

## Rolling Out the Partnership: A Vision for Change

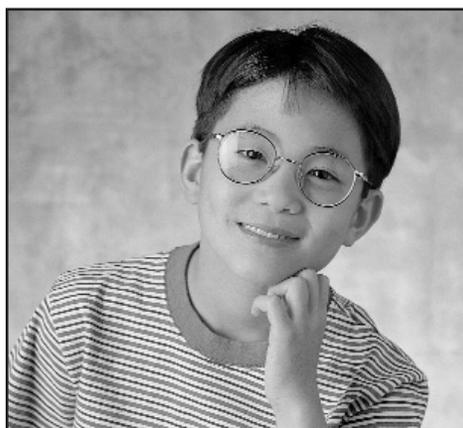
**S**ix years ago the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation launched a child welfare initiative called Community Partnerships for Protecting Children in four promising communities across the United States. These communities – Jacksonville, Florida; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Louisville, Kentucky; and St. Louis, Missouri – had a number of progressive assets, making them pioneers in the implementation of the community partnership approach. These assets included family resource centers or “hubs” in the community, outstationed child protective services workers, differential response capabilities, community outreach, and team work with families. Since 1995, each of these pioneer sites has worked to ensure that “protecting children is everybody’s business.” These sites are paving the way for other communities that are committed to improving outcomes for children and families.

From these four initial sites, Community Partnerships for Protecting Children is expanding to more than thirty sites in Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, and Missouri. Other states and jurisdictions as diverse as Hartford, Connecticut; Atlanta, Georgia; Winooski, Vermont; and Saginaw, Michigan have also recognized the value in partnering with families and communities to keep children safe. They are now implementing their own community partnerships. The principles, values, and beliefs of the partnerships have resounded with many across the country, and the approach is gaining the support of a wide range of stakeholders. These include legislators, child welfare agency leaders, community residents, juvenile court judges, and other service providers that address mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence.

The original sites have helped to refine a comprehensive strategy that focuses on four unique but interrelated core elements that have come to define the partnership approach. Each element is defined below. While any one of the elements is powerful and may bring about change for families, they are strongest when implemented together. (See page 8 for more information.)

- An **individualized course of action (ICA)** that is strength-based and family centered is initiated with all children and families who are identified as being at risk of child abuse and neglect. (See *SafeKeeping Fall 1999*.)

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# Gaining the Commitment of Key Stakeholders

**B**uilding a community partnership requires buy-in from a range of stakeholders in the neighborhood. Partnerships generally have begun with a core group of committed individuals, and local leaders seek to continually expand this base. In getting started, there are a few key stakeholders whose participation is necessary to get the work off the ground. These include neighborhood residents, representatives from community-based organizations, and managers, supervisors, and frontline staff from the public child protection agency.

## A conversation with your neighbor:

- Visualize a family that you have thought about in the past, a neighbor or someone you've seen on the news, someone that you wanted to support, but you didn't know how to begin.
- By becoming active in the Partnership, you can help such families.
- Examine your talents to see how you might get involved.
- Where do you want to start?  
Lots of people start small by helping to stuff envelopes or post flyers, and as you become more comfortable, you may identify other ways to use your talents.

*As people realize that they are valuable to the Partnership's efforts, they see the difference they can make as individuals, and their commitment grows.*

**Sandra Durham, Director, Community Partnerships for Protecting Children, Jacksonville, FL**

When asking neighborhood residents, "How would you like to participate in the partnership?" there can be a range of creative responses. Residents can participate in many different ways – from planning community celebrations that reach out to isolated families, to volunteering as mentors for parents who would like additional support, to joining the partnership's governance body. In return, residents should be offered the support they need to be effective in their chosen roles. This may include staff support, access to child care, flexible funds, and skill training. Community organizations also have a range of options when they are asked to take on the issue of child abuse and neglect prevention. They can provide space for family activities or actually organize and staff activities such as a latch-key program. They can also become more directly involved with other local agencies as

part of teams working with vulnerable families. A local church might "adopt" a family that is struggling. A program for battered women might collaborate with the child protection agency to develop a protocol for helping families dealing with both domestic violence and child maltreatment.

Staff at all levels of the public child protection agency need to be engaged and committed to the partnership approach as well. Administrators may be asked to promote the approach by establishing specific goals for serving the targeted communities. Other important changes include: geographic case assignment in which outstationed staff work in local agencies



so that they can become more familiar with specific neighborhoods, changing job descriptions to include community-based prevention work, and developing additional methods to ensure that the agency can become more connected with the communities it serves. Supervisors and frontline staff will be asked to learn ways of enhancing direct practice so that they are engaging families as partners. They will also need to work closely with other social service systems to assist families who are struggling with issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental illness. While it is important to begin with a few "champions" in the CPS agency, over time this work should become the standard way of doing business, so that when staff leave or a new administration comes in, the changes do not fall by the wayside.

All of these stakeholders bring essential perspectives to the partnership. Without their commitment, the work will not progress. So, how is it possible to engage each of these groups? Many communities already have a neighborhood-based, collaborative decision making body in place that includes local leaders, and this can be an excellent place to start. If such a group begins to "own" this approach, the beginnings of a new partnership are already in place.

# Taking Stock:

## Assessing Strengths and Needs

There is a risk, however, of selling the community partnership approach as simply an extension of established institutions or a new way of looking at old practice. Make no mistake, this is a different way of working. A community partnership builds on the creative efforts already occurring in neighborhoods but a significant philosophical shift is often required, and the way work is done needs to be realigned. Community leaders often go through the “three stages of commitment.” On first blush,

### Three Stages of Commitment

**Stage 1: Oh, we’re already doing that.**

**Stage 2: There’s no way we can possibly do THAT.**

**Stage 3: We have to do this for children and families.**

**Sandy Lint, Rollout Coordinator, Iowa**

they are convinced they already have a community partnership in place. All they need to do is some tweaking. As they understand more about what it will take to pull it all together, they feel overwhelmed. But, when they look at the strengths of their community and the needs of the families and children, they know this is the right way to proceed. Passing through these stages requires some soul-searching about how they really want the families and children in their communities served. This enables them to see how they can create a partnership that uses the many assets in their community, while expanding efforts to “do right” for kids, families, and neighborhoods. ●

### Advice for gaining support and commitment from frontline staff:

- **Emphasize that we are asking everyone to do the fundamentals better than what we’re doing today.**
- **Allow the new practices to serve as replacements, not additions, to the current approach.**
- **Expect administrators and supervisors to practice the practice change themselves. As workers are focusing on supporting families and using a strengths-based perspective, this should be the pervasive culture of the CPS agency in terms of how staff work together.**

**Matt Hanlon, Family Team Meeting Coordinator,**  
Partnership for Safe Families, Cedar Rapids, IA

**T**aking stock is an important initial step for every emerging Community Partnership for Protecting Children. There are fundamental questions about *where* to develop the partnership and *how* it might be accomplished. The existing partnerships have learned through hard experience that it is no easier to establish a Community Partnership for Protecting Children than it would be to start any other community-based effort without adequate preparation. The chances of success are always better when there is a clear understanding of the strengths the community has to build on and the most urgent needs to be addressed.

Often, communities are painfully aware of their needs (generally characterized as “problems”), but less certain about their strengths. Even with needs, though, there can be misunderstandings. For example, a high incidence of abuse and neglect in an area may not always represent a lack of parenting skills. Sometimes the underlying need has more to do with a high incidence of substance abuse. Because an accurate and honest assessment of both strengths and needs is so important to the eventual success of child abuse and neglect prevention efforts, assessment has to be organized and thorough.

All communities have strengths *and* needs, but every community is different. A “cookie cutter” approach to child protection is much like assuming that every family is the same. Some of the most valuable experience from successful partnerships strongly suggests establishing partnerships in communities that have some reasonable balance of strengths and needs. It doesn’t make sense to start where there is a tremendous imbalance – where the needs are overwhelming and the strengths are few. Fortunately, a diligent assessment of most communities reveals not only the needs, but also unexpected strengths.

Successful community partnerships have found, or sometimes invented, effective ways to map the strengths and needs in their areas. The partnership in Cedar Rapids used

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**“Build on existing collaborations.  
Recognize community assets.”**

**Sara Barwinski, Consultant to the State of Missouri**

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# Taking Stock: Assessing Strengths and Needs

(continued from page 3)

local expertise and available information to do “geomapping” of the actual geographic location of reports to the child protection services (CPS) agency. The computer maps produced a vivid picture of where the concentrations of CPS reports in the city were located. Later, after mapping police reports of domestic violence calls, they discovered a geographic overlap of domestic violence and CPS reports. This created logical choices about *where* to start with a community partnership. The mapping process also helped to identify existing strengths and resources such as community centers, full-service schools, neighborhood associations, and churches. This helped to ensure that the partnership began in locations where there were both strengths and needs.

Other partnerships used an assessment process that was much less technical, but no less useful. Door-to-door surveys, positively framed as a “community talent search,” helped residents identify not only their concerns, but also leadership skills and resources in their neighborhoods. Within neighborhoods largely identified as “problem areas,” there were trusted individuals, people who knew how to navigate the complexities of public agencies, and pillars of the faith community. The community talent search identified people who understood the community needs and had the talents to address them.

High-tech or low-tech, the community assessments all need to achieve a thorough understanding of:

## Assets, such as:

- an understanding of the existing social structures in the community like churches, neighborhood associations, inter-agency councils, recreation leagues, tenant associations, civic organizations, existing task forces, fraternal organizations, and natural leaders, and
- an accurate inventory of resources like after school programs, respected elders, soup kitchens, informal mentors, community gardens, playgrounds, barter economies, 12-step programs, safe houses, community policing, home day-care providers, businesses, and faith communities.

Sometimes, assets fulfill multiple roles. A neighborhood church may be both a source of spiritual support for residents and have physical space to house a fledgling partnership activity. Sometimes assets are simply information like lists of schools with breakfast programs, community pantries, and programs which provide “mom’s days out.”

## Needs, such as:

- limitations on residents’ ability or willingness to access available resources like inadequate public transportation, misunderstandings about eligibility for services or supports, social isolation, language or cultural barriers, the absence of child care, mistrust of public agencies, or a simple lack of information, and
- circumstances or conditions that handicap individual children, parents, or families like victimization from abuse or neglect, chronic substance abuse, insufficient income, lack of education or vocational skills, fear of the neighborhood, mental illness or mental retardation, medical disabilities, domestic violence, and inadequate housing or homelessness.

Often, communities find families struggling to cope with multiple needs such as single parents feeling trapped – out of touch with extended family, overwhelmed with parenting responsibilities, frustrated by poverty, and seeking escape in alcohol or other drugs.

A critical part of the community assessment is the involvement of people who live in the identified communities or neighborhoods. Often a very different picture emerges from “street level” assessment than from traditional needs assessments that reflect only the interests of established constituencies such as public agencies, service providers, or politicians. It is also an important responsibility of the

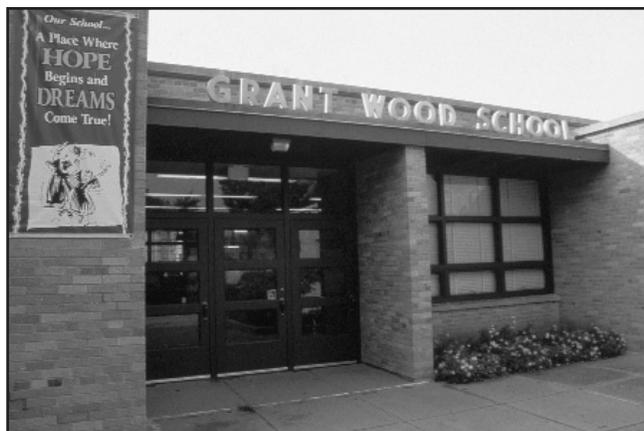


key stakeholders interested in community partnerships to ensure that the assessment reflects the perspective of the families whose children are most at risk – the children that stand to benefit the most from effective community-based child protection.

Another powerful tool for assessing community strengths and needs relevant to child protection are formal qualitative service reviews (QSRs). The QSRs follow a protocol based on face-to-face interviews with formal and informal supports involved with a family and interviews with the family members themselves. All of the existing community partnerships have used QSRs to get an accurate and unflinching snapshot of what it is actually like for a family to be at risk in the community and, perhaps, the focus of the child protection system.

By doing qualitative reviews with families receiving services from the partnership's network, including public child welfare or other services, the community gains an accurate picture about two broad domains: the status of the children and family, and the performance of the service system in meeting their needs. The collective results from the QSRs tell the story of how children and families are doing and of how the system is working, or not working, to ensure that children are safe and families are strong. The QSRs are provided initially through a process of technical assistance, until local capacity to use the tool can be developed. Data from the reviews can be used to help set priorities for change and to benchmark progress.

Communities that take the time to carefully assess their strengths and needs are often encouraged at the strengths to be found even in struggling neighborhoods. Understanding **where** to start with community partnerships and **how** it might be accomplished, based on a thorough understanding of the community, can bring together strengths from established agencies, nongovernmental community resources, and the residents of the neighborhoods themselves. Rallying around a shared understanding of their strengths and needs, communities across America are forming partnerships to protect their children and strengthen their families. ●



## Florida's Self-Assessment Survey\*

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- **Would the district be interested in assuming leadership of all aspects of this project, including frontline practice changes, interagency collaboration, and community development?**
- **Within your district, which high-risk zip code or neighborhood area, and the estimated area population, would be appropriate for this program and intervention strategy?**
- **Has a needs assessment, asset mapping, or resource inventory been completed in the last three years in the targeted area?**
- **Are community residents currently involved in any decision making activities related to district/partner agency services being delivered in the zip code or neighborhood area?**
- **Describe the district/partner agency's current relationship with service providers in the following areas: domestic violence, mental health, and substance abuse.**

\*The full survey is available from The Clearinghouse on Community-based Approaches to Child Protection at [clearinghouse@cssp.org](mailto:clearinghouse@cssp.org) or (202) 371-1565.

# Engaging the Community to Support Families and Protect Children

**A** critical aspect of Community Partnerships for Protecting Children is engaging community members and organizations in the work of the partnership. This engagement is what makes community partnerships possible. Without actively seeking out the participation of the community in the business of child protection, a true partnership would not be possible. For any community, but especially for those with a history of poor relationships with the child protection agency, an extra effort must be made to bring neighborhood partners into the fold.

There are a myriad of ways to do this – community celebrations, give-aways, and public events – but at the core of all community engagement efforts, one crucial aspect cannot be overlooked: the power of champions. The best way to engage residents and community leaders in the work of child protection is to talk to them, share your enthusiasm for an approach that you know will help keep children safe, and offer them a meaningful role in the good work that you are doing.

For an inside look at how communities can be engaged in the work of child protection, let us take a look at two new community partnership sites: Tampa, Florida and Atlanta, Georgia. Though the community partnerships in these two cities began in different ways, they would not have been possible were it not for the hard work of local champions who were brought in, one by one.

Harriett Scott had worked for the state of Florida for 25 years on child abuse issues when she was asked to help the local Children’s Board in Tampa develop a neighborhood partnership site with the state. To Harriett, the initiative sounded promising, if a bit daunting: bringing services directly to the community, working with community members and residents to boost strengths and collaboratively handle issues. She worked with local leaders to develop a plan and then traveled to Jacksonville to see the initiative in action. For Harriett, the Jacksonville visit changed the “initiative” into a personal mission. “I saw how it really worked, how families were empowered, how the community actually supported the child protection agency, and how the principles really accomplished what they set out to do. I wanted that in my community, and I wanted to make that happen.” The more Harriett worked with the budding neighborhood partnership the more she became committed to the idea. “I fell in love with the partnership,” she adds, “I petitioned the state to change my job to run the partnership myself.”

Harriett worked with state and local leaders to examine child abuse and neglect incidence rates and to choose a jurisdiction for the partnership in Tampa. “Then I just started driving the zip code,” she says – talking to leaders, neighbors, service providers. Her enthusiasm is evident to anyone who hears her and one by one, she turned others on to the idea, engaging them in the work of the partnership. When community members began to see results, they became champions, too. Harriett boasts that the partnership structure gives all participants a chance to make a positive change in the life of their community. “Once you turn someone on to the idea, you have to give them an opportunity to act; once you do that – they become advocates themselves.” Harriett is most proud of the parents who have had a family team meeting and then asked to volunteer, brought other parents to the partnership, or who have served as champions. “That’s how I know it’s working – families come for the services and then they grow the partnership by bringing others in.”

Harriett’s team provides a wide range of services and activities for, and by, the residents. From toy distributions at holiday time to enlisting landlords to notify the partnership when families are at risk of eviction, the key is talking to residents, leaders, and providers to help them see how **they** fit into the partnership. “To engage residents, you sometimes have to think outside the box,” Harriett adds. “Transportation is a big issue for us, so we worked with the local public transportation hub to set up a family support and education center. We’ve even hired some kids from our caseload to do odd jobs around the office – they’ve had a 180-degree turnaround, and now we have kids asking for jobs.”

In Georgia, Mary Wilson had been a community activist and volunteer coordinator for a community-building initiative called “Hands on Atlanta” for about 10 years. She had an interest in doing organizing work in her own community, and together with other community leaders, formed the East Point Community Action Team (EPCAT) to help kids in the East Washington neighborhood of Atlanta. They knew this community had very high rates of child abuse and neglect and wanted to do something about it. As they were thinking of how to proceed, they started working with the Department of Families and Children in Fulton County. Their priorities: keeping kids safe and neighborhood economic development. Together with the Department of Families and Children, they set out to change the way child protection was done in East Washington and turned to the community to help accomplish their goals.

Mary and key EPCAT leaders began enthusiastically bringing others to the table after receiving a small initial grant from the county and support from private foundations to get started.

## Rolling Out the Partnership: A Vision for Change

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Key leaders went to a site visit in Jacksonville, Florida and saw the approach in action – they were hooked and pledged to make that happen in Atlanta. They realized that if they expected services to be located in the community and to be reachable by community members, they had to have a place to do business. EPCAT worked with the Alpha Kappa Psi fraternity to renovate a school building for housing the partnership and various service providers.

The community organizers served as the intermediaries between the Department of Children and Families and the community – once the various groups were in the same room talking with each other, they realized that they shared similar goals. Since then, the partnership has been a magnet for activity. Mary Wilson and her team have brought major service and corporate partners to the table by engaging them in community activities. By keeping a constant watch on the community, the team can leverage the support of these partners to tailor services to meet needs of families and children.

At the core of any community engagement work is the enthusiastic championing of the community partnership by leaders and the residents themselves. By deliberately reaching out to the community and providing a place for community involvement, people will join with you in this work and will contribute with their energy to making the partnership grow. ●

- A **neighborhood network of formal and informal supports** is readily available to assist families and is tailored to meet the needs of each family. (See *SafeKeeping Spring 2001*)
- A **culture change in child protective services (CPS)** is needed and occurs when the agency adopts new policies, practices, roles, and responsibilities.
- A **local decision making body** is established to govern the work of the partnership and to provide a forum for assessing the effectiveness of the community partnership strategies.

While much has been accomplished through the partnership approach, there is still much to learn. In an effort to offer guidance to other sites and jurisdictions interested in implementing their own community partnership approach, the original sites, along with national leaders, compiled a “lessons learned” document entitled *Creating a Community Partnership: Guidance from the Field*. This rollout guidance document identifies six key ingredients for a successful implementation of the community partnership approach. Each ingredient listed below is more fully discussed in this issue of *SafeKeeping*.

- Commitment of Key Stakeholders (See page 2)
- Assessment of Community Characteristics (See page 3)
- Community Engagement (See page 6)
- Keeping the Community Partnership Approach Intact (See page 8)
- Adequate Staffing and Financing (See page 10)
- Technical Assistance and Support (See page 12)

Those currently working in community partnership sites are wonderful “teachers” of the work. We look forward now to new sites helping all of us understand how to transfer these ingredients for change across jurisdictions, from dense urban neighborhoods to sparsely populated rural areas. Our biggest challenge continues – to create and sustain community partnerships that can respond to the needs of children and families and help keep them safe. ●

# Keeping the Community Partnership Approach Intact

**J**asmine and her three children had just lost their apartment due to increased rental fees in their neighborhood. The shelter that serves homeless families was full. They had nowhere to go, and Jasmine was frightened for herself and for her children. In desperation, she walked to the nearby family support center, which is housed in the local high school. A family support worker listened to her situation and called upon a network of helpers and service providers to arrange for short-term emergency housing through a local church. In talking with Jasmine, it became clear that she and her children needed help beyond the immediate housing emergency. They needed long-term assistance to ensure that Jasmine would be able to provide for herself and her family.

While Jasmine's family was settling into their emergency housing, a planning session, called a family team meeting, was scheduled to brainstorm with Jasmine as to how she might meet her needs and those of her children. Jasmine and the family support worker together identified who would be invited to the meeting. One of the participants was Jasmine's former social worker from the child protective services (CPS) agency.

Though her CPS case had been closed, the worker was able to share helpful information about what had worked for the family in the past and agreed in the meeting to help the oldest child to re-connect with the "big brother" who had mentored him last year. For Jasmine, more permanent housing was her most pressing need. She was not alone – this was the fifth family in a month that required emergency housing assistance. The community's lack of both affordable and emergency housing for families was brought to the attention of the community partnership governing board. The board sprung into action and, within six months, a grant from the city enabled one of the network's service providers to purchase a home in Jasmine's neighborhood. With volunteer efforts, the home is nearly ready to provide emergency housing and services to families who are homeless in the area served by the community partnership. The governing board also learned of and began supporting a local community organizer who was working with the low-income tenants of a building that had recently been put up for sale due to the owner's failure to pay taxes. These residents are in the final stages of purchasing their building thereby preserving affordable and livable housing in the neighborhood.

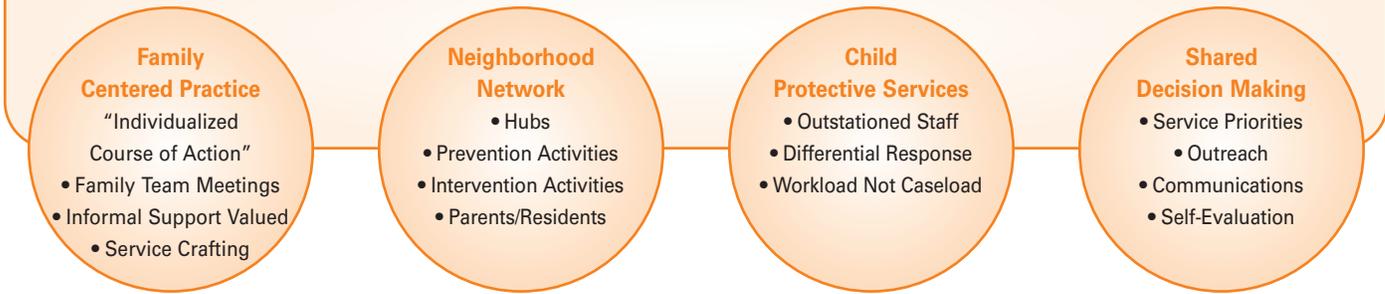


**Jasmine's story illustrates how the four strategies of Community Partnerships for Protecting Children reinforce one another.**

**These four strategies are:**

- **Individualized courses of action (ICAs) for vulnerable families and children.** This strategy aims to bring together the parents, informal supports (like church members and the parents' friends and relatives), and formal service providers. As a result of this planning process, which takes place during one or several family team meetings, a family-tailored plan is crafted that addresses the needs of the parents and children. In Jasmine's situation, the first family team meeting addressed emergency housing needs. Other meetings followed that helped to establish employment for Jasmine, get her 4-year-old enrolled in child care, and secure a "big brother" for her ten-year-old son.
- **A neighborhood network of services and supports that is accessible and offers a wide range of help to families.** For Jasmine, this "web" of support included the family support center, the church that provided emergency housing, the CPS worker who reconnected the son with his "big brother," the local child care center, the elementary school's guidance counselor, the staff from a job training and placement program, and the city's housing department. The network also began to include more informal supports when Jasmine's sister, who previously had been uninvolved, was invited and came to a subsequent family team meeting. The sister agreed to have the family over for dinner every other week. A local church agreed to provide food from their food bank to support this renewed relationship.

# The Community Partnership Approach



■ **Changes to the CPS agency’s culture and practice.**

In the community partnership approach, the CPS agency is crucial to helping families and communities prevent and address child abuse and neglect. This requires the CPS agency to work with families differently. CPS workers, for example, will attend a family team meeting and provide assistance, even when their case is closed. In a community partnership, CPS is committed to having its staff “know” the community they serve, looking for ways to engage all helpers, formal and informal, to improve safety for children.

■ **Shared decision making.** In a community partnership, it takes a variety of people to ensure that needed services and supports are available. Decisions about keeping children safe are made by a mix of residents and service providers. Together, they identify service

gaps and work to fill those gaps. Jasmine was one of several families who were “falling through the cracks” into homelessness. Once this problem was identified, the governing board exerted its influence to help resolve the problem.

As the first four community partnership sites initiated the rollout of this approach, there was a temptation to focus on only one or two of the strategies. Vern Armstrong, chief of the Bureau of Protective Services with the Department of Human Services in Iowa, said: “At first we thought we would concentrate on getting the ICA practice solidly in place...but, the more we worked with that strategy, the more it made sense to incorporate all of the strategies. You can’t really implement an individualized course of action unless you have a wide, supportive network for families and unless CPS workers, and other agencies change how they serve and support families.” ●

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**from the Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare and the Center for the Study of Social Policy**

**“Creating a Community Partnership: Guidance from the Field”**

**“Bringing Families to the Table: A Comparative Guide to Family Meetings in Child Welfare”**

**“Collaboration Demands Respect: Making Decisions in Common”** by Andrew White

Contact The Clearinghouse on Community-Based Approaches to Child Protection to obtain these new items: [clearinghouse@cssp.org](mailto:clearinghouse@cssp.org) or (202) 371-1565.

# Affording A Strong Community Partnership: Be Creative!

## **Staff. Space and equipment. Flexible funds. Food.**

These are the implementation pillars of Community Partnerships for Protecting Children. Although the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation provided funding for the four original partnership sites, it was never intended to be the sole source of support and subsequent sites receive little, if any, of the Clark funds. All existing partnerships have relied on their creativity and influence to find additional resources to support and fund needed staff, space, and programs. In search of support, the partnerships have developed relationships with a variety of people, families, community organizations, public agencies, local initiatives, community leaders and residents, faith-based institutions. In return, these stakeholders have demonstrated their commitment to the partnerships in various ways by supplying space for family and community meetings and staff offices, by changing staff roles, and by including partnership practices as part of their own “culture.”

The partnerships have also tapped into various funding streams such as the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) federal block grant, state child abuse prevention funds, and federal funds through the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act. Numerous challenges exist, however, in creating flexible financial support for community partnership activities, as the strategies cannot be easily linked to traditional funding sources and agency regulations often hinder flexibility. The figure on the next page summarizes resource needs and sources of support.

## **STAFF**

Having adequate staff for community partnerships is important for developing working relationships with families, community residents, private organizations, and state and local agencies. Although a certain level of staffing has proven essential for launching a community partnership, there is no staffing “blueprint” or formula. Each existing partnership has a staffing complement that makes sense for its respective circumstances. While not identical, there are similarities. All sites have program staff, but not all have direct service staff who are employees of the partnership. All have a project director who acts as the local “glue” and contact point. All partnerships also recognize a need for personnel specifically devoted to community outreach and engagement. (See *SafeKeeping* Fall 2002 for more on community network development.) All have at least one staff member assigned to oversee and coordinate the implementation of family team meetings. Some have office support staff and various combinations of service

specialists such as family support workers, domestic violence specialists, substance abuse case managers or specialists, and child witness to violence specialists.

In the original partnerships, funds from the Clark Foundation have been the primary source of support for core program staff. Florida rollout sites have been initially funded through the state’s allocation of federal funds from the “Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act.” Expanding beyond the core program and office staff, partnerships have used grant funds to partner with private agencies to provide direct service staff to the community.

The St. Louis Neighborhood Network used a combination of foundation dollars and private agency funds to pay for two community family support workers. Other direct service staff operating within the targeted neighborhoods often redeployed existing staff from partner agencies. In other words, these are social workers or program specialists who have had their responsibilities changed to focus on the goals of the partnership. The St. Louis CPS agency has redeployed two workers into the community partnership to act as community development specialists. In Kentucky, public agency staff have been redeployed to the Louisville partnership, freeing up foundation funds to contract for specialist staff. The CPS agency serving Cedar Rapids has changed the assignments of two social workers, removing them from caseload responsibilities so that they can be family team meeting coordinators and facilitators. The Jacksonville partnership has recently linked forces with the federal AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps volunteers, recruited from neighborhoods served by the partnership, perform a variety of important tasks.

### ***AmeriCorps Volunteers in Jacksonville:***

- ***inform families about the goals and mission of the community partnership,***
- ***visit families and complete a partnership assessment,***
- ***identify families that might benefit from the ICA process,***
- ***participate in family team meetings, with the permission of families, as informal supports, and***
- ***recruit residents to participate in activities.***

A key partner in every community partnership is the CPS agency. As such, a stable workforce at the CPS agency serves the whole partnership well. There is some anecdotal evidence that working in a partnership increases CPS worker morale and reduces turnover, but it is also very hard to engage CPS workers in this work when their daily experience is one of crisis and budget cuts. Other partners should join with the CPS agency to advocate for adequate CPS staffing.

## SPACE AND EQUIPMENT

Space and office equipment are necessary for the partnership staff to function effectively. Designated space is also needed for outstationed agency staff, training, family team conferences, governance meetings, community and family activities, and neighborhood celebrations. This space can be just about anywhere – in a school, a health clinic, a church basement, or a family support center. Computers have become a useful tool for partnership business, though no partnership has a shared database among its members yet. For the most part, partner agencies and organizations have “stepped-up to the plate” and donated space. Ribault Full Service School in Jacksonville, Sigel Community Education Center in St. Louis, Jane Boyd Family Resource Center in Cedar Rapids, and Neighborhood Place Ujima in Louisville are all natural focal points in their communities and are intended to be places where services are located and families are served. They were established long before the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children initiative began, and they were natural places to locate offices and organize activities. All have their own funding sources – school boards, private funders, and public agency consortiums.

## FLEXIBLE FUNDS

Flexible funds are also vital to implementing a community partnership. They better enable partnerships to:

- **individualize support and services for families,**
- **respond to family emergency needs,**
- **train and support practice champions,**
- **provide opportunities for frontline staff and residents to attend trainings and conferences for skill-building,**
- **issue mini-grants for community efforts to address child abuse,**
- **fund neighborhood celebrations,**
- **supply materials for child abuse prevention campaigns,**
- **publicize the work of the partnership, and**
- **offer stipends to neighborhood volunteers.**

Flexible funds allow a partnership to perform miscellaneous duties that relate to its mission. The St. Louis Neighborhood Network has used flexible funds to provide housing security deposits when all other known resources have not been available. The Louisville partnership used flexible funds to send a community partner to a grant-writing course. She was then able to seek and secure local foundation support for a neighborhood youth program. In addition to private foundations, local organizations such as businesses and business groups, fraternities, and sororities are possible sources for funding. Other than foundation grants, there are few sources of truly flexible dollars. However, some partnerships have been able to tap into Medicaid funding to support a range of “wraparound” services for families and children. The state of Kentucky is using grant dollars to match federal Title IV-E funds to support training of CPS agency staff. And, in Cedar Rapids, the local college has created public relations films to enhance community engagement.

## FOOD

A final, but equally important aspect of the community partnership approach is hospitality. Food represents hospitality – welcoming everyone to the partnership. At family team meetings food can be used as an icebreaker – the focal point for initial engagement among participants. And, sometimes, it is a convenience for the family who can only meet together at the dinner hour. If reimbursed, neighborhood volunteers can more easily share their cultures and customs by offering to cook the meal for a family team meeting. Food is also an important “draw” for community activities, meetings, and celebrations. Money for food can come from foundation grants, local organizations and initiatives, private funds, or in-kind food services and donations from faith communities, other groups, and volunteers.

There are no one-stop sources or simple answers in the quest for resources to launch and sustain a Community Partnership for Protecting Children. Partners must think broadly and strategically about what exists and what can be drawn into the partnership, what can be redirected from existing staff and resources, and what can be newly developed through the collaboration of public and private entities. They must also find their advocacy voice with elected officials to encourage more flexible funds and fewer restrictions on providing adequate support for service systems in their communities. ●

# Technical Assistance and Support:

## Making TA Work for You

**T**echnical assistance comes in a variety of shapes and sizes and can be delivered in a number of ways. Determining what technical assistance (TA) is needed for site development and how to best maximize this resource can be a challenge for any jurisdiction wishing to create or enhance a Community Partnership for Protecting Children. Sites that get the most out of TA take the lead in defining and monitoring how TA helps accomplish partnership goals. Their relationships with TA providers are collaborative ones, where each participant is responsible for working hard to ensure success.

While TA can assist in a variety of areas (improving frontline practice, enhancing communication strategies, developing community resources, and improving information systems) TA is best used as an integrated component of the partnership's strategic plan. The sites that have been most successful in using TA have first asked themselves, "What do we want to accomplish?" and "How do we get there?" The TA then grows out of these priorities and builds capacity to support the priorities over time.

When a site genuinely owns its change process, TA is not an isolated event but rather a tool that builds on past learning experiences. This means there are often local "champions" who embrace the TA experience and continue to promote the learning after the initial TA encounter. The Louisville partnership used TA to strengthen its governing board and help craft strategic plans that would help keep children safe. This included the development of a consensus-building process and a protocol for voting on action items during governing board meetings. Because this work was embraced by a partnership champion who stayed in contact with the TA provider for support, the site was able to maintain these strategies over time. A newly created countywide board that governs the eight community partnership sites in Louisville, including the original site and seven rollout sites, continues to benefit from this early TA as original board members contribute their expertise. The new board is using components of this TA, which promoted shared decision making strategies, and it now has a much larger capacity for governance than originally envisioned.

Technical assistance can also come from peers in the field who are doing similar work. Colleagues working in different states and communities share experiences, knowledge, skills, and materials to jointly develop solutions that help them improve results for children and families. In many cases, new partnerships have developed or practice approaches have been refined after a peer TA experience. The initial partnership

sites have a tremendous amount of know-how to share and rollout efforts are building on those "lessons learned." When participating in peer TA, a few principles apply: strategically plan for the TA experience, know what you need before you go, and negotiate around expectations.

Less successful technical assistance has often resulted from a site's desire for quick changes with the expectation that *all* the "work" come from an outside source. This TA is usually poorly attended or does not provide an avenue for maintaining the learning. Thoughtful planning for TA and determining how it fits into the big picture is necessary for ensuring success. Planning activities should begin with the governing board's development of strategic plans and includes quarterly meetings of key stakeholders to make adjustments to the TA plan as necessary. Other activities include preparing the partnership for upcoming TA experiences and post-TA debriefing to determine effectiveness.

This process is greatly enhanced when both the governing board representatives and CPS administrators are invested in planning and observing the TA, as well as supporting the changes anticipated when TA is delivered. When these leaders are aware of what is being presented, attend the TA to show staff that it is truly valued, and want a debriefing after each TA experience, there are multiple benefits. First, workers are more likely to understand the importance of the "new way of doing business" because they can see the level of commitment from leadership. Second, a more thorough assessment can be done of the TA resources throughout the system to determine if there are gaps or unexplored





***“The TA provider was great. He helped my unit better understand the importance of engaging families and then showed us how to do it. Some of the workers were skeptical at first, but as they started seeing how the families responded, especially in the family team meeting, their practice really shifted. Now they are encouraging workers in other units to develop and use these skills, too.”***

***Linda McMillan, Supervisor,  
Community Partnerships for Protecting Children,  
Jacksonville, Florida***

opportunities. And finally, the desired outcomes of TA are clearer to decision makers who may need to make mid-course corrections. The figure below outlines how a site might approach the planning process for technical assistance.

Building a relationship between the TA provider and the site is also an important consideration. Solid TA relationships usually start out with the site and the TA provider collaborating on the nature of the interactions. This includes identifying options and developing work plans for how TA will be used to achieve objectives. Sites that take an active role in defining what is needed, how the “work” will be divided between partnership staff and the TA provider, and what the outcome will look like are usually rewarded with successful TA experiences. In these cases, there is more balance in the TA relationship and TA providers are more likely to roll up their own sleeves to support the change process. Creating a shared responsibility for change is key in the TA relationship. ●

## **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN**

***Are your reform efforts working?  
They are if:***

- Families routinely participate in the case planning through the use of family team meetings;
- Meetings are held “as needed” and not on a pre-established time frame;
- The plans crafted look different for each family (if everyone is being referred to parenting classes, anger management classes, psychological evaluations, and drug testing, the plans are NOT being individualized);
- The network your workers and families depend upon includes services that will make a difference for families over the long term – housing, employment and training opportunities, and transportation;
- There are effective ways to assess for and address other problem areas such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues;
- Your governing board identifies gaps in services and approaches funders to bridge those gaps;
- Your network manages to help families find “substitutes” for the ideal service when the ideal is not available;
- Families in your community know who they can go to when they have problems – before CPS gets involved;
- There is a defined outreach activity for those your governing board has identified as most “at risk” – i.e., teen moms, families with live-in boyfriends, etc.;
- You can say, with confidence, that families are served differently and better now than they were before;
- Finally, if YOU or your loved ones were in trouble, you would refer them to any part of your community partnership with confidence that they would be well served.

***Mamo Batterson,  
Community Partnerships for Protecting Children  
Rollout Conference, February 2002, Orlando, Florida***

# Community Partnerships for Protecting Children in Georgia



In 1999, several highly publicized child deaths in Georgia triggered the creation of a task force to make recommendations related to child welfare reform. One of those recommendations was that the state move toward a community partnership model of child protection. The newly appointed director of the Division of Family and Children-Services (DFCS), Juanita Blount-Clark, followed up on that recommendation by including Community Partnerships for Protecting Children as one of the initiatives in her blueprint for reform.

A little more than two years later, the rollout of the partnership in Georgia is underway. Subsequent to the leadership's commitment to the effort, several events helped to "seed" enthusiasm in communities. The first was a presentation by the Jacksonville Partnership at a DFCS managers' meeting. That was followed by a site visit to Jacksonville by Georgia's child welfare leadership, local child welfare directors, and staff and community partners from several urban counties. Enormous enthusiasm was generated by the site visit, and some counties began work immediately.

Several factors paved the way for work in Georgia. One was that Georgia already had a network of Family Connection collaboratives, active in almost all 159 counties. These collaboratives were already committed to neighborhood-based, family-centered service delivery. The county DFCS agencies were, in almost all cases, already a partner in these efforts. It was agreed that the collaboratives could serve as a platform for the implementation of the partnership approach. The initiative evolved into a partnership between DFCS and Family Connection.

Nine counties were selected for participation. Five were urban counties that had self-selected early in the process. Four were rural counties were invited to participate based on several

factors: higher than average rates of child abuse and neglect, a strong local Family Connection and DFCS partnership, and a goal of reducing child abuse and neglect.

Despite significant budget reductions, each county received seed money at the beginning of the year and was assured one dedicated DFCS position. Additional resources, in the form of technical assistance, training, the coordination of peer-to-peer learning, and site visits will be supported jointly by DFCS, the Family Connection, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. A state/local design and implementation team has been convened and is currently finalizing implementation strategies.

Meanwhile, at the local level, work is progressing in some sites and beginning in others. The site that began the earliest is in Fulton County, the largest county in Georgia, with the highest rates of child abuse and neglect. The Fulton County partnership is in a neighborhood called East Washington, in the city of East Point, which is adjacent to Atlanta. Fulton County DFCS partnered with a small group of dedicated community organizers, the East Point Community Action Team, and the partnership adopted child safety as their unifying theme. The partnership moved into what was an almost abandoned local school owned by the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity—the Alpha Center. The Alpha Center is now home to outstationed DFCS workers, an alternative school suspension program, a prevention resource library, GED classes, a computer lab, an after-school sports program, and the Boy Scouts. DFCS staff and several community partners recently received training in family team meetings, and the partnership is creating a First Response Team to meet the needs of families *before* CPS referrals are made.

In a time of dwindling revenues, it has not been easy to find the resources to support this initiative. However, strong state support and frontline commitment has combined with considerable local enthusiasm to infuse the effort with a sense of great hopefulness. • — Becky Butler

## Want to know more...?

For more information on the community partnerships in Georgia, contact:

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# Rolling Out The Partnership: Florida, Kentucky, Iowa, and Missouri

## FLORIDA

The Neighborhood Partnerships Project of the Florida Department of Children & Families has replicated the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children approach in 11 new project sites. These sites are in different phases of the work with some sites making significant progress in addressing the needs of children and families in their communities, some identifying a hub in the community that is easily accessible to residents, and some still in the start-up phase.

Englewood Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Hastings Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Jackson Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Paxon Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Pensacola Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Beaches Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Tampa Neighborhood Partnership Project/a.k.a. Positive Spin  
Ft. Lauderdale Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Miami Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Daytona Beach Neighborhood Partnership Project  
Lakeland Neighborhood Partnership Project

## IOWA

Iowa is expanding the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children approach to five additional Iowa areas, with the support of partners such as the local Decategorization and Empowerment boards and Department of Human Services area administrators. These sites are building upon the successes of the original site, the Cedar Rapids Community Partnership. The rollout process began in August 2001, and Sandy Lint, community partnership liaison with the Iowa Department of Human Services, is the lead coordinator.

Spencer Community Partnership  
Story Community Partnership  
Black Hawk Community Partnership  
Charles City Community Partnership  
Mahaska/Wapello Community Partnership

## KENTUCKY

The rollout in Kentucky involves five regional sites, each with distinct identities based on regional geographic boundaries and the communities and families involved. In addition to their respective local partner networks, which include the Cabinet for Families and Children's Department for Community-based Services and Child Protective Services, these service regions work with child advocacy and other groups such as Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky, Children's Alliance, and Seven Counties Services to increase awareness of community child protection efforts in the sites.

Kentucky River, 8 counties  
Big Sandy, 5 counties  
Gateway/Buffalo Trace, 10 counties  
Barren River, 10 counties

### Jefferson County

*Neighborhood Place Ujima (original site)*  
*Bridges of Hope Neighborhood Place*  
*First Neighborhood Place*  
*South Jefferson Neighborhood Place*  
*South Central Neighborhood Place*  
*810 Barret Neighborhood Place*  
*North West Neighborhood Place*  
*Cane Run Neighborhood Place*

## MISSOURI

Missouri will roll out the community partnership approach in eight local sites. Partner agencies in this effort include Missouri's Division of Family Services' Children Services and Income Maintenance, along with the Family and Community Trust. Sara Barwinski is the lead coordinator for the rollout efforts.

St. Louis County  
Marion County  
St. Louis City  
Randolph County  
Phelps County  
Barton, Cedar, and Dade Counties (BARCEDA)  
Washington County

# Outlook

This is the first issue of *SafeKeeping* to be published under the auspices of the newly created Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare. Launched in January 2002, with a grant of approximately \$11 million from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Center represents a new phase in the extensive collaboration between the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). For the past 20 years, the Clark Foundation's Children's Program and CSSP have closely worked together to promote progressive child welfare practice. During Clark's phase of developing and promoting family preservation, CSSP acted as a valued co-strategist and a coordinator of technical assistance. When the Children's Program began its Community Partnerships initiative six years ago, it once again turned to CSSP to help build the conceptual framework and implement it in the field. More recently, as the Clark Foundation shifted its focus in a new grantmaking direction called Institution and Field Building, we took the opportunity to unify our longstanding collaboration "under one roof:" a Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare as part of the Center for the Study of Social Policy to expand and further refine the efforts of the initial partnering approach. The creation of this new Center reflects our conviction that the work of community partnerships in this crucial area of social welfare is only just beginning.

We view the new Center as a funding and technical assistance intermediary dedicated to helping the child welfare field enter into effective partnership with other public and private providers, civic associations, faith-based groups, local businesses, and residents in pursuit of a common goal - keeping children safe and strengthening families within revitalized neighborhoods.

## Our specific agenda includes:

- Continuing to implement community partnership efforts in the four original sites and their home states: Jacksonville, Florida; St Louis, Missouri; Louisville, Kentucky; and Cedar Rapids, Iowa.
- Coordinating analysis of the impact of this work to date through the evaluation being conducted by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

- Serving as an active resource for policymakers, administrators, practitioners, and community leaders around the country who seek guidance in moving their child welfare systems toward a community partnership approach.
- Broadening the application of the community partnership concept to other areas of the child welfare continuum, including adoption and transition services for older foster youth.

What will distinguish this Center and its scope of work will also involve an ongoing challenge: to maintain a due regard for and commitment to what we have learned, while remaining humble and open-minded about the knowledge we still need to gain. A great deal of interest and hope rides on the community partnership idea – not just among those who have shaped its principles and methods or dedicated themselves to its implementation, but among all who work in the child welfare system and all whose lives are affected by its functioning and outcomes. In other words, community partnership is an idea that responds to a shared frustration with the limitations of the current system and a shared recognition that government alone can never successfully fulfill our societal obligation to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. The appeal of this idea – as a matter of common sense, careful theorizing, innovative practice, and a philosophical commitment to working closely with families – has jurisdictions across the country keen on learning about how they, too, can embark on implementing the community partnership approach. Part of our mission will be to disseminate throughout the field lessons that we have learned, with carefulness and candor. This work is challenging, and we are still in a relatively early stage of formation and exploration. But together with the states, cities, towns, and neighborhoods that are already on board, and with new networks of partners in the future, we hope to learn how to improve our country's response to its most vulnerable children and families – how to make the world in which they live a safer place for all. ●

**Susan Notkin**  
*Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare*

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