

# The State Association's Role

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ere are some suggestions from administrators on how state associations can help them during times of in-transition.

- Request a state or regional association set up a support group structure to respond to managers in transition. Divide the state or region into districts, with one member assigned to monitor "managers under fire" in each district, and assign someone to keep in touch with managers in transition.
- Ensure a professional association continues to invite terminated managers to their meetings, sends them publications and meeting notices, and provides them complimentary or reduced membership dues and conference/meeting fees. Decide what accommodations will be made for members in transition and put that information in a form that can be given to association members.
- Set up programs that allow managers in-transition to share hotel rooms and travel arrangements for state and ICMA conferences.
- Encourage area managers to help identify volunteer secretarial and office support for terminated managers.
- Develop a support mechanism for the partners of members in transition.
- Explore if a local college, state university, or other institution will provide secretarial, office, exercise, library, outplacement, or other services for terminated managers. In return, the manager can give lectures or perform consulting or other services for the institution.
- Provide a list of employee assistance programs and

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outplacement services within the state that might help terminated managers.

- Develop a list of attorneys within the state that a member can call for advice or services.

### **Specific Programs**

Here are some state association programs for managers in transition or managers in trouble.

Karen Smith, city manager of Union City, California, and chair of the **California City Managers' Foundation**, provided this statement on behalf of the Foundation.

Ours is both a rewarding and difficult profession. By virtue of our position as local government managers, we have an opportunity to affect peoples' lives on a daily basis; but this opportunity is fraught with uncertainty and risk. When things are going well, it is like riding the crest of a wave; when things are going badly, you are suddenly terminated. We constantly face the reality that we might be asked to resign our position involuntarily. We do not, however, assume the CM's job ignorant of this possibility. It is impressed upon us from the moment we enter local government management. We address it explicitly in the termination provisions of our employment agreements. Thus, we are intellectually and rationally prepared for the moment when it happens to us.

The actual experience of being fired is totally different than one's abstract musings of what it would be like. No one emerges from the experience as the same person. For most, it serves as an impetus to critically examine your life, career path, perhaps even your values, before determining your future direction.

Many managers have faced the crisis and surmounted it, going on to even more distinguished service as a manager in another local government. Others have faced the challenge and the trauma, and decided

that they no longer wanted to deal with the vicissitudes of a council or the endless evening meetings and chose a new profession.

The **California City Managers' Foundation** has commissioned a study to take an intensive look at the subject of forced terminations. The Foundation is aware that an earlier offering, *Notes for Beachcombers*, was published in 1983 by ICMA (Fran and Frank Aleshire, editors). It would seem, however, that a millennium has passed since 1983: forced terminations have increased, councils have made greater demands on their managers, and electorate indifference toward governance generally, and the council-manager concept specifically, has risen. The California City Managers' Foundation felt a comprehensive structured study of the system within which they practice their profession was needed, and the study is currently underway. The Foundation has retained recently retired manager Bob Fast (West Covina, California) with directions to investigate the impact, feeling, and impression of the manager in transition. Subjects will include: managers' sensations and thoughts at the moment of termination, how they coped with being fired, internal and external sources of guidance, how they decide whether to continue in the profession, lessons learned, support, or lack of support, from colleagues and the profession, and lasting effects.

The California City Managers' Foundation intends to act on the findings of this study to assist the city manager in transition. It is already clear that self-help and awareness, while necessary and desirable, are not enough. Systems must be in place so the profession can support its own. To be most responsive, at least three levels of attention are needed: the region, the state, and ICMA.

**Florida City and County Management Association (FCCMA)** has a

program with a goal of establishing a state-wide support system for managers and assistants in transition who are continuing to seek other opportunities in the local government management profession.

When FCCMA staff learns a manager is in transition or is aware a transition is about to occur, a staff member notifies all officers and board members of transition and circumstances via telephone, fax, etc.; contacts member in transition to offer emotional and professional support and review available FCCMA information; provides requested information to member in transition; follows-up contact at least monthly; provides information as it becomes available; and contacts other members and partners in the district who have previously volunteered and encourages them to contact manager in transition and manager's partner.

FCCMA members frequently telephone or write members (whom they know personally) in transition, and report opportunities for temporary assignments or work to FCCMA staff for dissemination to members in transition.

Resources on file at FCCMA include the current status of all managerial positions available in the state, as well as openings outside of the state advertised in ICMA and American Society for Public Administration publications; a list of executive search firms; sample resumes; sample employment agreements; unemployment information; names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all managers in transition; a directory of managers and spouses who have previously been in transition and are willing to be contact points; requests from other managers for contracted or short-term work; library resources; and a package for members and district directors regarding what to say when making contact with managers in transition.

Other support mechanisms: man-

agers in transition are invited to annual state conferences with a complimentary registration fee, and the conference committee is encouraged to schedule an annual program addressing subjects related to transition.

The **Iowa City Management Association** has established seven regional networks with a coordinator for each region. The coordinator is responsible for reporting to the executive board new appointments and the names of managers in transition. Regional coordinators and other managers within the region follow-up with members in transition with a telephone call or lunch.

The **Massachusetts Municipal Management Association (MMMA)** has established a "Manager in Trouble" referral process. Managers experiencing difficulty in their communities with respect to employment agreements or working conditions, or who need dispute resolutions, can contact the chair of the MMMA Advocacy Committee or the president of MMMA for assistance. A referral will be made to a manager who will work with the manager needing assistance to try and resolve the issues. If legal assistance is needed, it will be solicited. All requests are confidential. The aim of having a central contact is to ensure that follow-up is provided to the manager requesting information.

The **Minnesota City Management Association (MCMA)** has a Network Committee whose primary purpose is offering support to managers who are in transition or experiencing difficulties. The immediate past president serves as the chair of the committee. Four to five other Minnesota managers, who volunteer at the annual spring conference, also serve on the committee. Any Minnesota manager who knows of a colleague in trouble contacts the past president or another member of the committee. The nearest committee member then contacts the colleague to pro-

vide moral support and determine if the MCMA can be of assistance.

The **New Jersey Municipal Management Association (NJMMA)** retains an attorney for association members. The attorney provides an initial consultation to a manager in trouble. If more assistance is required, the manager is responsible for payment. Members of the association also can call the attorney if they have a general question, such as advice on the wording in an employment agreement.

The **North Carolina City and County Management Association** has a committee that offers membership support. The 17 North Carolina council of government directors inform the chair of the support committee of personnel changes. The committee chair or a committee member contacts the member who has been fired or forced to resign and offers to inform ICMA about the member's in-transition status. The committee also offers an update on jobs available in the field.


The **City Management Association of Oklahoma** has recently endorsed Pre-Paid Legal Services, Inc. for its members. Pre-Paid Legal Services offers policies to anyone, but has also developed a policy especially for local government managers. The distinguishing feature of this policy is that a member can request legal representation at an administrative hearing or city council inquiry. For \$13.95 per month, managers and their families can have an attorney on retainer from a major law firm.

In addition to job-related legal services, Pre-Paid Legal Services also will defend a member in any civil or criminal trial, or in circumstances involving tragic accidents. The attorney will prepare letters and make telephone calls on their client's behalf. The policy also provides IRS protection of up to 50 hours of free professional services when a member is notified of a tax return audit.

The **Texas City Management Association (TCMA)** has offered a special service for the last two years to members considering a career move, and the service is especially useful to managers faced with an unexpected career change. A series of video cassettes and workbooks offering important insights into career management strategies are available from TCMA at members' convenience. The three tapes offered by TCMA, which can be viewed in a private conference room, are "Developing a Promotional Package," "Developing Multiple Contacts," and "Interviewing and Negotiating." TCMA staff also assist with resume construction and correspondence support.

The **Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA)** has established a Managers Support Network to provide information and support to managers especially in times of stress and personal need. The VLGMA Executive Board has divided the state into 22 support districts with one manager for each district to coordinate support efforts and one board member as a liaison.

The coordinator is a focal point and an initiator for information exchange. The board member is responsible for monthly contact with the coordinator and for providing encouragement for the Network. This communication is intended to support the network system, help the board be more in tune with the membership, and identify districts where support might be necessary.

VLGMA provides a support network directory to each member containing a map showing the boundaries of the 22 support districts; a listing of VLGMA members by district, including such information as home and work telephone numbers, birthdays, and partner and children information; and information about ICMA's Range Rider Program. 

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