

Significant Issues Report — January/February 2005

SPECIAL EDITION: 2004 Outcomes

We believe the best way to begin this new year is to look back over last year and report on some of the concrete outcomes of our efforts. The information presented in this special edition report provides a comprehensive overview of those programs which have had the most significant impact on individuals, children, and families in our community.

Children's Network

Created at the request of the Solano County Board of Supervisors over twenty years ago, the Children's Network continues to provide a united voice for the children of Solano County. The Children's Network endeavors to provide the Board with an independent perspective on the needs of children in our community, and partners with the County and others to promote programs that support families, secure funding for children's services and programs, influence policy at the local and state level, help families access services, and collect and publish data on the health, safety and well-being of Solano County children. Additionally, the Network has provided leadership and coordination to the following countywide collaborative efforts:

The Integrated Family Support Initiative (IFSI)

IFSI, now in its 4th year, is a comprehensive program offering center-based and in-home family support services to isolated families, throughout Solano County, with children 0 – 5 who are at risk of abuse and neglect. The Children's Network and Child Haven are the lead agencies for the ISFI project. Thirty-four other collaborative partners participate in the project. IFSI is coordinated by The Children's Network.

From July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004, IFSI project efforts resulted in the following outcomes:

- A total of 14,974 units of service were provided to families with children 0-5.
- 435 unduplicated families received in-home services from FRC staff.
- 1,902 unduplicated families with 2,067 children 0—5 received center-based services from FRC staff, including: 4,203 encounters for case management services, 4,194 referrals for working through family relationships, 2,180 instances of assistance with basic needs, 581 referrals for assistance with health status issues, and 515 referrals to parenting resources and classes.

IFSI assesses families utilizing a validated instrument, the Family Development Matrix, developed by the Institute for Collaborative Community Studies California State University Monterey Bay, and adapted by Children's Network staff for Solano's FRC Network and the IFSI Project. Families are assessed in 13 categories, in three domains — "Family Relations," "Food and Clothing," and "Community Engagement":

Family Relations

Average scores for all families studied improved from "At Risk" to "Stable" in all areas of "Family Relations" including: "Conflict Skills," "Family Rules," "Family Communication," and "Family Support." Of the families that entered the program in crisis in these areas:

- 60% reported receiving increased support from their extended families by their third assessment.
- 50% reported increased conflict resolution skills by their third assessment.

Food and Clothing

Average scores for food and clothing remained stable for participating families.

IFSI is partially funded by First 5 Solano. First 5 funds have been utilized to leverage more than \$52,000 in Targeted Case Management (TCM) reimbursements for case management services provided by the Fairfield and Vacaville FRCs to their Medi-Cal eligible clients.

Solano Parenting Partnership

Envisioned in an Asset Mapping Conference in October 2002, the Solano Parenting Partnership was an outgrowth of two efforts: Fighting Back Partnership/Office of Family Violence Prevention's Strengthening Families Collaborative, and collaboration among parenting education providers in Fairfield. Today, the Parenting Partnership, under the coordination of The Children's Network, is a collaborative of more than 30 organizations and agencies county-wide. Since October 2002, the Parenting Partnership, coordinated and staffed by The Children's Network, has:

- institutionalized the Nurturing Parenting Program in Solano County (A research-based parenting program, recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a model program.)
- trained and supports 29 local providers to facilitate the program (with co-sponsorship from Vacaville Police Department Family Resource Center).
- coordinated a Nurturing Program "Training of Trainers" (with co-sponsorship from Fighting Back Partnership Family Resource Center).
- assisted two local providers to become Nationally Recognized Trainer/ Consultants for the Nurturing Program (Deborah Welinske and Sue Galvez of Youth and Family Services). In a reciprocal agreement, Galvez and Welinske will offer up to two facilitator trainings to our community per year.
- developed and maintains the first parenting web site exclusively for Solano County families (www.childnet.org/parenting) featuring an up-to-date, searchable database of parenting classes and support groups in Solano County. In the last 6 months of 2004 alone, there were more than 49,000 hits to the parenting web site; more than 2,300 of these were unique visitors to the site. The site also allows us to track parenting gaps and needs in Solano County.
- implemented a comprehensive assessment and referral system linking Solano County families to parenting programs appropriate to their needs. Information and Referral (I&R) Specialists located at Family Resource Centers in each city in Solano County provide assessment and referral services for families seeking parenting support. Solano County courts, Child Welfare Services, Probation, families, and child care providers use the Parenting Partnership system to link families to parenting resources.
- nurtured collaboration and networking among parenting education providers. General meetings of parenting education providers promote smooth referrals and sharing of best practices.
- coordinated the Week Honoring People Raising Children which reached more than 1500 families in 2004 through the week's events, raised public awareness of parenting resources, and recognized parents for their role in creating a stronger, healthier community for all citizens.

The Solano Parenting Partnership is made possible by a grant from First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission.

The Children's Network also provides integral support for parents, child care providers, and children's service providers. The following items reflect the effectiveness of Children's Network's involvement with the FRCs, as well as additional outcomes for 2004:

- FRC staff evaluation of Children's Network coordination results:
 - ◊ 86% said the FRC Network helped them collaborate with others
 - ◊ 79% said it was an effective vehicle to advocate for children/families
 - ◊ 73% said it increased their ability to assess and refer families appropriately
 - ◊ 73% said it increased program sustainability

- Developed ChildNet Results Manager outcomes data system, presented at a national Family Support Conference in May 2004, and being utilized by Solano County FRCs and two agencies outside of Solano County.
- Maintained two free web-based resources: a Community Directory of over 900 local resources and a Parenting Education Directory listing the most current classes/support groups in Solano County.
- Received the Constructing Connections grant award to create a streamlined process for child care facilities financing and development that increases children and families' access to quality child care and development services. The program will help to ensure a strong local economy in the future, reduce future government spending, and produce an overall higher quality of life for members of the community. The Network was the only northern California agency, and one of only two non profits statewide, to successfully compete for this grant.

AmeriCorps Child Abuse Prevention Initiative

As a result of the work of this council, the entire county has secured long term support from this statewide venture. The Children's Network coordinates the FRC Network/ AmeriCorps members, and works to strengthen countywide efforts to reduce child abuse and neglect and provide quality family support programs. Over the last four years, AmeriCorps members have come to play an important role in our prevention infrastructure, through the FRCs. Our 38 AmeriCorps members have:

- increased the number of prevention services to families, providing approximately 20,538 referrals and linkages to families, and approximately 5,974 intensive services to families (in FRCs and in homes) – over the 2001-2004 period;
- provided support for 102 workshops held at the FRCs – over the 2001-2004 period;
- assisted FRC staff with home visits, targeting families with children ages 0-5;
- increased FRC's capacity to provide services in Spanish language;
- organized and supported the First, Second and Third Annual Blue Ribbon Campaign, in coordination with the Solano County Child Abuse Prevention Council, reaching approximately 1,500 individuals annually. This countywide community event has raised public awareness about what can be done to prevent child abuse and neglect;
- recruited approximately 50 parents and community members to get involved in their local FRC as volunteers and as advocates;
- organized or supported local community events for national service days, including Dixon's Second Annual Cesar Chavez Day which approximately 800 people attended, Solano County's Annual Academic Decathlon, and Vallejo's Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day; and
- provided support for the 2005 EITC Campaign *Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Solano*, a partnership of public, private and nonprofit agencies dedicated to increasing income and building assets of low-income individuals and families who seek free tax preparation services at one of the coalition's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites throughout Solano County.

The AmeriCorps project demonstrates significant impacts on those served, and those serving. On average, 71% of members have successfully completed their term of service (12% did not complete their term due to extenuating circumstances, i.e. illness, family crisis and 14% found permanent employment during term). Upon completion of their term(s):

- 47% became permanent employees at their host site.
- 54% have achieved higher education by the use of the educational award.
- 30% have obtained their Master in Social Work degree.
- 10% have obtained their Bachelor in Social Work degree

AmeriCorps can also be considered a job development/skill-building program. The Children's

Network coordinates annual trainings for AmeriCorps members which this year included Family Violence, Mandated Child Abuse Reporting, Confidentiality, Conflict Awareness/Resolution, Cultural Competence/Awareness, and Community Emergency Response Training (CERT)/CPR and First Aid.

Family Resource Centers

The Family Resource Center Network is a partnership of eight Solano Family Resource Centers located in each city in the county, supported by the Children's Network. The Family Resource Center Network was created in 1995 through public funds planned for by the Solano Children's Alliance. Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are neighborhood-based agencies that provide services to support families and strengthen communities. FRCs view families as important advocates for children and local communities and work with families in a spirit of mutual respect, modeled upon the Principles of Family Support Practice.

- Solano's FRCs served 5,755 families in 2003-2004.
- The majority of parents/caregivers served were Hispanic (43%), followed by Caucasian (29%), and African-American (18%).
- 71% of families served were low-income.
- 48% of families served had parents who were married; 36% were single parents.

Parent Survey Results

Of 806 parents who completed pre-service surveys:

- 60% self-rated their knowledge of resources as poor or fair.
- 51% did not know of other resources prior to coming to the FRC.

Of 431 parents who completed satisfaction surveys:

- 85% rated resources provided as very appropriate.
- 78% rated the outcome of services as very good or excellent.

The FRCs utilize a validated tool, the ***Family Development Matrix***, developed by the Institute for Community Collaborative Studies at California State University Monterey Bay, and adapted for Solano County. Families can be assessed in 13 categories. The majority of families served by FRCs are struggling to maintain a level of resources/skills to meet their needs. FRC services prevent these families from falling into crisis, therefore maintaining stability is a success. Families in crisis are showing steady improvement and moving out of crisis.

Research shows that isolation and poverty are strong predictors of the likelihood of child abuse. On the Matrix measure indicating reduced isolation (Community Engagement) the following outcomes have been achieved as a result of FRC services, over three assessments:

- Families needing help to stay at their current level and avoid crisis, remained stable or improved 89% of the time in their knowledge of and access to resources, and 90% of the time in their level of active community engagement.
- Families in crisis improved 80% in their knowledge of and access to resources, and 50% in their level of active community engagement.

Solano CARES (Compensation and Retention Encourage Stability)

Solano CARES is a public-private partnership coordinated and staffed by The Children's Network. Public funds from First 5 Solano, First 5 California and the California Department of Education are used for implementation of this project of the Child Care Planning Council, whose members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and the County Superintendent of Schools. Solano CARES works toward improving the quality of child care and development services by increasing providers' educational levels and reducing provider turnover rates.

CARES Stipend Recipients

- 1,013 stipends and incentives, totaling over \$1,350,000, have been issued to 566 providers, or over 20% of the licensed workforce to date. 20%, or 113 of these providers, work in licensed family child care homes. 80%, or 453 providers, work in licensed centers.
- Year 3 stipend recipients serve approx. 10,000 children birth to five in Solano County.
- Year 3 stipend recipients represent the diversity of the community (23% African American/Black; 11% Asian; 49% Caucasian/White; 22% Latino; 12% Other)
- Nearly a third of Year 3 stipend recipients speak more than one language.
- All stipend recipients also receive membership in the Association for the Education of Young Children, a professional organization for early childhood educators with local, state and national affiliations.

Reducing Turnover Rates

- The turnover rates of providers participating in CARES is 4% as compared to the 2001 (pre-CARES) total workforce turnover rates of family child care providers at 27 percent and teachers working in centers at 25 percent.
- The turnover rates of teachers, teacher/directors, and directors have declined over the past few years, from 25 percent to 24 percent, 3 percent to no turnover, and 10 percent to 4 percent, respectively. The turnover rates of teacher assistants and family child care providers remain constant.

Increasing Educational Levels

- 62%, or 351, CARES participants have received a stipend in at least two program years. These providers have completed a minimum of 3 additional Early Childhood Education units or 21 hours of professional growth and have attended at least 1 CARES Forum. (CARES Forums are half-day conferences offered free of charge to Solano County child care providers. The events feature topics and expert speakers relative to the needs and concerns of child care providers, and are an effective source of professional growth training, networking, and resource information.)
- Many providers have increased their educational levels beyond the minimum requirements and have successfully applied for and received their Child Development Permit.

ECE and Human Development (Hu Dv) at Solano Community College

Since CARES began in 2001:

- The number of ECE and Hu Dv classes and sections available has increased by 8%.
- The number of ECE majors enrolled for credit has increased by 43%.
- The number of new students in ECE and Hu Dv has increased by 41%.
- The number of students' successfully completing coursework in ECE and Hu Dv has increased by 14%.

Forum Attendance — Additional Training Opportunities

- The attendance at CARES Forums has increased by 27% since the first program year.
- 618 providers have participated in CARES Forums over the past 3 years. Of these, 71% worked in licensed child care centers, 25% worked in licensed family child care homes, and 4% worked in license-exempt programs.