PROGRAM DESIGN GUIDE:

A completed Program Description/Manual should have a thorough description of the full program, the population served and of the services to be provided.

Answering the following questions will help assure that all of the necessary areas have been addressed. It is important to not be satisfied with broad generalities, assumptions and intuitions. Each question is best resolved by pushing for detail and hard data or research support, where it exists.

PROGRAM NEEDS:

1. What are the nature and magnitude of the problems to be addressed?

2. What are the key characteristics of the population in need? Detail areas of specific need – for example, what percent have a diagnosis of PTSD or chronic depression or . . . .?

3. What are the needs of the population? Specific needs will be tied to the specific characteristics that have been defined.

4. What services are needed? (In the program design section which follows, you will need to be able to establish why/how it is reasonable that the services provided will actually impact the needs identified.)

5. How much service is needed and over what time period?

PROGRAM DESIGN:

1. What goals and objectives apply? Can a detailed review of the step by step process/components of the program be shown to link logically and practically to the intended outcomes?

2. What clientele should be served? How closely does this match the needs identified above? What client groups are not included?

3. What services should be provided? (Match to need?) (Match to intended outcome?)

4. What are the best delivery systems for the services? Examine the Organization Plan for marshalling the resources necessary; the Service Utilization Plan for reaching (effectively) the target population; and the Program Theory connecting the intended intervention with the desired benefit (outcome).

5. How can the program identify and engage the intended clientele?

6. How should the program be organized?

7. What resources are necessary and appropriate for the program?

8. What are the evidence-based practices that support the population and/or program model?

9. What are potential challenges for the program?

One tool available to assist with this area of review is called the Program Impact/Outcome Line. This process requires that for every Program Activity identified a logical, practical and/or research connection can be made to some proximal outcomes (results) which then can be similarly linked to some distal outcomes (the intended results). For example:

PROGRAM ACTIVITY	→	Short-term Outcomes	→	Long-term Outcomes
Community Aftercare Services		More social support		Self-sufficiency
		Resources for self-support		Living in the community
		Life Skills		Better Quality of Life
		(Define How Measured)		(Define How Measured)

(1) Make a COMPLETE list of all of the program activities.
(2) Following each activity, list the immediate or short-term outcomes expected to result from investing program time (and other resources) in that activity.
(3) Following each Short-term outcome, list those longer-term outcomes expected to result from that program activity.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

<u>Once the program has been in operation for some time you may move on to these additional areas of review; however, you should be planning to answer the following questions now.</u>

PROGRAM OPERATIONS:

1. Are administrative and service objectives being met?

2. Are the intended services being delivered to the intended persons? (Match to needs and design?)

3. Are there persons in the target population that the program is not reaching?

4. Once in service, do sufficient numbers of clients complete service?

5. Are clients (and other customers and stakeholders) satisfied with the services?

6. Are administrative, organizational, and personnel functions handled well?

The contract implementation plan reviews that IDJC has established are an excellent example of this level of review. Standards for review at this level include; but, are not limited to, the terms of the program design, administrative objectives or requirements (IDAPA Rules) and professional standards (PbS). This is another area where multiple perspectives (clients and other stakeholders) should be considered.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

1. Are outcome goals and objectives being achieved?

2. Do the services have beneficial effects on the recipients?

3. Do the services have adverse side effects on the recipients?

4. Are some recipients affected more by the services than others?

5. Is the problem or situation the services are intended to address made better?

Key issues related to the above questions have to do with the quality of the plan (and practice) for measuring the results intended. This should include distinguishing between outputs (services delivered) and true outcomes (results). In considering outcomes, it is important to consider that the tools identified for measurement align well with the intended outcomes, ie: They measure what was intended.

Closely examine the evaluation section of the program manual. What items identified can reasonably be measured? Have you remained realistic about your evaluation plan? Have you identified specific sources of data to measure in designing the evaluation?

Operational performance monitoring, using PbS, provides a good basis for identifying extreme conditions that may need correction and provides sound information for a process of ongoing correction and improvement.

PROGRAM COST/EFFICIENCY:

1. Are resources used efficiently?
2. Are costs per case or service unit reasonable?
3. Would alternative approaches yield equivalent benefits at less cost?

As used here, COSTS are those identified expenditures or in-kind contributions necessary to deliver the service. To determine Cost-effectiveness, some relationship between the costs and results must be established and compared to some standard or other similar service. Cost-benefit analysis requires the additional step of monetary valuation of the results for comparison purposes.