

FROM THE EDITOR

It is a pleasure to introduce this issue on program evaluation, guest edited by Barbara Helms and Stephen Moore. There are few topics in human services today that command as much attention as evaluation program outcomes. This is no less true in the field of vocational rehabilitation. As the amount of dollars available to meet expanding consumer demands for more services continues to shrink, there is an ongoing critical need to determine which programs are the most effective, particularly cost effective. Drs. Helms and Moore have put together a wonderful balance of papers that look at issues such as benefit-cost analyses, experimental design, and program evaluation issues and include an examination of the vocational rehabilitation evaluation system as well. All of the papers in this issue very nicely complement each other.

What service providers and managers in the rehabilitation and adult services area need to be aware of is that program evaluation is not a single static process but instead must be ongoing. Effec-

tive program evaluation occurs over a long period of time, is quantitative and qualitative, and looks at cost as only one of the many indicators that can be evaluated. In this issue Helms and Moore have aptly struck the right balance with papers that provide a collective sense of the importance of program evaluation that know easy how-to-do-it cookbook guides.

There is little doubt in my mind as we continue on in the early 1990s with over two-thirds of the states in this country facing some form of budget deficit that program evaluation issues will loom larger than ever. As service providers who wish to be responsive to people with disabilities, as well as the people in the community in which we work, developing an understanding of program evaluation becomes an essential aspect of a manager's position. We believe that this issue will be a positive step in the right direction for those service providers who want to develop and expand their knowledge in this area.

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