



100 NATIONAL
HUMAN SERVICES
ASSEMBLY

Celebrating 100 Years of Service

1919 - 2023

NHSA Historical Highlights

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1919 Committee of the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work met with the American National Red Cross to discuss how to avoid duplication of efforts.

Recognizing the similarities of their problems and desiring closer coordination of their work, [12 social work organizations](#) began monthly meetings by 1920.

1923 The Milford Conference is seen as one of the foundational moments in NHSA's history. David Holbrook invited social agency executives to discuss informally and unofficially their various specialties of work with the hope of achieving clearer understandings and cooperation in over-lapping areas. Twenty-four organizations attended; many of which are still with NHSA today.

Since that first conference, the organization's administrative duties were shared on a volunteer basis by two executives of national organizations until 1925: Howard S. Braucher and David H. Holbrook.

The meetings at the time largely concerned issues and best practices for financial support, budgets, and endorsement. In fact, many of the topics covered are still areas of focus in NHSA's peer learning and peer council events today.

Other topics included:

- Relationships between national organizations and their local agencies;
- Problems arising from the Great Depression;
- Defense mobilization and its social repercussions; and
- Demobilization and the social needs and problems created by massive relocation.

Founding Members

Of the 24 organizations that participated in the 1923 Milford Conference, we know of 6 that were founding members. Another 5 can date their membership back to 1945. They include:

- 1923:** American Red Cross
Boy Scouts of America
Girl Scouts of the USA
Travelers Aid
YMCA
YWCA
- 1945:** Catholic Charities USA
Child Welfare League of America
Jewish Federations
Salvation Army
Urban League

1932 Collectively, the organization sponsored the Committee on the Care of Transient and Homeless

1942 Six national agencies, five of which were members of the National Social Work Council, combined to establish the American War Community Services to promote joint financing and joint planning of their war service projects in local communities during World War II.

1945 The organization is incorporated as the National Social Welfare Assembly in NYC to attain tax exempt status. The organization had 29 members, 11 of which are still members today.

Representatives of government, philanthropic foundations and agencies outside the NSWC were frequently invited to speak at the Council's monthly meetings and examine with its members topics of mutual concern. Other meetings revolved around reports from member agencies of programs and projects undertaken, and topics of current importance for social work, which were discussed at the Council's "Round-Table Meetings."

Some issues that remained on the meeting agendas during the time included problems associated with the millions of returning veterans who had to find their places in home, school, and community, as well as to the internment of Japanese-Americans. The Committee on Japanese Americans was established to address that issue. The Assembly's Committee on Japanese Americans prepared a series of bulletins covering problems related to discrimination in housing and employment, legislation under consideration and prejudices against Japanese-Americans.

What's in a Name?

The National Human Services has undergone several name changes over the years, signifying changes in focus, membership, and sometimes mission. Previous names include:

1920: Association of National Executives Conference of Executives of National Organizations

1923: National Social Work Council

1945: National Social Welfare Assembly

1967: National Assembly for Social Policy and Development

1973: National Assembly of National Voluntary Health and Social Welfare Organizations

1997: National Assembly of Health and Human Service Organizations

2005: National Human Services Assembly

1947 The organization created the film “Make Way for Youth,” in partnership with the American Jewish Committee. The film was set in a school and depicted children as either free from the xenophobia of adults or obliquely addressing the irrationality of racial, ethnic, and religious intolerance.

1948 The organization formed the Young Adult Council, took a lead role in organizing the World Assembly of Youth, and developed a correspondence exchange service with German youth leaders financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. Nine youth leaders came from Germany and Austria to study and observe group work and recreation programs in the United States. This evolved into the International Exchange Program that has been funded by the Department of State since 1951.

The Assembly in Times of National Crisis

Over the years, the members of the National Human Services Assembly have used the organization to collaborate and drive national policies in order to respond swiftly and broadly in times of national crises due to war or economic instability. Some notable examples:

The Great Depression: Led to the first meeting and convening of what became the National Human Services Assembly

World War II: Promoted joint financing and joint planning of war service projects in communities; responded to issues of veterans returning home; responded to the internment of Japanese-Americans

Korean War: Reactivated the USO, and formed the United Community Defense Services and the United Defense Fund

War on Terror: With terrorism rising and war looming, United Way of America and the Assembly convened youth-serving agencies to share resources for helping children and families cope with terrorism and war.

1950 The organization formed the National Council on Aging as a result of the recommendation in the 1940s to create a national entity to coordinate efforts on behalf of older adults.

During the Korean War, the Assembly moved to reactivate the USO and with United Community Funds and Councils of America formed the United Community Defense Services and the United Defense Fund.

1952 The NSWA sponsored the [first comprehensive national study of salaries and working conditions](#), and it was completed by the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the Federal Security Agency, and the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

1953 The organization prepared the report on voluntary social welfare. This report to the UN provided information about social welfare for use in the field.

In coordination with the American Council on Education, the organization helped to influence the formation of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

1950-60 The National Social Welfare Assembly began producing and publishing comic-book Public Service Announcements once a month for several years in DC comics. The Program was fun by Jack Schiff, and once he retired in 1967, the PSA program discontinued.

1964 The organization signed a statement of understating with the United Community Funds and Councils of America, forming a close collaboration of national, state, and local planning forces in resolving serious social problems.

The organization also created the “Standards of Accounting and Financial Reporting for Voluntary Health and Welfare Organizations,” with the National Health Council, which helped renew and strengthen public confidence in volunteer organizations. Newer editions of that book have since been released, and it is still widely used today.

1967 Reconstituted to become a national citizen’s organization that sought to develop and influence public welfare policies.

1973 Returned to previous mission of coordinating and assisting work of its constituent member organizations.

Making the Business Case

The National Human Services Assembly is an association of associations, and in the nonprofit sector, these large organizations face unique challenges and operate in ways more similar to corporations than a community organization. This aspect has shaped the projects the Assembly has pursued over the years including:

1967: Publishing the “Standards of Accounting and Financial Reporting for Voluntary Health and Welfare Organizations” to improve trust for the financial strength and soundness of nonprofit organizations

1985: Publishing “Competition between the Nonprofit and For-Profit Sectors” to address popular criticisms

1989: Surveying 270 local, state, regional nonprofit managers to identify and share best practices

2004: Creation of National Assembly Business Services (NABS) and PurchasingPoint, a group purchasing program for members and nonprofits

2014: Closer alignment and structure of NHSA and NABS

The National Collaboration for Youth was created to be a coalition of national organizations advocating with and on behalf of youth and to promote research-driven “positive youth development.”

1985 Issued report: "Competition between the Nonprofit and For-Profit Sectors," following reports by the U.S. Small Business Administration and National Federation of Independent Business that alleged that nonprofits had an unfair competitive edge due to tax exemptions, postal rate reductions, and other preferential treatment for nonprofits.

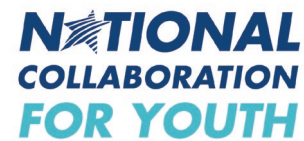
1988 Authored the book *Unfair Competition? The Challenge to Charitable Tax Exemption*, as a follow-up to the 1985 report. The forward was written by the former IRS Commissioner.

Set up a booth at National Federation of Independent Business annual conference to make the case for nonprofits.

1989 Conducted the study: “A Study in Excellence: Management in the Nonprofit Human Services”, in which 270 local, state or regional managers deemed to be outstanding by their national organizations were asked to complete a survey designed by Lester Salamon. About a quarter were selected for intensive study, including in-depth interviews with members of their boards and staff.

1990 The National Collaboration for Youth graded the country’s progress in dealing with problems faced by youth in “Making the Grade”, resulting in over 350 town summit meetings or community forums, and was featured on an ABC News special.

200 children from National Collaboration for Youth agencies participated in the ABC July 4th literacy special with Barbara Bush.



The members of the National Human Services Assembly decided to form a subsidiary group within the Assembly in recognition of the fact that many members focused specifically on providing opportunities to children and youth, and their desire to work more closely together. One long-term focus of the group is providing safe environments and hiring trustworthy adults for out-of-school time programs. Some milestones include:

1973: Creation of the National Collaboration for Youth

1990: “Making the Grade” Report released resulting in 350 town-hall summits and an ABC News Special

1990s: Worked to Establish the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its reauthorizations

1997: Publishes “Screening Volunteers to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse”

2002: NHSA members forge partnership to perform background checks on volunteers

1990's Worked closely with the White House Office on National Service by providing guidance and written plans on what a national service program should look like, emphasizing the role of the nonprofit sector.

More than 200 young people from NCY agencies participated in a program at the White House lawn where President George H.W. Bush announced his Points of Light Initiative.

Worked to establish the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its reauthorizations

Also in the late 90's, "NYDIC"—the National Youth Development Information Center, a website where all youth agencies and their workers can easily access information on youth programs, research, policy, jobs and more—was formed by the National Collaboration for Youth of the Assembly.

1997 National Collaboration for Youth publishes "Screening Volunteers to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: A Community Guide for Youth Organizations." A Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse was created and chaired by the Boy Scouts of America's Director of Administration.

2002 Continuing its efforts to safeguard clients, the National Assembly and its members forged a partnership to perform background checks on volunteers.

The National Assembly launches the Family Strengthening Policy Center.

2004 Creation of the National Assembly Business Services (NABS) and the PurchasingPoint® Program, which offers members and their affiliates access to discount pricing from vendors, thereby reducing overhead expenses.

National Collaboration for Youth establishes core competencies for frontline youth workers for use by member organizations and other youth-serving agencies.

2008 The National Assembly "Reinventing, Re-Imagining Voluntarism and the Private Sector" published in the Nonprofit Times.

Held a national convening for member C-Suite executives to share lessons on coping with the U.S. economic crisis

2009 With funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the National Assembly launched the Bridging the Gap initiative that connected working families with access to “earned benefits” – public and private assistance programs like tax credits, nutritious food programs, child care subsidies, and free or low-cost medical care.

Through a New Lens: Toward a Fundamental Reframing of “the Client” published.

2010 With funding from the Ford Foundation, the National Assembly developed a pilot program to test the viability of working with member organizations as employers to help frontline human service workers achieve greater financial stability through enrollment in public benefits and other work supports.

2011 NABS partnered with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to offer access to PurchasingPoint® to all of the Foundation’s domestic grantees.

National Assembly published “Putting Human Needs on the National Radar Screen.”

NHSA developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Peace Corps program to facilitate the hiring of Peace Corps alum after their service.

Formed the eleventh peer network: the Learning & Development Council.

2012 PurchasingPoint® program surpassed \$50 million in collective purchasing.

National Assembly publishes “A Shared Vision for Youth: Common Outcomes and Indicators.”

Launched a new multi-year initiative to reframe human services with support from the Kresge Foundation. The Frame Works Institute engaged to conduct research on reframing.

2015 Launched the “[Bridging the Gap](#)” initiative that connected working families with access to “earned benefits.”

2016 With funding from the Ford Foundation, the National Assembly developed a pilot program to help frontline human service workers achieve greater [financial stability](#) through enrollment in public benefits and other work supports.

2017 In partnership with FrameWorks Institute, The Kresge Foundation, and Annie E. Casey Foundation released the Reframing Human Services toolkit as part of the [National Reframing Initiative](#).

Released the “[Beyond Bars](#)” report to the public in support of community-based continuum of care models for youth diversion from the juvenile justice system.

2020 The National Assembly pivoted as the COVID Pandemic began, focusing on providing the supports, resources and services that members and the human service sector needed most.

2021 PurchasingPoint® surpasses \$200 million in lifetime savings to member nonprofits.

Encouraged regional and local agencies to use funding under the American Rescue Plan for wage subsidies for frontline/field workers providing COVID relief.

2022 For the first time ever in its history, the Assembly is being led by BIPOC executives in top staff and board level positions.

2023 The National Human Services Assembly celebrated its 100th anniversary.