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Community Partnerships for Protecting Children
*an Initiative of the Edna McConnell Foundation's
Program for Children*

[Not sure these scenarios work. Let me know what you think. Maybe as boxes, on inside front cover and first page of brochure?]

Scenario One: A mother with two children, a newborn and a two-year-old toddler, is brought to the attention of the local child protective services (CPS) agency. A CPS worker visits her home to find out about the specific allegation—a bruise on the two-year-old. Although the family appears troubled, the worker is unable to connect the bruise to abuse.

At this point, the worker could leave and hope that the family will not reappear in the CPS system on more serious charges of abuse. Instead, the worker conducts a thorough assessment of the family. The assessment reveals a young single parent who is unsure of how to care for her children and is drinking too much alcohol. She is isolated from her neighbors, friends, and family and has no contact with the father of the children.

After the assessment, the worker develops an individualized “action plan” with the mother, targeted equally to address the family’s strengths and problems. The safety plan requires the mother to join a program for young parents and to attend AA meetings; the worker goes to the first AA meeting with her. A neighbor agrees to visit every few days and help out with occasional meals and errands. The toddler is enrolled in day care. A family support worker will help the mother tackle long-term challenges such as finding ongoing medical care for her family and getting into a job training program.

Scenario Two: A child protection worker leaves for work one morning. Instead of reporting to the public agency’s downtown office, she goes to work in an office located at a community center or school. There, she works with staff from public assistance agencies, healthcare organizations, and housing services. She confers regularly with her new colleagues about specific families in the surrounding area to determine if the families are doing okay—or if the families could use services like parenting skills development, check-ups from a pediatrician, and assistance with housing and public assistance problems.

**DO NOT CIRCULATE
OR REFERENCE**

Scenario Three: A group of neighbors—parents from the local PTA, ministers from nearby churches, and neighborhood association members—convenes one morning around coffee and doughnuts. Then the group disperses and begins knocking on people's doors in the neighborhood, in groups of two or three. They meet local families and introduce themselves as members of a community-based initiative interested in strengthening families and protecting children from abuse. They encourage families to participate in recreational and educational activities at a nearby school. The canvassers sign up parents who want to help organize these events and also share information about resources like recreational movie nights for families or afterschool programs. The group of neighbors adds all of this information to a database, to be used when community activities need additional volunteers or new resources for families become available.

Scenario Four: A judge is sitting on the bench in family court. She considers the case before her: a father, a mother, one child. The father has been brought to court on charges of abuse and neglect. The charges have not been substantiated, but clearly, something is wrong with the family. Although the judge can make an educated guess—the father is unemployed, the mother is looking tired, and the stress may be affecting the child in harmful ways—there is no actual evidence to support a charge of child abuse or neglect.

Instead of devising a plan based solely on her own judgment, the judge asks a child protection worker to convene a “family group conference.” At the conference, the group—comprised of family members, the CPS worker, relatives, and friends—discuss the child's circumstances and agree to carry out specific actions that will keep the child safe until either the family gets its act together or the situation requires more serious intervention by the CPS agency.

Put together, these scenarios provide a composite snapshot of a new approach to preventing child abuse and neglect: **community child protection**. Community child protection is a concept—now being translated into practice—that distributes the responsibility for preventing child abuse and neglect between child protection agencies and local communities. One comprehensive version of community child protection, created with the support of the

Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, is taking shape in four cities across the country. This initiative, called "Community Partnerships for Protecting Children," focuses on enhancing the ability of individual communities to keep children safe from abuse and neglect.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN *WHY DO WE NEED THEM?*

For more than twenty years, responsibility for addressing child abuse and neglect has fallen heavily on child welfare agencies and the family court system. The tools employed by public agencies—including investigation, intensive family preservation services, foster care, and adoption—while appropriate for confirmed situations of abuse and neglect, may be too blunt for family situations that could benefit from less intrusive, more supportive interventions. Parents believe—with some basis in fact—that any contact with a CPS agency will result in the loss of their children.

is the growing awareness that traditional child protective agencies, working alone, cannot keep all children safe. A 1997 study by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect reported that almost three million children were brought to the attention of the system because of abuse and neglect. Of that group, over one million children were found to have been maltreated. In 1996, statistics from 22 states showed 1,046 child deaths attributable to abuse or neglect. Almost fifty percent of those children who died showed prior or current contact with a CPS agency at the time of death.

Challenged by this state of affairs, child welfare advocates, parents, and CPS agencies began formulating new ways to protect children from abuse and neglect. They first asked

themselves fundamental questions:

- What can we do to **better protect** children?
- How can we reach families **before** abuse occurs?
- Whose **responsibility** is it to keep children safe?

These questions resulted in new thinking about child protection, thinking based on a simple principle: enlist resources, such as families, neighborhood associations, schools, and churches, that are untapped by traditional responses to child abuse and neglect.

This thinking eventually resulted in a new community-based initiative, called **Community Partnerships for Protecting Children**, designed and implemented with the support of the Program for Children at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. The initiative is taking shape in four cities across the country: Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Jacksonville, Florida; Louisville, Kentucky; and St. Louis, Missouri.

Some of the sites have taken their own name for their community partnership—Cedar Rapids, for instance, calls their effort “The Partnership for Safe Families,” and St. Louis has named their initiative “The Neighborhood Network for Protecting Children.” All four sites, however, share common goals, the most important being to fundamentally change and expand the traditional responses to child abuse and neglect.

HOW DID COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS BEGIN?

In 1994, the Program for Children at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation was winding down its ten-year initiative that supported intensive family preservation as part of a continuum of services for families in need of support. At that time, program staff were already becoming interested in the “front end” of the child welfare field—preventive strategies to reduce child abuse and neglect. After conducting extensive research on current problems in the child

welfare field, the Program convened a group of people to begin discussing a collaborative approach to child abuse and neglect—one that would rely less heavily on investigation through the auspices of the local CPS agency, and more on the strengths and supports to be found in individual communities.

This group of people included child welfare advocates, state government officials, representatives from CPS agencies, and representatives from community-based organizations who served families and children. In addition, the Program for Children at the Foundation brought two decades of experience in child welfare reform to the table.

In designing the Community Partnerships initiative, the Program for Children at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation looked for cities that were already positioned to do something different with child welfare reform. In three of the cities—Cedar Rapids, Jacksonville and St. Louis—the states had already passed legislation allowing counties in the state to experiment with more flexible and comprehensive responses to reports of child abuse and neglect. Other cities, like Cedar Rapids and Louisville, already had networks in place that linked nonprofit service providers with public agencies.

After over a year of discussion and planning, the Program selected four sites in 1995 to pilot Community Partnerships for Protecting Children. The Program asked the sites to design community partnerships aimed at the following outcomes:

- **Children in the targeted neighborhoods will be less likely to be abused or neglected;**
- **Children who come to the attention of CPS will be less likely to be re-abused or neglected;**
- **Serious injury to children due to abuse and neglect will decrease.**

Each site was given one year to plan strategies and begin implementing activities around

these goals. As part of the planning process, each site formed a steering committee, comprised of representatives from state and local child welfare agencies, nonprofit community-based organizations that worked with children and families, parents recruited through the local P.T.A. and other sources, and citizen groups.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: HOW DO THEY WORK?

In most states and counties, the local CPS agency works out of an office located in a downtown office. Reports come to the CPS agency through a variety of sources—schools, hospital workers, concerned citizens—and those reports are either substantiated through visits to the family homes or dropped if insufficient evidence comes to light confirming the report. CPS workers struggle with heavy caseloads and may not follow up on signs of serious trouble in a home. Families that have come in contact with the agency are left with feelings of mistrust and may not seek the services (such as parenting advice, health care, or substance abuse treatment) they desperately need.

In a community partnership, the local CPS agency works in concert with communities under its jurisdiction to develop a wide range of responses—some aimed at preventing abuse before it even occurs—for different family circumstances. What this means, in practice, is a fundamental shift in *who* assumes responsibility for child abuse and neglect. Under the community partnership model, CPS agencies still handle the serious reports of maltreatment—but neighbors and citizens join in the effort to inform families about the purposes of the initiative and link troubled families to support services. Communities work towards becoming more alert and responsive to the needs of individual families, and CPS agencies, in turn, begin to station workers in schools and community centers. Parent groups plan activities—such as family movie nights and picnics—designed to relieve everyday stresses on

families and knit communities closer together.

In the context of this community partnership initiative, “communities” are usually defined as a group of several distinct neighborhoods in geographic proximity to one another. The targeted group of neighborhoods share common characteristics across all four sites: lower incomes and higher rates of child abuse, domestic violence, and substance abuse in comparison to other areas of the city and other counties in the state. However, these neighborhoods are also characterized by distinct strengths—community-based organizations, neighborhood associations, churches, and schools that can be used as central bases for partnership activities.

The community partnership initiative has taken on slightly different forms in each city, depending on the characteristics and strengths of individual communities in each city. Jacksonville’s Partnership, for example, has involved managers and residents of subsidized housing projects in the five targeted areas, people who are uniquely positioned to know the status of the hundreds of families living in those projects. The St. Louis model works with day care centers and elementary schools to help identify children who may be at risk of abuse or in need of support services. A more specific profile of each city’s community partnership is included at the back of this booklet.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS?

Each steering committee spent one year planning the framework and activities of their own partnership. To keep the scale of the partnership manageable, the sites identified the specific geographic neighborhoods to involve in the effort. In addition, the steering committee began implementing tangible, important changes during the one-year planning phase. Parents were immediately enlisted to serve on the committee and help create policies for the initiative. New tools for data analysis, such as computerized mapping systems, were installed.

The systems were useful both for keeping track of the prevalence of abuse and neglect in a given area, and for mapping community-based resources.

Although each site has structured its partnership differently, the Program for Children at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has requested that all four sites work on some common fronts.

First, early site experiences have shown that domestic violence and substance abuse are factors in a significant percentage of child maltreatment cases. Although this link was already known to researchers and policymakers, no child protection approach has ever tried to address all of these problems collaboratively—until now. In the community partnership framework, child protection and domestic violence workers actually work together on getting families the help they need.

Second, the Program for Children has provided funding and technical assistance to each site to engage in a process of self-evaluation. Partnership participants are asked to collect and analyze data to measure their own progress towards the goals of reducing child abuse and neglect.

The Program intended this process to be used in a number of ways. The sites can use the process as a management tool and, at the same time, explore critical questions such as: Are they reaching the families they intended to serve? Are they achieving desired results with new strategies? Can they document what works—or what doesn't work—about their own partnership? Asking these questions along the way allows the sites to adapt their strategies as they gain experience in what is, for the most part, an entirely new way of thinking about and doing child protection.

Third, the Program for Children at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, in conjunction with the sites and child welfare experts, asked all four community partnerships to focus on

four strategies to form the cornerstone of the entire initiative.

ONE: An individualized course of action is implemented for all children and families who are identified by community members as being at substantial risk of child abuse and neglect. If communities are to work together to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect, no one response can serve every family's needs. Action plans consist of tailor-made strategies aimed at ensuring the safety of children at risk of being maltreated. If a family comes to the attention of a neighbor, relative, or CPS worker, the worker sits down with the family and others to create and implement a plan to support the family and, most importantly, to ensure the safety of the children in that family. To achieve these ends, action plans identify the roles and responsibilities to be played parents, friends, extended families, and other informal supports. Action plans also identify one caring adult—a relative or a neighbor—to assume responsibility for the long-term success of the plan, even after formal services and contact with the CPS agency is phased out. Finally, action plans are intended to build on the strengths of families—as opposed to focusing on their weaknesses—and adapt to cultural and racial norms that vary from family to family.

TWO: Each partnership in the four cities organizes a network of neighborhood and community supports. Each site is creating a formal association of agencies, neighborhood groups, and families. The network is intended to accomplish several purposes: provide support services designed to strengthen families and children; intervene in crisis situations where a child is at risk of being harmed; and broaden the community's "eyes and ears" beyond the CPS agency to identify more at-risk families who may urgently need resources such as counseling or daycare. Core members of the network include: schools, faith institutions,

mental health professionals and healthcare providers, substance abuse and domestic violence programs, police, child care providers, parents, and of course, the public CPS agency.

One of the most important functions of the networks was to develop community “hubs” – places that provide the base of operations for the majority of partnership-related activities in the area. These hubs come in different forms—in Jacksonville, the hub operates out of a school that offers additional services to families such as afterschool programs, and in Louisville, the hub is stationed at a community education center. These hubs help to reduce the isolation of individual families by giving them a place to meet, mingle, and develop friendships. In addition, CPS staff who are transferred to these hubs are easily accessible to families, work closely with other service providers, and learn more about the unique characteristics of the community that distinguishes it from others.

THREE: The CPS agency begins to adopt new policies, practices, roles, and responsibilities.

In order to take a leadership role in the partnership, the CPS agency had to change traditional practices of responding to reports of maltreatment while still fulfilling its legal mandate to protect children from abuse and neglect. For the CPS agencies in the four sites, this process has involved training that teaches workers different skills for working with families in the system. Instead of simply investigating a report of abuse or neglect, the CPS worker now sits down with the family and assesses the family’s problems and strengths. If the child’s safety is at risk, then formal procedures are followed. If not, then the worker helps connect the parent to services and resources they may need. Sometimes, the worker simply talks with the family, and has them get in touch with a community resident if they want to know more about family resources in the community.

In addition, CPS agencies are expected to act as “safety consultants” to other members of the partnership network—assisting teachers, pediatricians, family support workers, and residents in determining what they can contribute to child safety in the community.

FOUR: Each partnership establishes a local decisionmaking body that reviews the effectiveness of community child protection and engages community members to participate and support the initiative. In the beginning stages of the Partnership initiative, the decisionmaking groups in each site set up the framework of the local partnership. For example, the group determined what the target geographic areas for partnership activities would be, and created a core group of activities to reach those areas. Currently, this group takes responsibility for the ongoing direction of the partnership and leads efforts to reach out to neighborhood residents, parents, local faith institutions, schools and inform the broader public about the purposes and benefits of community child protection.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: LOOKING AHEAD

The Community Partnership for Protecting Children initiative is a long-term effort that aims to fundamentally change the way communities and CPS agencies respond to child abuse and neglect. Participants in the partnerships bring impressive leadership, enthusiasm, and spirit to their efforts.

Yet, it is difficult to accurately capture all of the interconnected pieces—and, most importantly, the overall energy—that form the basis of partnerships in each site. And, the initiative's goals of reducing child abuse and neglect are complex and dependent on many

factors; a cause/effect relationship between partnership activities and improvements in child protection services is not easily measured.

However, the planners of the community partnerships are already being asked to share some of the lessons learned from the planning and implementation stages of the initiative. Different community child protection models are springing up all over the country – in Hawaii, in Vermont, even in military bases across the country.

In 1998 the Program for Children made a two-year grant to the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago to conduct an external evaluation of the community partnership initiative. First, the evaluation will assess the implementation of the partnerships in all four sites. For instance, the evaluators will look at the scope of partnership activities; what services were and were not put in place as a result of the partnerships; whether action plans were put into place for individual children and whether the plans were acted upon; and whether CPS agencies actually changed their policies and practices and actively participated in the partnership. Second, the evaluation will look at the impact of the partnership in relation to the stated goals of the initiative: reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

The planners of and participants in Community Partnerships for Protecting Children do not expect that the evaluation will answer all of their questions about the impact of the initiative. For example, it has been proven that most reform efforts in the child welfare field are sometimes correlated to *higher* rates of abuse and neglect in given areas. Reform efforts often place a heightened emphasis on the disturbing problems of abuse and neglect, which then results in more assiduous reporting of suspicious situations. However, those involved in the community partnerships hope to learn more about how the process worked in different settings and most importantly, whether communities noticed a positive difference in the lives of their children and families.

Already, participants are starting to articulate the benefits of the Partnership that are most meaningful to them. For neighborhoods, a greater sense of unity and pride, stronger local institutions, a "can-do" spirit for "our children," and an opportunity to help others. For agencies, improved communications and coordination, more allies, and a wider range of services, supports and interventions to draw on. For families, the prospect that the help they need to prevent or stop child abuse will be available nearby and more likely to address the unique specifics of their situation.

Some of the significant early results of the Partnership are not things that are typically documented as part of a "reform" initiative: joy and laughter at school events from families who once felt unwelcome; child protection workers and families who work together instead of mistrusting each other; service providers who address the inter-related problems of child maltreatment and domestic violence; and a growing number of community members who are willing to face the painful realities of child abuse and take leadership roles in efforts to protect children from harm. It is these shared commitments and new capabilities that represent the promise of community child protection: a vision of strong families, safe children, and concerned, caring neighbors.

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Partnership for Safe Families
Help is Right Next Door
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

The Place: Cedar Rapids (Linn County) is Iowa's second largest city with a population of 170,000. The minority population is small, less than ten percent. Surrounded by fertile farmland, the city boasts a strong economy that includes agricultural, manufacturing, and service industries.

Target Neighborhoods: The Partnership's initial efforts are concentrated on several neighborhoods -- including as the Mound View, Oakhill-Jackson, Taylor, and Northwest communities -- that have a combined population of 21,000 residents. These neighborhoods have a number of assets including historic homes, active neighborhood associations, and several "year-round" schools that function as community centers. Rental properties are concentrated in these areas, and some of the housing stock is in poor repair as a result of owners' neglect. Families residing in these communities have lower average incomes than the rest of the county and are over-represented in the child protection system. Thirty-eight percent of the county's total child protection assessments and forty-six percent of police reports for domestic violence are located in these neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood Hubs: Partnership activities are organized in and around three of Cedar Rapids' five Family Resource Centers where families go for a variety of services such as Head Start and child care, health check-ups, parent groups, financial assistance, free food and clothing, recreational and educational activities. Neighbors also go to these centers to use a

phone, read the newspaper, or have a cup of coffee. One center was once a small apartment building; another is a settlement house; the others are located in schools and child care centers that have expanded their hours and range of activities. The Family Resource Development Association, a consortium of nonprofit service providers, public agencies, and neighborhood groups, planned and oversees the operation of the centers in conjunction with site councils made up of local residents.

Legislative Change: In 1995, Iowa's state legislature passed a law requiring that the Department of Human Services pilot a new assessment approach in response to reports of child abuse and neglect. In addition to investigating the specific allegation, the law mandated that child protection workers look at families' **overall** situations and try to ensure child safety by tailoring a response to families' specific needs and strengths. Cedar Rapids was selected as one of the five pilot locations. As a result of this change and of their partnership activities, the Cedar Rapids partnership is working more closely with the CPS agency, providing written reports to all families who are assessed, and forging closer collaboration between the worker who conducts the assessment and the worker who picks up the case when follow-up services are recommended. In 1997, Iowa's legislature passed a bill that calls for the incremental expansion of child abuse assessments to be implemented statewide by July 1, 1998.

Key Partnership Strategies:

Patch - Cedar Rapids has adapted "Patch" which targets CPS services to a specific neighborhood (known as a Patch in England where the approach originated). Rather than working out of a downtown office building, CPS assessors and service workers are stationed at

a Family Resource Center. There, they are part of a team and devise individualized plans for families that draw on the expertise and resources of other team members that include a homemaker, nurse, income maintenance staff, family support workers, and a domestic violence advocate. Through frequent contact with families, the Patch team can closely monitor safety of children known to CPS and can help other families solve problems that if left unresolved could put children in serious jeopardy. Patch workers can more easily check on a child, for instance by stopping at her school during lunch. And families can take care of many problems right at the Patch site, rather than running around town with children in tow to apply for food stamps, talk to a nurse, or request cash to help with a short-term emergency.

Domestic Violence - Recognizing the disturbing overlap between the problem of domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, Cedar Rapids is plowing new terrain in its efforts to devise a community-based response that ensures that all family members are safe. Towards that end, CPS, domestic violence, and family support staff have received training utilizing a curriculum developed by the Family Violence Prevention Fund which is also providing on going consultation. Child protection and domestic violence staff are meeting regularly to learn about each others work, and solve problems that in the past have kept them from working together. To better coordinate services to specific families, a domestic violence advocate has joined the Patch team and a family support worker provides follow-up services to parents when they leave the domestic violence shelter. The Partnership is identifying additional policy and practice changes needed to promote safe families such as closer collaboration with the courts and with programs for men who batter.

Family Support - Based at Family Resource Centers, family support workers assist families

with a range of issues -- parenting, child development, health, housing, education, employment -- to improve their well-being and increase child safety. Family Support Workers fill a critical gap, working with families who need help and whose children may be at risk, but who do not necessitate a full child protective services response. For example, a CPS assessor referred a family to a support worker because he was concerned that this "dirty house case" could result in the family being evicted if the household deteriorated further. A consortium of four agencies has been formed so that family support workers can coordinate their work across traditional service boundaries. Cedar Rapids has used flexible grant monies to ensure that, if needed, families can continue to receive support services when categorical funding runs out, such as when a family leaves the domestic violence or homeless shelter, or when a child is making the transition from an early childhood program to school.

Neighborhood Partners - To help families connect with others who live nearby, the Partnership has recruited and trained two dozen Neighborhood Partners who organize events, provide support to other families and help them take full advantage of local resources. For example, Partners recently provided meals for a family when their young child was hit by a car and injured. Another Partner has taken the lead in organizing tenants and advocating with her landlord to stop drug trafficking in her building.

Community Outreach - As a means of reducing isolation and encouraging positive relationships among families, neighborhood associations have received grants of \$3,000 to sponsor activities including: summer and after-school programs for children; workshops in cooking, art, and gardening for parents and children together; and celebrations for the whole family. To reach out to the general public, the Partnership for Safe Families has enlisted the

help of the Cedar Rapid Gazette. On a weekly basis, the newspaper now publishes Parenting Tips supplied by the Partnership's Communication work group.

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Neighborhood Network for the Protection of Children

St. Louis, Missouri

The Place: St. Louis, population 400,000, is Missouri's largest city extending 19 miles along the Mississippi River. Although the surrounding jurisdictions are experiencing population growth and prosperity, St. Louis City's population has declined over 36 percent since 1970.

Target Neighborhoods: The initiative in St. Louis targets neighborhoods within a two zip-code area located just south of downtown. The target area covers almost seven square miles and includes over a dozen distinct neighborhoods, with housing that ranges from low-income housing projects (some slated for demolition) to modest, well-maintained townhouses, to impressive, large homes. Some sections have experienced urban revitalization, while others are deteriorated, distressed communities. Overall, it is an area facing radical change in its economic and racial composition. The population is in flux, with the student mobility rate between 60 and 70 percent. The rate of reported child abuse and neglect is over three times higher than the national rate.

The Neighborhood Hubs: Within this larger area, the Neighborhood Networks (the name St. Louis selected for its Community Partnership because that term was already in use in Missouri) are organizing their activities around three community hubs. The first, **Sigel Elementary Community Education Center**, is one of the city's 16 community education centers and houses a variety of services -- including outstationed CPS workers, community outreach and counseling staff -- within a neighborhood elementary school. The second hub, **Shenandoah**

Elementary School, is working with a nearby church to establish a "welcome center" where parents can relax in an informal setting. A Division of Family Services (DFS) prevention worker at Shenandoah helps parents address local needs such as establishing a summer program. The third hub, **Benton Park West Neighborhood Association** has the active involvement of the Salvation Army, South Side Day Nursery, and a local church and is working to coordinate home visiting programs to pregnant women and families with young children. Together, the neighborhoods served by these hubs include approximately 20,000 residents.

Legislative Change: In 1994, the state legislature enacted Senate Bill 595 under which the Missouri Division of Family Services piloted a "dual response" system to reports of child abuse and neglect. Depending upon the severity of the allegation, hotline reports can either be investigated with an emphasis on gathering evidence about a specific event, or assessed with an emphasis on developing a service plan with the family. The law also mandated that the Division work closely with communities to ensure the availability of a continuum of services to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. Sigel community was one of the initial sites to pilot test the dual response approach.

Key Strategies:

Partnerships with the Department of Family Services - With the impetus of state legislation and its commitment to building local partnerships, the public child welfare agency is stationing its workers in community-based settings and is linking CPS to the neighborhood hubs. CPS staff members are part of local Family Support Teams, along with other service providers and

school personnel. The teams coordinate resources for specific families and tackle shared problems. For example, now rather than waiting for a child's absenteeism to reach the point where it necessitates a hotline call to report educational neglect, the Family Support Team at Sigel school is taking a proactive approach. Once a child has been absent five to seven days the team reviews the case and determines who and how to reach out to the family to help resolve whatever problems are keeping a child from attending school. CPS workers are also utilizing community support agreements that enlist neighbors, friends, and relatives to provide consistent informal help and regular contact with families.

Emphasis on Children Birth-to-Five - Because the youngest children are the most vulnerable to maltreatment, many of St. Louis' Network strategies focus on infant and pre-school children. For example, a Family Support Worker, located at South Side Day Nursery and recruited from the neighborhood, works with pregnant women and their families to access services and supports. Another family support worker will be assisting families where neglect has been a chronic problem. The Network has also organized forums for members of the early childhood field to meet and share resources. As a result, providers are more knowledgeable about available prenatal services and eligibility criteria. The group is developing shared referral procedures to ensure that families who need help are able to get it during this critical time.

Common Assessment Tools - Network members, with assistance from the Child Welfare League of America, developed and are testing a common intake form and assessment tools. The group was determined to develop an assessment that truly recognized families' strengths, as well as problems, and was easy for workers and family members to use. Used by DFS caseworkers, family support staff, and therapists, the tools are designed to reduce duplication

and make service delivery more efficient and effective by clarifying the responsibilities for family members, service providers, and informal supports. The assessment work group also created a Family Life Book, a fun kit that invites family members to share and learn information about themselves. The Network envisions that the Life Books will have many different uses with all types of families including as a gift from a home visitor to new parents and as an activity that parents and children can do together at home or when meeting with a counselor.

Parents Anonymous - The National Parents Anonymous organization has conducted training in St. Louis to support the development of self-help groups at the Network hubs. Parents Anonymous groups are co-lead by a parent and a professional staff member and are designed to give parents a chance to talk about their experiences, take responsibility for their actions, and support each other in resolving problems non-violently.

Community Outreach and Activities - To encourage people to meet their neighbors and feel welcome in their children's school, the Network has initiated many community events with an emphasis on celebrations -- movie nights, a dance party -- which are often a first chance for community residents, teachers, and agency employees to get to know and trust each other. St. Louis was the first Community Partnership site to offer small, flexible grants for community activities and has used these funds to support such events which are planned by parents, DFS staff, and teachers together. Utilizing Community Outreach Workers, the St. Louis site has sponsored several door-to-door canvasses to mobilize parents, churches and businesses to get involved in Network activities. And, to keep track of local resources, the site is using computerized geographic information systems to map neighborhood assets.

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INSERT LOGO
Community Partnership for Protecting Children
Keeping Children Safe is Everyone's Business.
Louisville, Kentucky

THE TARGET AREA: The city of Louisville, Kentucky—population 685,000—is the main part of Jefferson County, the largest metropolitan area in Kentucky. Although the state of Kentucky veers between northern and southern identities, Louisville itself is distinctly southern in nature.

Before the Partnership began, Jefferson County was already served by “family centers,” resource hubs (often located in former school buildings) where local families could go for services ranging from health care, child care and public assistance. Neighborhood Place Ujima is one of those family centers, and has also become the hub for Louisville’s Partnership activities as well.

Ujima (Swahili for collective work and responsibility) is situated in a community characterized, on the one hand, by many strong faith institutions and community centers, but also, on the other hand, distressed public housing projects and high rates of poverty. There are 25,000 residents in the Neighborhood Place Ujima area, down from 32,000 due to the recent exodus of residents when several public housing buildings were razed. New lower-density public housing is being built in the area—beautiful new homes intended for a mix of low-income and middle-income residents. To create this mix, a population of recent immigrants—for example, Bosnian families are starting to move in—has been added to the historic community population of mostly African-American families.

The Neighborhood Hub: Twenty public and private agencies, working together, created Neighborhood Places—community-based family service centers located in the city's most vulnerable neighborhoods. All of the major public agencies -- health, mental health, child protection, financial assistance, and employment -- have deployed staff to these centers. Approximately 500 children come to Neighborhood Place Ujima every day -- for Head Start, child care and after-school programs -- making it an ideal place to identify and reach at-risk families. Currently, the Louisville team is considering how to adapt the community partnership approach. The Louisville site is committed to expanding the Community Partnership approach to other Neighborhood Places in Jefferson County and to other counties that do not have family service centers in Kentucky.

Legislative Change: As of the end of 1997, Kentucky has not enacted any state CPS reform legislation. However, state and local policymakers are very supportive of the Partnership's values and tenets and have promoted creative training, financing, and community-based service strategies that are critical to sustaining and expanding Community Partnerships for Protecting Children at numerous other sites statewide.

LOUISVILLE: KEY STRATEGIES

Family Solutions - To ensure that all Partners who work directly with families approach them in a way that truly builds on their strengths, workers are being trained in a common casework methodology called Family Solutions. Family Solutions emphasizes identifying concrete actions that families can take to address their own problems, guard against relapsing into destructive behaviors, and more effectively care for their children. Local researchers have determined Local researchers are conducting an evaluation of Family Solutions to determine

whether the key tenets of Family Solutions are actually being translated into practice. The evaluation entails case record reviews and interviews with staff and family members.

Family Group Conferences and Mediation - The Louisville site is adapting Family Group Conferences, an approach to decision making that originated in New Zealand. Family Group Conferences give families the responsibility to make decisions about how to safeguard their child. All family members, friends, professionals, and others concerned about the child are invited to come together, share information, and devise a plan for assuring a child's safety. The Partnership will begin using conferences for children who have just entered foster care placements with the goal of reuniting them more quickly with their parents or other relatives. The site plans to eventually utilize conferences for families through-out the child welfare system.

As another way to expand the repertoire of responses to families, the Family Court judges in Louisville have added the option of **mediation** for families who are in court because of child abuse and neglect. Judges refer families to mediation when the risk of harm to the child is low and when a non-adversarial, less authoritative intervention is more appropriate. Community residents have been trained as mediators and are well-positioned to help families access local resources -- both formal services and informal supports.

Substance Abuse - To better utilize the range of services available in the Ujima area, Partnership members collected information on specific programs throughout the community. One resource that they quickly recognized was in short supply is local substance abuse treatment, a very troubling gap given the correlation of substance abuse and child

maltreatment. As a result, the site is working to develop community-based programs to help neighborhood families where substance abuse is a significant problem. Partnership participants have held focus groups with parents, workers, and people in recovery and are looking at treatment programs locally and in other parts of the country to identify and adapt approaches that will be most helpful to parents with young children.

Community Resource Team - Community resource teams -- that include child protection workers, service providers, and volunteers from the neighborhood -- work together to support local families, guide them to appropriate services, and prevent families from coming into the CPS system. The CPS agency and other partners in Louisville have agreed to implement a process where low-risk families are referred to the team for an assessment and will be connected to neighborhood services. Families and community residents can also call the team directly when they need assistance for example to access child care, solve housing problems, or meet food and utility costs.

Educational Neglect Strategy - Operating in three neighborhood elementary schools, Partnership staff are working with school personnel to identify children who are having attendance and behavior problems -- often an early warning sign of problems at home. By visiting these families, talking with them about their children, and devising service plans, the Partnership intends to reduce the incidents of educational neglect, help resolve school-related issues, and improve family dynamics.

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INSERT LOGO

Community Partnership for Protecting Children

Jacksonville, Florida

The Place: Jacksonville, located in Duval County, has a population of 700,00; the minority population, primarily African American, comprises about a quarter of the total. The area is one of the most populous in the state and has a more diverse economy than many other Florida cities that depend primarily on tourism.

Target Neighborhoods: The initial focal point of Jacksonville's Community Partnership is the community served by the Ribault Full Service School, one of the city's five school-based service centers. The catchment area for Ribault includes 79,000 residents; however, Partnership outreach and engagement strategies are targeted to the five housing projects near that school with some 7,000 residents. While the Partnership was a logical extension of city and state efforts to improve the well-being of children, local community leaders have become strong activists in Jacksonville's efforts to keep children safe. On behalf of the Partnership, they have engaged churches, businesses, and tenant groups and are spearheading self-evaluation efforts. The community faces serious challenges, however as the Ribault area accounts for 24 percent of the city's child abuse and neglect reports, one-third of births to teen mothers, and half of the newborns exposed to drugs.

The Neighborhood Hubs: Established in 1993, Jacksonville's full service schools offer a range of educational, financial, and social services. They are based at high schools and are linked to

the feeder elementary and middle schools in that neighborhood. Full service school staff generally include a school social worker, child guidance therapist, teen parent counselor, and family liaison worker who assist those families who might otherwise "fall through the cracks." CPS workers are teamed with on-site, full service school staff, and they serve as consultants to the teams on child maltreatment issues. Each full service school has an oversight committee made up of parents, teachers, community residents, religious leaders, and others. Jacksonville plans to eventually expand its Partnership to all of the neighborhoods served by its full service schools.

Legislative Change: In 1995, the Governor and state lawmakers created legislation changing the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) response to reports of child abuse and neglect. The changes followed numerous public hearings at which citizens expressed concern that the public agency had become too investigatory and should place greater emphasis on helping families. After several rounds of revision, the state now requires that all abuse and neglect referrals be assessed, rather than investigated, including an overall evaluation of the child's safety and the family's functioning. The legislation also eliminated the central registry which had maintained the names of child abuse perpetrators and was used for employment screening for some occupations. This screening now occurs through background checks of criminal records.

Key Strategies:

Integrated Service Teams - Department of Children and Families' child protection workers are now assigned cases in a designated geographic area that corresponds to the catchment area of a

full service school. CPS workers spend part of their time at the school where they participate on a team with full service school staff from other public and community agencies. As a result of these neighborhood-based teams, CPS staff are more familiar with local resources, and families have one primary contact person and a service plan that integrates the work of various providers.

First Call for Help - To better connect families with local services, telephone calls made to Florida's child abuse hotline that are **not** accepted by CPS for assessment (generally because the problem described does not meet the criteria for child maltreatment) are now transferred to "First Call," a city-wide resource and referral system. First Call operators direct families to the nearest full service school for immediate assistance. For example, a mother, about to be evicted from her apartment, was referred to a the family liaison worker who helped the parent located temporary emergency housing and child care and secure employment.

Domestic Violence - The child protection agency has been working in partnership with Hubbard House, one of the oldest domestic violence shelters in the country, because of their belief that for children to be safe their mother's must also be safe. With support from the Family Violence Prevention Fund, CPS staff have been trained to recognize and respond to domestic violence and to ensure that safety plans are crafted for all family members. In addition, one person within each child protection unit is designated as the domestic violence specialist. This individual serves as liaison to the domestic violence shelter and is well versed in available services for women and children. Other workers now consult with the specialist when they have questions about how to handle cases where there is violence between adults.

Community Support Agreements - Pioneered by staff at Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF), Community Support Agreements enlist the help of neighbors, relatives, and friends to ensure children safety and reduce reliance on the formal CPS system. The agreements are signed by individuals who make a commitment to work with a family they know. Often these volunteers help others through a crisis period then maintain regular contact to help families and make sure that children remain safe. The use of these agreements will be expanded beyond child protection staff to other partners such as members of the integrated service teams and Healthy Families Jacksonville staff who make home visits to new parents.

Call for Great Ideas - Residents of the Partnerships' target Neighborhoods have been invited to submit their great ideas for grants of up to \$5,000. The Call for Great Ideas has been an effective tool for getting local groups to begin thinking about ways they can help keep children safe. Activities -- such as improving playground areas -- have served to enroll new members in the Partnership, encourage local businesses involvement, and create tangible ways for families to get together, thus reducing isolation and fostering new friendships. The call for great ideas has also spurred the creation of a **Neighbor to Neighbor** project that gives training and support to residents who are willing to provide respite child care when a neighbor has an emergency.

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