Managing for Results
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The Maryland Opportunity Compact announced by Governor Robert L. Ehrlich this week represents a promising model for tackling social problems and saving taxpayers money. The compact applies the bottom-line thinking of the private sector and the data-driven standards of science to the public sector’s challenge of fighting poverty and disadvantage.

Rather than struggling to cope with social problems after they have metastasized, the compact seeks to address them at an earlier stage through preventive interventions that have proven successful in jurisdictions such as San Diego and Milwaukee. Substance-abusing parents with children in costly foster care will be enrolled in treatment programs in an effort to speed up family reunification or, where that is impossible, adoption.

Community-based intensive mental health services, substance-abuse programs and other services would be given to non-violent youth offenders who might otherwise land in expensive institutional settings where few receive the supportive services they need to put their lives back on track. And prisoners returning to the community would be provided the skills, training and counseling needed to successfully reintegrate with society and avoid reincarceration.

Instead of repeatedly reauthorizing money for last-resort programs that often do no more than mitigate harm, the compact creates thoughtful incentives and calls for investing in proven strategies that can give poor children a "good start" and needy adults "a second chance." In a laudatory example of public-private cooperation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, T. Rowe Price, the Abell Foundation and the Family League of Baltimore City have pledged the resources needed to get these preventive programs off the ground.

For its part, the state has made a commitment to reinvest a portion of the savings it realizes from reduced dependence on last-resort programs -- programs that consume the lion's share of the public sector's social spending today -- in good-start and second-chance programs. But this will happen only after rigorous analysis has demonstrated that these programs work and generate the promised savings. As an indication of good faith, Mr. Ehrlich and state legislators overwhelmingly approved an initial $2 million line item in the 2005 budget as a reserve on savings produced by the compact.

In the business world this is called managing for results. In the world of public policy, it represents a new approach to social service funding, one that is both revolutionary and common-sensical. Done right, this new way of doing business can create more support services, demand more accountability and deliver more results for the state and its citizens.

State officials will be able to demonstrate to taxpayers how proven strategies can help Maryland citizens who are most in need and how those investments can save significant resources by reducing the demand for costly, last-resort services. That in turn will free up dollars to reinvest back into effective good-start and second-chance interventions.

Over time, this cycle has the potential of yielding a net savings for the state, which can be used to meet other priorities or to balance the budget.

In recent years, the federal government has restructured the social safety net and encouraged states to experiment broadly with new ways of meeting human-service and welfare goals. These dramatic changes were guided, in part, by the assumption that states, being closer to the problems they need to solve, have a
greater capacity to determine how best to support vulnerable families and their children. Most states have not responded fully to this challenge.

With the Opportunity Compact, Maryland has. We should applaud the leadership of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Mr. Ehrlich’s willingness to consider new approaches to addressing old problems, the cooperation of key Democratic and Republican legislators and the constructive involvement of state and local agencies and Maryland’s business, philanthropic and child advocacy communities.

If successful, Maryland’s approach can influence how other states and the federal government allocate their funding for public programs. By improving efficiencies in government, reinvesting savings back into strategies that work, and leveraging the resources of the private sector, we can create more successful futures for America’s most vulnerable children and families. This is clearly an initiative worth supporting.

Other Publications by the Authors

- Robert D. Reischauer
In this course, author and business coach Dr. Todd Dewett shares the secrets businesses large and small use to manage teams, achieve precise results, and intelligently execute business strategies. He focuses on three key areas: motivation, positive change, and decision making. Discover how to shift your mindset, create a culture of motivation and accountability, make decisions that matter, and maintain excellence over time. Understanding how to get results is about moving past the basics of being a manager. Read detailed description of Managing for Results by GIBS with reviews, dates, location and price with the help of Coursalytics. For managers who have transitioned from managing themselves to managing others. Influencing others to effectively implement your plan, working with different personality types, creating processes that support the achievement of your team's goals, and changing your own mindset, are just some of the challenges you will face as a manager.