

Meet MSSA Member Liz Dodge  
By Cassandra Clark,  
Chicago County

This month MSSA would like to spotlight Elizabeth Dodge with Chisago County Health and Human Services. Liz has worked for Chisago County for 9 yrs. Her job titles have been Administrative Assistant I, Social Services Director and Co-Director of Health and Human Services. Liz has demonstrated many outstanding qualities with both clients and with staff. She uses creative and new ideas. Taking the road less traveled rather than the road already paved, she is a visionary thinker who is not afraid of taking on the status quo if it will improve the services to area residents.

Liz always has the client's best interest in mind when she introduces new programs to the county, and she is always looking and learning about new programs. Liz has many projects going on at one time; however she can make you feel like your project is the only one she is working on. Some programs that have been implemented are in Child Support: there is now a Social Worker to help Non-Custodial parents with filling out court papers, job searches and referrals for clients for chemical dependency or mental health services. Chisago County is the first to try this program and is striving to help Non-Custodial Parents have a better involvement with their children. The Drop-In Center, where clients can come and see the psychiatric nurse, the psychologist, etc—there is also a Community Support Program for clients who have mental illness and provides them with educational and recreational activities. There is also a Parents Support Outreach Program aimed at helping families at risk of maltreating of their children but have not yet done so.

When the buzz phrase "strength based services" was being used, it was Liz's contention that our services should and always have been strength based. If you are not trying to use what is good within a family or client, then what you are trying to do will not work. She has always pushed us to strengthen families rather than to focus only on the bad things they do. Liz believes there is good in every person even when others don't see it. She is always looking at what can be done to make the community stronger and offer services to reach that goal.

Liz has created a great working team in Chisago County. The staff respects her and she respects them in return. She has a habit of seeing things in the staff they don't see in themselves, encouraging them to take risks and try new things. She has always been open to having people try out a new position and will work hard to persuade them to make the change, even if they are not sure about it. Liz has been open to not only praise from her staff but criticism as well. If there is something which could/should be done differently she will listen and even change her mind if the other way is better. She has always been open to her staff coming to talk to her about any issue and is always willing to listen. She has encouraged her staff to join MSSA and other professional organizations for the growth and for the opportunities they provide. Staff that have a Bachelor Degree are encouraged to get their Master's Degree and staff without an undergraduate degree are encouraged to attend schooling.

Liz takes the time and the effort in all that she has done and is still doing. I feel that she is an excellent person to receive this award. Liz has come a long way since winning 3rd place in a typing contest.

If you work with someone who you think deserves to be recognized, please contact Deb Most at [deb@mnsocialserviceassoc.org](mailto:deb@mnsocialserviceassoc.org) to find out more information about spotlighting them in the MSSA Voice.

[www.mnsocialserviceassoc.org/feb2007.pdf](http://www.mnsocialserviceassoc.org/feb2007.pdf)