



Working Strategies

Strengthening the Family Support Field

Poverty and Family Resource Centers: Where We Are Today

Annette Marcus and Barbara Alderson

Poverty creates a destructive cycle of income insecurity, limited education, family stress, illness, and further poverty that impacts families and communities. This cycle affects many aspects of the work of family support practitioners.

Strategies and Springfield College sponsored a symposium last year on the theme Ending Poverty: Moving from Social Service to Social Change. This gathering brought together service providers for facilitated discussions on poverty, its consequences, and possible remedies. At the conclusion of the symposium, participants committed to continue working together to support and build a movement to end poverty and adopted the Economic Bill of Rights developed by the Supportive Parents Information Network (SPIN).

Changing the picture of poverty requires a commitment to provide

economic security and secure communities. The challenge is to address the institutional basis of poverty rather than the consequences of poverty. To do so will require a change in ideology from one that sees poverty as a failure of will to one that sees it as an outgrowth of multiple institutionalized factors; the dedication of resources to building communities; a coalition of service providers, unions, constituent groups, and non-governmental funders to create innovative programs that address poverty; and coalitions within communities to address issues such as livable wages, affordable housing, and access to health care and education.

The symposium called upon service providers,

communities, and consumers “to be part of building a movement to end poverty in a way that creates economic security for all individuals and families as well as builds healthy communities that can support those individuals and families.” This movement requires a shift from the social service model, which focuses on individualized services, to a social change model, which empowers families, communities, and service providers as partners in efforts to end poverty. A social change model can

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lead to replacing the destructive cycle of poverty with one in which healthy families create healthy communities create healthy families. FRCs are well positioned to make the shift from social service to social change through the work they already do as they provide supports to families, build coalitions within communities,

working parents who do not earn enough to support themselves and their two children, the single parent working two jobs. Most of those living in poverty work at least one job, sometimes two.

The federal poverty line (FPL) is a statistical measure of poverty used to determine official counts of poverty. As of the 2000 Census,

higher rates for Latino, Native American, and African American families compared to non-Latino White families. A combination of system factors – women earn less than men; Latinas, Native Americans, and African Americans earn less than Whites – results in poverty for many children and families.

Regionally, the highest poverty rates are in the Central Valley and Northern Counties with the lowest rates in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In 2003, the FPL for a family of four was \$18,400, or \$8.85 per hour for one full-time worker. Over 1.4 million Californians, most of them adults, earn the minimum wage of \$6.75 per hour.

It is widely acknowledged that at least twice the FPL is needed for a family to provide basic necessities such as adequate food and stable housing. In 2003, 32.9% of Californians had incomes below 200% FPL.

However, providing basic necessities is only one step toward income security. The estimated basic family budget, including housing and utilities, child care, transportation, food, health care, taxes, and miscellaneous expenses, for a family of four with two working parents in 2003 was \$58,269, or over 300% FPL.

Many federal and state programs use multiples of the FPL to determine eligibility. For example, Healthy Families, a program that provides health insurance for children, sets eligibility at 200% FPL. Other programs using a percentage of FPL to determine eligibility include Head Start, the Food Stamp Program, the National School Lunch Program,

California Poverty Rates by Demographics: Percent of People At or Below 100% FPL

All Californians	14.2%
Under the age of 18	19.5%
18-64	13.0%
65+	8.1%
Families	
Married couples	6.8%
Female-headed households/no spouse	25.0%
Male-headed households/no spouse	15.0%

Regions

Central Valley	20.5%
Los Angeles	17.9%
Northern California	16.9%
Southern California	12.9%
Sacramento Metropolitan	12.7%
Central Coast	11.7%
Eastern Sierra Mountain	11.6%
San Francisco Bay Area	8.6%

Source: Lopez, Alejandra. *Race and Poverty Rates in California: Census 2000 Profiles*. CCSRE Race and Ethnicity in California: Demographics Report Series No. 12. Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity, Stanford University, 2002.

and bring together families and communities in ways that empower both.

Profile of Poverty

Whether visible in urban centers or hidden down rural gravel roads, poverty exists throughout California. Almost one-third of California families are considered poor, earning less than 200% of the federal poverty line. The images of poverty are legion: the increasing numbers of families relying on food banks, the men gathering on a street corner before dawn waiting to hear if there is day work, the family with two

14.2% of all Californians lived below the FPL. Children, single-parent families, African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos experience the highest poverty rates. Poverty strikes hard at children, with almost one in five (19.5%) of California's children living at or below the FPL. The numbers are harsher for African American (30.4%), Latino (27.2%), and Native American (28.1%) children.

Poverty rates are high (25%) for families headed by a single mother. Within this category, poverty rates vary by the mother's ethnicity, with

the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

Impacts of Poverty

Poverty exacerbates the negative conditions in people’s lives and takes an ongoing toll on children, families, and communities. Families in poverty are more likely to experience illness, inadequate health care options, low levels of education, and domestic violence and other forms of abuse than economically secure families. This reflects systemic conditions, not individual failings.

Families in poverty often do not have adequate access to health care because they are uninsured, do not have medical care within their communities, or do not have medical care that will accept what insurance they do have, e.g., Medi-Cal. People without adequate access to health care are more likely to wait until conditions worsen before seeking help, which can lead to lengthier recoveries. Children who live in poverty experience more hospitalizations and miss more days of school due to illness than children from higher income families.

In 2002, about 6.5 million Californians were uninsured. Among those whose family incomes were under \$25,000, over a third (35.6%) were uninsured. Almost 70% of

uninsured children live in households with at least one full-time worker. Of the uninsured, 27% were eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families but were not enrolled.

Families with poverty incomes have completed fewer years of education than those with higher incomes. The stress of providing basic necessities makes it more difficult for families in poverty to participate in their children’s education. As a group, young children from families whose income is less than 200%

FPL consistently score lower in math and reading than those from families whose income is over 300% FPL. This sets the stage for later school difficulties and, ultimately, for completing fewer years of education. Compounding the problem is the condition of many schools in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty. These schools tend to have more inexperienced teachers, larger class sizes, and fewer resources, such as computers and adequate textbooks, than schools in neighborhoods with low levels of poverty. Lower educational levels impact the ability to obtain employment that will sustain a family.

About half of women in poverty have experienced domestic violence. Women in poverty have a more difficult time leaving partners and finding ways to develop economically sustainable lives outside the abusive relationship. Batterers often interfere with a woman’s ability to locate and retain employment. Domestic violence has an additional negative impact on children who may grow up to continue the cycle of violence as abusers or victims themselves. Many FRCs are exploring creative ways to partner with domestic

violence services to interrupt this destructive cycle.

FRCs and Ending Poverty

The challenge posed by the Ending Poverty symposium is to find ways to address the root causes of poverty. FRCs have a vital role to play in ending poverty. FRCs can help families understand and navigate the economic and social service systems by providing services that help families develop income supports and resources, connect families with currently available supports, build community partnerships, and encourage civic participation.

FRCs can help families connect to income supports and resources such as financial education, Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), tax assistance, food stamps, subsidized child care, and health programs such as Healthy Families. The Family

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Federal Poverty Line (FPL) and 2003 Annual Income

Percentage of FPL	Equivalent 2003 Annual Income for a Family of		
	Two	Three	Four
0% to 100% FPL	\$0 to \$12,120	\$0 to \$15,260	\$0 to \$18,400
100% to 200% FPL	\$12,120 to \$24,240	\$15,260 to \$30,520	\$18,400 to \$36,800
200% to 300% FPL	\$24,240 to \$38,380	\$30,520 to \$45,780	\$36,800 to \$55,200
300% or more FPL	\$38,380 or more	\$45,780 or more	\$55,200 or more

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (2003). Annual update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines. Federal Register 68(26), 6456-6548 (aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/03fedreg.htm).

Family Financial Success in Rancho Cordova

The Rancho Cordova Neighborhood Center, started over three years ago on a Healthy Start Grant through the Sacramento Office of Education, operates as an incorporated nonprofit “One Stop” center with a direct focus on economic development. Inez Reyes, Program Coordinator, reports, “Our center is all about family economic success. It’s what we do.”

Rancho Cordova’s comprehensive, community-based approach makes it clear that they provide a winning combination of capacity building elements to support consumers. In viewing family financial success as a critical component of family support programs, the agency uses an integrated, collaborative approach with an array of partners serving a variety of needs.

Asset mapping, encouraging partnerships, and having everyone under one roof focus on the goal of growing family literacy on multiple levels are important in Rancho Cordova. “Our ground rule is that

all of our activities are open to all. The whole community is invited to participate. You must operate from the community agenda, not just agency agendas,” Inez says. From this philosophy, the Rancho Cordova Neighborhood Center invites joint leadership and public-private partnership.

Family financial literacy education is offered in parent education classes and incorporated into other programs such as CalWORKs and WIC. Human assistance programs, employment and training activities, a business information center, and a partnership with the Bank of America provide on-site resources to build financial opportunities, including microenterprise grants. In choosing from the array of services, consumers in Rancho Cordova can use a “ladder approach” to developmentally gain financial success.

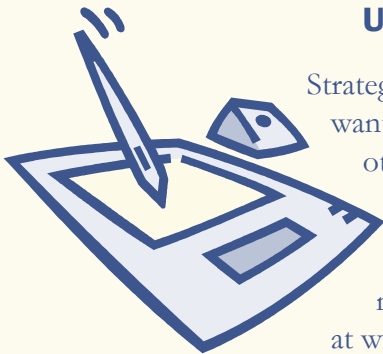
Growing the capacity of community members combined with growing

collaborative funding streams for agency sustainability reflects the message of Sid Gardner, popular lecturer and executive director of Children and Family Futures. Gardner draws a parallel between agency sustainability and family financial success and outlines a plan for sustainability in hard times. He proposes three key policy shifts that must be made to ensure the future of FRCs:

- FRCs must make an effort to connect families to a full array of available income and in-kind supports.
- Increased levels of data collection documenting how FRCs meet the needs of working lower-income families must match increased funding for FRCs.
- Partnerships with community and county institutions working to integrate direct services with community development efforts will create the most effective array of funding options.

Rancho Cordova Neighborhood Center in Sacramento County is doing all of the above. Acknowledging that these are hard times, they believe that an active, accountable, community-led center is the key to a sustainable future. Starting small, doing one thing well at a time, yet involving everyone is their formula for success!

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Return the business reply postcard in this newsletter or update your information online at www.familyresourcecenters.net.



Region 1

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Affordable Preschool in Conejo Valley

Even in the affluent communities of Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, and Simi Valley, 10% of the residents are living in poverty and are often underserved. Initiated by a steering committee headed by former Ventura County Supervisor Frank Schillo, a series of town hall meetings were held to address better serving these communities in the Conejo Valley.

A survey indicated community citizens felt that affordable preschool and parenting programs were a priority need. In response, Conejo Valley Unified School District, Conejo Recreation & Park District, the City of Thousand Oaks, and the County Supervisor's Office combined their efforts and were awarded a grant from First 5 Ventura County to develop and operate affordable preschools and other family strengthening services through the Conejo Valley Neighborhood for Learning (CV NfL).

To effectively provide preschool services to needy families, the NfL needed to overcome a number of access barriers: lack of phones and transportation and frequent family moves made connecting with families that qualified for assistance difficult. CV NfL utilized numerous methods of outreach, including door-to-door canvassing. Bilingual Family Resource Specialist Frances Kurowski, located at the Conejo NfL Preschool site,

explains that many families hesitate to use the resources that are available to them. Family members express feeling embarrassed or ashamed of needing assistance or using special programs. Frances encourages families to participate for the benefit of their children, but explains that even with encouragement and personal contacts, parents sometimes need three or four visits to the school before feeling comfortable enough to enroll their children in the preschool program.

CV NfL has successfully used an array of approaches to engage needy families in various services. Small incentives, such as restaurant and food coupons and free child care, help motivate children and family members to participate. Many programs are operating on such tight funding that contributions such as beverages or snacks make a big difference in meeting attendance.

Families are often isolated, living in "pockets of poverty" within the Conejo Valley. Bus tickets and vans are used to help overcome transportation barriers to health care appointments and meetings. Ongoing personal contacts with local businesses, churches, service organizations, and professional

offices have garnered support for the NfL's programs. One area dentist gave free dental services, including x-rays, fillings, and needed extractions, to several families in the program. Another important strategy for connecting with families in poverty has been providing parents with information about local resources that are within easy reach of family members.

The NfL helps family members develop the leadership skills needed to have a real voice in their community. The three preschool sites have individual Parent Advisory Councils (PAC), and from the meetings one parent is chosen to serve on the Citizen/Parent Executive Board, which meets every other month to discuss CV NfL programs. This gives parents an opportunity to help identify priority concerns. This is important as many family members work in the service sector of the community and have expressed a lack of confidence engaging in activities such as Parent Teacher Associations and the local soccer association where their employers may be participating.

CV NfL takes great pride in helping families to "do it right, right from the start."

Pictured: Conejo Valley Neighborhood for Learning Preschool.



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Individual Development Accounts at Oakwood FRC

According to a study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, thirty-nine million people in this country are living in families defined as working poor. These Americans work full-time but never seem to earn enough or save enough to lift themselves out of poverty.

For the past five years, one experimental program has helped families save and build financial assets – key components to getting out of poverty. In November, Congress approved funding that will allow this program to continue for another year.

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) match equal or greater dollars to every dollar saved by the individual or family for the purpose of helping low-income families save money for higher education, down payment on a home, or starting their own business. Additionally, participants receive economic literacy training that helps them repair their credit, set a budget and saving schedule, and manage their money. Funded by the federal government and matched by local financial institutions, IDAs are held at local financial institutions and managed by community-based organizations.

Federal and state governments and/or private sector organizations and individuals can match deposits for low-income families. There is potential for creative program design

and partnerships among the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, in cooperation with account holders themselves.

Considering the potential and need for community collaboration and partnership in the delivery of this program, how can family resource centers (FRCs) be involved?

One example of the IDA program at work can be found at Oakwood Family Resource Center in Los Angeles. Jose Ramos, FRC Director and Children's Bureau Community Director, sees a vital role for FRCs in this program and any effort to help families become financially self-sufficient.

First, FRCs play an important role in supporting the program by outreaching to families, referring families to the Community Financial Resource Center, hosting training workshops, and case managing the families' program involvement and saving.

Secondly, FRCs play an important role in supporting families as they participate in the program by addressing other family factors that often inhibit family financial self-sufficiency, such as family functioning and stress management. FRCs, by their nature, support families, which in turn increases families' chances for financial stability.

Thirdly, FRCs play an important role in building community capacity by building community partnerships with financial, governmental, business, and community-based organizations.

"In short," Jose said, "FRCs should be involved in the IDA program. It is one of the great ways in which FRCs can help address poverty one family at a time as well as addressing poverty at the community level."

Currently, Oakwood FRC manages the IDA program for ten families. "We've been involved with the IDA program for over a year and have graduated approximately twenty-five families. We're fortunate to have helped twenty-five families reach their financial goals," said Jose. "If you look even further, the Los Angeles IDA program has 114 active families involved in the program across the city [as of March 2004], which speaks to the potential for long-term solutions to ending poverty."

IDA Resources

You can listen to National Public Radio's November 22, 2004 story about IDAs – "Program Aims to Help Low-Income Families Save" – at www.npr.org.

A total of 554 IDA programs are registered nationwide with the IDAnetwork. Visit the IDAnetwork at www.idanetwork.org.



Region 3

Children's Bureau

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Building Bridges

Supportive Parents Information Network: Educating People Out of Poverty

Supportive Parents Information Network (SPIN) in San Diego is a unique blend of volunteers,

parents, and community members working together to build bridges from poverty to self-sufficiency.

SPIN, an entirely volunteer-operated grassroots organization, strongly believes that education is the critical pathway out of poverty.

SPIN began in August 1998 with Joni Halpern, a dedicated and passionate attorney who began to outreach to parents on welfare. She met twelve parents who were struggling to complete their education in the face of welfare reform. Although the law allowed parents 18 months to 2 years to attend school, most often in conjunction with part-time work, employment case managers were forcing parents to quit school. Parents came together with Joni to understand how they could use their limited time on welfare to acquire the education and training they needed to get a job that would allow them to leave welfare forever.

Outreach Coordinator Aída Reyes continues this dedication to low-income families. Her commitment to and passion for SPIN's mission, even throughout her own health struggles

with cancer, have been passed on to the SPIN parents, families, and communities.



When asked how SPIN is addressing the issue of poverty, Aída identified the following approaches:

Creating Community

SPIN provides opportunities for families to build

relationships with one another and to collaborate with community partners.

Changing Policy

SPIN parent members attend hearings, allowing them to advocate for change within their communities. In addition, they created the Economic Bill of Rights (see page 8) and developed a position paper on the issues of poverty that was presented to state legislators.

Fighting for Education Rights

SPIN provides skill-based training to help parents move out of poverty.

Escaping Poverty

SPIN is committed to helping parents achieve the goal of moving their families out of the cycle of poverty, both through individualized education and through system change such as banking reform.

SPIN has traveled throughout California educating and promoting policy change. When asked what SPIN would like family resource

centers (FRCs) to know, Aída expressed interest in working with FRCs in providing education on laws and rights for parents, as well as helping other programs create alliances for families and for the poor.

Exhibits of children's art have provided one powerful means of communication for SPIN. SPIN created a youth art program as a way to share the reality of poverty with mainstream America. SPIN feels that youth need to become the voice for their community and not be ashamed of being poor. The program of 60 or more young people was cut to only 30 due to decreased funding in 2002. For two years, several artists from throughout California worked with the youth and taught them how to express their thoughts, feelings, pains, hopes, challenges, and aspirations using art.

Samantha, 15, lost her home and community to a new ball park in the San Diego area. Her art depicted a large melting ice cream cone. This is her view of life: fragile and continuously changing right in front of her eyes.

SPIN welcomes family support programs and family resource centers to join them in their efforts to end poverty. For more information regarding SPIN, visit their website at www.spinsandiego.org.

Pictured: Artwork from SPIN's "Through the Eyes of Children: An Experiential Art Exhibit of the Lives of Children in Poverty."

(Continued from page 3)

Economic Success Center (FESC) at the Cope Family Center in Napa County provides a financial education course, expanded information and referral services, and a volunteer income tax assistance program.

Many families never received basic financial education and do not know how to navigate the economic system. FESC provides the Money Smart course which teaches families how to open a bank account, develop a savings plan, and use credit cards. These skills can lead to the development of economic security and new alliances in the community. Local bankers teach the course, which allows families and bankers to learn more about each other.

Some families opened IDAs. This asset building tool matches a family's savings; for every dollar the family saves, the IDA adds two. IDAs can help finance a home or an education.

A financial education can improve family economic success if there is an available bank. Over the past decade, however, banks in low-income communities and communities of color have been replaced by check cashing and payday systems, which charge up to 456% interest. The San Diego Coalition for Fair Banking focuses on system change by "working to bring banks and full banking services back to low- and moderate-income communities and communities of color."

A grassroots organization that grew out of SPIN, the Coalition works to have banks offer services currently unavailable, such as the essential direct deposit savings account. This savings-style account can be opened and maintained with only a penny and a low monthly fee, and offers direct deposit, free money orders, an ATM-debit card, and a monthly statement. No checks can be written, and it can be opened with the alternative

identifications acceptable for social service programs such as Medi-Cal or TANF.

FRCs can help families access an array of underutilized government-sponsored family income supports, such as the earned income tax credit. Michelle Laymon of the Cope Family Center says that a "tax clinic is a huge way to make an impact in a short amount of time. We bring back thousands of dollars at a time to families and get a ripple effect in the community." Michelle estimates that this year over \$200,000 will go directly into the community through the purchase of additional services such as child care and transportation.

In addition to providing support to individual families, FRCs can encourage political engagement by helping people navigate their community boards and commissions. Learning what these groups do and participating in them is an effective way to influence and impact local communities.

These first steps generate hope and empowerment. As families become more confident, they can engage in the community and build effective coalitions to end poverty.

About The Authors

Strategies thanks Annette Marcus, Strategies Project Director, Region 2, and Barbara Alderson, MSW, Consultant, for their contribution of this article to our newsletter. Annette can be reached by phone at (805) 485-6114 or by email at amarcus@icfs.org. Barbara can be reached by email at barbara.alderson@stormnet.com.

Economic Bill of Rights

1. Everyone must have a right to be heard concerning his or her experience, knowledge, and vision.
2. Everyone must have a lifelong right to education and training to prepare for all the challenges and transitions they must face in life.
3. Everyone must have a right to a wage that provides the necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, and medical care.
4. When the free market fails to yield the necessities of life, everyone, including those who cannot work because of illness or disability, must have a right to obtain them without shame or excessive burden.
5. Since we are all contributing members of society, everyone must have a right to share equally in society's opportunities not only to obtain the necessities of life, but to strive to fulfill the dreams they have for themselves and their children.
6. All residents who devote their concern and diligence to their families, cities, or communities also contribute profoundly to the well-being of our society as a whole, and their efforts cannot be evaluated by monetary measures.

Book Review

Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities

In navigating the swelling sea of concern about poverty, family resource centers (FRCs) face the challenge of reaching higher ground in working with consumers who live in generational poverty. Dr. Ruby Payne looks at poverty from a cultural perspective, as illustrated in her seminal work *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (2001). In defining the differences in the poverty, middle, and wealthy classes, Payne includes each class's hidden rules, use of language, and other important characteristics. Her emphasis on understanding cultural differences suggests that our efforts to teach or effect change with those in poverty will only be successful if we can build positive relationships with respectful understanding.

As a companion guide to her framework text, Payne, along with addiction specialists Phillip DeVos and Terie Dreussl Smith, applies her theory to social service delivery in *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities*. With poverty defined as "the extent to which an individual does without resources," Payne defines ten resource categories: financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/role models, knowledge of hidden rules, and coping strategies.

In a simple to read, graphic style, theory comes alive through the illustration of several family scenarios, each with needs and assets at varying levels of the many

resources. A tool is offered at the end of Chapter 1 to help family workers assess consumer resources in this way.

Payne asserts that school and work operate from the hidden rules of the middle class. Teaching those from poverty the hidden rules of the middle class can help them succeed where the world demands that awareness. Likewise, many skills need to be learned by those working with individuals in poverty. For example, understanding the process of change is critical. We know that change can create loss of relationship, which is felt by one from poverty as a threat to survival. Is it any wonder that family workers frequently encounter consumer resistance? *Bridges Out of Poverty* offers tips on working with resistance, especially in Chapter 12, "Developing Skills for Working with People in Poverty," and Chapter 13, "Improving Agency Policies and Internal Processes."

This is just one example of the many tips and implications offered. Pick up this quick read to broaden your understanding of poverty. Without discounting systemic issues, the intrinsic worth of all people,

and the importance of honoring personal choice, *Bridges Out of Poverty* provides guidance in understanding cultural barriers to family economic success. You will find useful tools to build a bridge to help your consumers help themselves!

Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities, ISBN 0-964743-79-5, is published by ahal Process and retails for \$22.00.

For more information about Family Economic Success, including upcoming Strategies trainings, contact Susan Patricio, Project Specialist, at (530) 872-3896, ext. 118 or spatricio@youth4change.org.

Peer Review

The California Peer Review Process brings together two centers in a cooperative, non-judgmental, peer-to-peer environment for the purpose of letting FRCs share their centers' successes, challenges, and strategies for improvement. FRC teams consisting of program staff members, parents, and administrators complete a center self-assessment tool that becomes the focus of mutual site visits. The Peer Review Process is an opportunity for your FRC to learn how other FRCs operate, share your experience and ideas with another FRC, and collectively develop recommendations and suggestions for center improvement.

2005 Peer Review Dates

January 27, 2005 - San Luis Obispo

February 24, 2005 - Los Angeles

March 8, 2005 - Location TBA

For more information, contact Laura Chavez at (323) 644-3900, ext. 209.



Hints and Tips

Helping Families Benefit from Untapped Work-Support Programs

Issues of poverty confronted by low-income families remain a constant hurdle for the family support movement when trying to achieve the vision of healthy families in healthy communities. Historically, family resource centers (FRCs) have helped to alleviate certain obstacles faced by low-income families as they develop and implement programs that promote family self-sufficiency. However, FRCs cannot provide this support alone.

In 1999, the government allocated an estimated \$52 billion to work-support programs across the nation to provide assistance to low-income families. Still, thousands of eligible families in each state failed to enroll in such programs for a variety of reasons. Lack of public awareness, inadequate materials in non-English languages, questions of immigration, and the “welfare state” stigma that confronts federal work-support recipients are all obstacles to successful enrollment and participation.

The Center for Community Change (CCC) in Washington, D.C. studied some of the motivating factors for low enrollment rates in government-funded work-support programs. By identifying a variety of barriers to successful enrollment in these programs, CCC identified five strategies for successful enrollment.

Social Marketing and Advertising

As in commercial advertising, the way a work-support “product” is marketed has a major impact on

whether or not it can be “sold” to the target audience. Traditional methods of advertising, such as posters and brochures, have their benefits. Nonetheless, they might not address the fact that an eligible family who is aware of its benefits still chooses not to enroll in a program that stigmatizes them for receiving government support. Successful advertising that addresses these issues would not only inform families about eligibility requirements, but also debunk the myth that receiving government support is dehumanizing. FRCs can serve as the vehicle for successful social marketing since they often possess a well-respected reputation in the community and maintain trusting relationships with their families.

Co-Enrollment

This strategy attempts to streamline the application process by identifying eligibility for more than one work-support program at the same time. For example, a check box on a Food Stamp Program application form may allow a Medi-Cal office to notify applicants of another program they qualify for. This strategy can work effectively when partnered with the proper marketing tools and advocacy strategies. In July 2003, California became one of the first states to introduce a comprehensive co-enrollment campaign that links families receiving school lunches to the Food Stamp Program and Medi-Cal for Children. FRCs can use this strategy by assessing consumer eligibility during intake procedures.

Advocacy and Organizing

As it is defined in CCC’s report, this tactic engages the community by testing the program and creating a list of hurdles work-support programs use to keep families from successfully enrolling. “Testers” go through the application process and note the difficulties along the way. Once a list exists, it can be leveraged when advocating for systemic change. This strategy puts the power back into the community by giving its members a voice in the process of change. Empowering parent and community engagement programs with the tools to implement change in their community is a prime example of how FRCs can participate in this strategy.

Web-Based Enrollment Tools

This emerging strategy has yet to be implemented in most parts of the nation; however, with evolving technology, it may prove beneficial and efficient in the near future. Comprehensive and simple online applications reduce paper load and duplication of information, therefore streamlining a somewhat cumbersome enrollment process. A web-based tool must be user-friendly and provide technical assistance in order to be effective. This strategy only works well if families have web access and ability, which may be a problem for many low-income families. FRC programs that have computer literacy classes can provide technical assistance to consumers in

(Continued on next page)

Strategies Calendar – Upcoming Events

January 2005

Making Supervision Work
Redding – January 7
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

Case Management Practice
Roseville – January 11-12
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

Engaging Youth as Resources: A
Foundation for Sustainable Community
Change
Culver City – January 13
(805) 485-6114, ext. 676

FRC Core Training
San Mateo – January 19-21
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

Peer Review Training
San Luis Obispo – January 27
(323) 644-3900, ext. 209

February 2005

A Framework for Understanding
Poverty
Sacramento – February 1
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

A Framework for Understanding
Poverty
Fresno – February 2
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

February 2005 (cont.)

A Framework for Understanding
Poverty
Los Angeles – February 3
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

Home Visiting 101
Santa Barbara – February 9-10
(805) 485-6114, ext. 676

Family Depression
Chico – February 10
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

Tapestry: Enhancing Multicultural Skills
for Family Workers
Redding – February 16
(805) 485-6114, ext. 676

Peer Review Training
Los Angeles – February 24
(323) 644-3900, ext. 209

Teleconference: FRC Advocacy/
Political Engagement
9:00 - 10:30 AM – February 24
(714) 517-1900, ext. 211

Teleconference: Making
Supervision Work
1:00 - 2:30 PM
– February 24
(714) 517-1900,
ext. 211

March 2005

FRC Core Training
Ontario – March 1-3
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

Teleconference: Getting the Most Out of
Your Supervision
9:00 - 10:30 AM – March 3
(714) 517-1900, ext. 211

Peer Review Training
TBA – March 8
(323) 644-3900, ext. 209

Making Supervision Work
Bakersfield – March 9
(530) 872-3896, ext. 116

Community Development
Los Angeles County – March 16-17
(323) 644-3900, ext. 209

Teleconference: Parent
Involvement
9:00 - 10:30 AM – March
25
(714) 517-1900, ext. 211

Teleconference: Human
Resources
1:00 - 2:30 PM – March
25
(714) 517-1900, ext.
211



(Continued from previous page)

navigating a web-based enrollment tool.

Employer-Based Strategies

Another new strategy showing promising results encourages employers to assist with work-support program outreach to their employees by offering workshops and enrollment classes on-site. Employers recognize that healthy workers translate into an increase in productivity. It is cost effective for

employers to invest in and promote programs that increase the financial self-sufficiency of their employees. FRCs can partner with for-profit companies to educate low-income families.

Closing the Enrollment Gap, CCC's September 2003 report on barriers to and strategies for successful enrollment in work-support programs, highlights these strategies in action through

fourteen case studies from across the nation. The full report can be downloaded from CCC's website at www.communitychange.org.

Key Financial Support Services Referrals

Food Stamp Benefits –
www.dss.cahwnet.gov/foodstamps/

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network – www.rrnetwork.org

Medi-Cal Services – www.dhs.ca.gov/mcs/medi-calhome/default.htm

Earned Income Tax Credit – 800-TAX-1040

A Framework for Understanding Poverty

This daylong workshop will help you understand how economic class affects behaviors and mindsets. You'll learn about hidden rules, discipline interventions that improve behavior, and the eight resources that make a difference in success. Jodi Pfarr will take us through this information – and more – from a human services/social services perspective.

Participants will:

- Analyze the eight resources of families.
- Explain language registers, discourse patterns, and story structure.
- Give examples of hidden rules among classes.
- Identify discipline interventions that are effective.
- Explain mediation and cognitive structures.
- Explain how economic realities affect patterns of living.

Last year's participants called this "The best and most useful training I have had!"



To register or for more information, call Jody Hall-Winget at (530) 872-3896, ext. 116. New! Register online! Visit www.familyresourcecenters.net to find out how.

February 1, 2005

Registration Deadline: January 25
Lions Gate at McClellan Park
3410 Westover Street
McClellan, California
(916) 643-6222

February 2, 2005

Registration Deadline: January 26
LaRyan Event Center
4277 N. West Avenue
Fresno, California
(559) 228-2111

February 3, 2005

Registration Deadline: January 27
Handlery Hotel
950 Hotel Circle North
San Diego, California
(619) 296-0511



Youth For Change

Paradise Ridge Family Resource Center
Working Strategies
6249 Skyway
Paradise, CA 95969

For more information about trainings, workshops, conferences, and more, contact your region.

Region 1 Jody Hall-Winget (530) 872-3896 ext. 116

Region 2 Geoffrey Biggs (805) 485-6114 ext. 642

Region 3 Laura Chavez (323) 644-3900 ext. 209

Please notify Jody Hall-Winget of any address corrections.

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Phone: (530) 872-3896, ext 116

Fax: (530) 872-4093

Mail: 6249 Skyway, Paradise, CA 95969

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