

## **REAL Services History**

REAL Services was established as a planning and program development component of the United Way on May 1, 1966, for the purpose of developing a comprehensive service network designed to meet older adults' needs in St. Joseph County. REAL's initial effort was to develop a Research and Development (R&D) Program and to secure Older Americans Act funding directly from the U.S. Administration on Aging in Washington, D.C. This was the first Older Americans Act award granted in Indiana. At that time, Indiana did not qualify for Older Americans Act funds because Governor Branigan vetoed the enabling legislation. However, during the Whitcomb administration, which followed, Governor Whitcomb, by executive order, qualified the Indiana Commission on the Aging and Aged to receive Older Americans Act funds.

REAL used the Research and Development program to establish the Information, Counseling and Referral; Meals on Wheels; Foster Grandparent; Retired Senior Volunteer Programs; and the first nutrition site in the United States. REAL also received a Model Cities award to establish a nutrition site in the Model Cities area. REAL Services served as part of the Federal Task Force that developed the Federal Nutrition Program and the Program's initial regulations.

After Indiana qualified for Older Americans Act funds, REAL was selected as the provider of the Nutrition Program in St. Joseph County. In 1971, REAL was designated by the State Commission as the County Council on Aging in St. Joseph County. In 1973, REAL Services was selected by the State Commission on Aging to establish and implement the Nutrition Program in the five-county area.

At the request of the Indiana Commission on Aging and Aged, REAL Services agreed to serve as the Area Agency. Accordingly, REAL Services was designated by Governor Otis Bowen in 1974 as the Area Agency on Aging with provision for an Area Agency Advisory Council that would have certain designated authority and responsibility. These are spelled out in the By-Laws of REAL Services and in the Advisory Council By-Laws. Bishop Joseph R. Crowley was the Council's first Chairperson.

In July of 1975, REAL Services assumed occupancy of the building at 622 N. Michigan. The facility was purchased by the City of South Bend utilizing revenue sharing funds, and deeded to REAL Services for one dollar. In 1980, 1200 additional square feet were added.

In July 1977, REAL Services was awarded a contract by the National Council of Senior Citizens to develop the Senior Aides Program in St. Joseph County. The Program provides part-time jobs for 80 low-income older adults. When REAL Services was awarded the Area-Wide Title V Program by the IDHS to provide part-time jobs for low-income older adults in the area, in the intent of equity, we allocated the positions to Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and LaPorte Counties and none to St. Joseph County.

In 1985, Governor Robert Orr officially approved and designated REAL Services as the Community Action Agency (CAA) in St. Joseph, Elkhart, Kosciusko, Fulton and Marshall Counties.

REAL Services, as an agency, administers a wide variety of programs and contracts that have no direct relationship to the Area Agency and are governed, whenever appropriate, by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Advisory Council or by the Board of Directors of REAL Services. Examples are Project SAFE, Energy Assistance, Foster Grandparents, Home Weatherization, Single-Parent Self-Sufficiency, and the Homeless Program. In addition REAL Services provides U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities to food pantries, and soup kitchens and homeless shelters in the 5 county area.

In November 1988, the River Park Third District Democratic Club donated its assets and facility at 907 South 31st Street in South Bend to REAL Services. Our Area Case Management Pre-Admission Screening Programs' central office was located there, and a Nutrition Site was established.

In May of 1990, Area Agency staff undertook measures to prepare for the implementation of the CHOICE Program. CHOICE, an acronym for Community and Home Options for Institutional Care for the Elderly, began serving clients in July of 1990 and provided services in St. Joseph and Elkhart County. In July of 1992, the CHOICE program expanded into LaPorte, Kosciusko and Marshall Counties.

The Indiana Department of Human Services. delegated the planning and subcontracting of SSBG dollars to the Area Agency which became effective July 1, 1990.

The HECM (Home Equity Conversion Mortgage) Counseling program was initiated in our five county area in 1991, after the Area Agency successfully secured a grant from HUD.

Indiana's Medicaid Waiver Program began in July of 1991. Medicaid eligible clients may receive "in-home" services in lieu of nursing home care if the cost is comparable. Area Agency case managers conduct assessments and develop care plans for Medicaid clients with special needs, such as aged, disabled, fragile children, mentally disabled and AIDS victims.

Indiana's Long Term Care Insurance Program provided a link between private insurance companies and the Area Agency on Aging case managers. Five long term care insurance providers have contracted with our agency to provide comprehensive case management.

1992 also marked the year in which our agency applied for and received a Department of Agriculture grant. The grant supported outreach and resource directories to rural areas through the "Students for Seniors" Program.

The By-Laws of REAL Services contain the following provisions:

"The Area 2 Agency on Aging Advisory council has the authority to make certain decisions that would regularly be made by the Board of Directors. Such authority, however, reserves to the Board of Directors the right to overrule the decisions that violate any Federal or State regulations, or would place REAL Services in jeopardy."

At that time, the Area Agency Advisory Council was established by REAL Services in order to provide a mechanism that would provide for a decision making process whereby the Area Agency's efforts to develop and implement the Area Plan, including the allocation of available funds, and the approval of programs to be funded. The Area Agency Advisory Council is made up of representation from every county in the area proportionate to the number of older persons in the county. This structure, established in 1974, remains the same to this date. Those programs for which the Area Agency on Aging has responsibility are administered pursuant to this procedure.

Recently, IDHS changed its name to the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA).

In 1993 REAL Services consolidated three scattered offices into its central facility at 1151 S. Michigan street in South Bend. This culminated a 10 year process of searching, planning and development.