treatment records which include assessment and family history, and diagnoses and treatment recommendations from the County Mental Health and Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs. This release authorizes a free exchange of information between members in order to give the most complete and thorough services available. It does not authorize release to any other person or agency except those agencies listed above. Unless revoked in writing, this release and exchange shall remain in force for a period of 12 months from the date of authorizations.

To the party receiving this information: This information has been disclosed to you from records whose confidentiality is protected by federal law. Federal regulation (42 CFR Part 2) prohibits you from making any further disclosure of it without the specific written consent of the person to whom it pertains, or as otherwise permitted by such regulations. A general authorization for the release of medical or other information is not sufficient for this purpose.

Witness

Date

Authorizing Signature

Juvenile's Signature

Relationship to child