

DRAFT

Introduction

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**DO NOT CIRCULATE
OR REFERENCE**

The Community Child Protection Movement

There's a new movement building around the country. From Michigan to Hawaii, communities are re-claiming their responsibility to help keep children safe from abuse and neglect.

~~Underlying this community child protection movement is the belief that protecting children from harm is everybody's concern.~~

Tn communities as diverse as Jacksonville, Florida, and Grand Rapids, Michigan, ~~Vermont~~, child protection is no longer just taking place in government offices. State and local child protection agencies are reaching outside their walls, often for the first time, to join with new partners to ~~strengthen families~~ and keep children safe from maltreatment.

In these communities, child protection is happening everywhere—in classrooms and churches, in domestic violence shelters and drug-treatment centers, at corner groceries and child-care centers, in beauty parlors and bowling alleys. It's happening wherever children are found and wherever parents converge, whenever a neighbor notices a child in need, a mother near the end of her rope, a father who could use a hand.

The pioneers in this movement are building a neighborhood network of services for families, based upon what parents tell them they need and what we know works, whether it be help getting a job, drug treatment, anger control counseling, or protection from an abusive spouse. And parents are being asked to participate fully in crafting solutions for their families that draw on their own strengths, as well as support from relatives and close friends.

The traditional tools of child protection are still important, including intensive family preservation services or swift and purposeful government action to protect children when their parents

~~cannot~~ (Foster care or adoption ~~must~~ continue to be key ingredients of a well-functioning child welfare system.) However, other family building tools have been added to the toolbox clear-eyed assessments of family strengths, casework based on achieving solutions, participation by parents in self-help groups, individualized plans for children's safety, a system of integrated services, help from community groups, and even good old-fashioned neighborliness.

~~But this movement is more than just a convey of innovative~~ support services for families. It is a whole new philosophy and approach to child protection, a coming together of neighbors and parents and public and private agencies all working together to promote the safety of children.

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It's sometimes hard to remember that the nation's system for reporting and responding to child abuse and neglect is still in its infancy.

Community organizations shouldered most of the responsibility for helping troubled families until well into the 20th Century. Not until 1963, after Colorado pediatrician Henry Kempe first described battered child syndrome, did government **begin to assume** a primary role **in responding to child abuse**. By 1968, all states had passed laws requiring mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect. But it wasn't until 1974 that Congress passed **the first national legislation aimed at child abuse**. Since then, state agencies and the federal government have shared the costs of child protection efforts, with states bearing an increasing portion of the financial burden.

Almost from its inception, the nation's child protection system has had trouble keeping pace with the ever-rising number of abuse and neglect reports and the growing complexity of family problems, **particularly substance abuse**. Reports of abuse or neglect increased 45 percent between 1987 and 1996, when about 3 million children were named in them. (About one-third of the reports were substantiated by investigators.)¹

Although most media accounts focus on children with serious physical injuries or sexual abuse, abuse can actually range from inappropriate discipline on a single occasion to injuries inflicted over time. And more than twice as many children are victims of neglect as are victims of physical abuse. (Neglect, too, includes a range of parental behaviors, from inadequate supervision to chronic, life-threatening failure to meet a child's basic survival needs.)

Further complicating the picture, experts are not sure whether the official numbers represent the true extent of the problem. Some experts believe that the problem isn't as bad as the official tally suggests. But others are convinced that the number of children who are maltreated is actually much higher than the 1 million substantiated cases a year. Based on information from providers of services to

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children, the most recent National Incidence Study estimated that the actual number of abuse and neglect victims in 1993 was 2.8 million.²

One sign of the strain on the current child protection system has been the growth of the foster care population - from about 276,000 children at the end of fiscal 1985 to ~~507,000 at the end of fiscal 1996~~.³ *2e*

There are other signs as well. Around the country, thousands of families are tied up needlessly in intrusive investigations without good cause, when all they may need is a helping hand. Many families are reported repeatedly to authorities, without ever getting the support they need, because the system lacks the resources to respond. ~~Meanwhile, some children live in squalid or terrifying home environments, and concerned friends or neighbors don't know how to help. For some children, intervention comes too late or not at all; in 1996, 1,185 children died from abuse or neglect.~~⁴

Nearly every study of the child protection system has found it overburdened, under-staffed, and too often unsuccessful in its mission to protect. ~~As long ago as 1990~~, the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect declared that child maltreatment constituted a national emergency,¹ requiring the replacement of the existing child protective system.¹

As Marva Livingston Hammons, charged with child protection for the state of Michigan, says: "Other agencies that have an interest in the rights and needs of children have got to come to the table and work closely with us to ensure that everything we can do to protect children is done in a community partnership."¹

*4/11/98
Marva
Livingston
Hammons*

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The community child protection movement grows out of the experiences of child protection specialists and the families that have been involved with the traditional child protection system.

Soon after the U.S. Advisory Board called for reform in 1990, the American Public Welfare Association brought 25 high-level child welfare administrators together as the National Commission on Child Welfare and Family Preservation. Among their recommendations were new community service networks based in neighborhoods, earlier intervention in troubled families, more collaboration between public agencies, and greater community involvement. The mantle of leadership must be assumed . . . not only by elected state and local officials and designated executives, but also [by] families, our formal and informal social and religious institutions, and employers who have an interest in families and children as both consumers and employees, the commission said.

In 1993, the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect elaborated on its earlier recommendations for a new system, urging a return to "a neighborly society" in which adults "resolve to be good neighbors - to know, watch, and support their neighbors' children and to offer help when needed to their neighbors' families."

With the consensus growing by the mid '90s that no one agency can bear the sole responsibility for keeping children safe and that reform within public child welfare agencies alone is not enough, states and localities were beginning to develop a more comprehensive approach to keeping children safe from maltreatment. A new vision of child protection was emerging, one that would provide help to a family before abuse occurs. That would provide services in neighborhoods, rather than in inaccessible state office buildings. That would take into account a family's needs and strengths, instead of just investigating its faults. That would provide custom-tailored services, instead of a one-size-fits-all approach.

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Richard Page

T ~~eaders of the community child protection movement recognize that one public agency [the child protective services agency] must continue to assume legal authority to protect children. But the thinking is that if a local network of parents, concerned neighbors, and public and private agency service providers agree to share the responsibility for safeguarding children, it will increase the likelihood of quicker, more intensive, and more effective responses to a child who is being abused or neglected – or is in danger of it.~~

Community child protection is already more than just a vision. All around the country, new partners are sharing the responsibility for protecting children and strengthening families – establishing local goals, designing new systems of service delivery, and tracking their successes. The partnerships look different from place to place, depending upon local needs, resources and priorities. But in all of them, child protection agencies are changing their internal practices so they can be more responsive, and community partners are helping provide the neighborhood-based supports and services that families need. Everywhere, the safety and well-being of children are paramount.

Who's involved in these efforts? The government agency charged with protecting children is a key player, of course. But so are numerous other partners including neighbors, relatives, school principals, clergy, police officers, corner grocers, pediatricians, drug-treatment counselors, day-care providers, apartment managers, and operators of shelters for refugees from domestic violence. These people are in the best position to identify troubled families early, and thus help protect children from harm. Through the community child protection approach, they're learning what it takes to keep children safe and how to act on that knowledge whenever they see a child whose safety is at risk or a family that is struggling.

Building community partnerships for child protection isn't easy. Neighbors are often nervous about intervening. Agency turf issues abound. Many parents view child protection agencies as child-snatchers, rather than helpmates. And some CPS frontline workers are still so accustomed to zeroing in on parents' flaws that they have trouble seeing their strengths.

The community child protection movement will not solve all of the problems of the child protection system. Nor will we ever be able to guarantee that every child will be protected from harm.

But across the country, more and more communities are stepping up to say, "We can and must do better by our children."

Community Programs

Michigan Child Protection Community Partners

When substantial federal child-abuse prevention funds became available for the first time in 1995, Michigan's Family Independence Agency started doing business differently. Rather than simply dictate new programs to its 82 diverse counties, the agency asked the counties to devise their own initiatives, based upon their particular needs. The Strong Families/Safe Children initiative permitted extraordinary community control over almost \$17 million a year in child-abuse prevention and early intervention services. Since then, communities all across Michigan have been stepping forward to help parents keep their children safe. And they are changing the financial structure of child protection while they're at it. (Note to Joanne: To me, the previous sentence, inserted by someone else, sounds awkward, and we've already said that the state is doing things differently. MS)

In 1998, the state gave counties more money—\$7 million a year for three years—and a new mandate: help the thousands of families that the Family Independence Agency hasn't historically been able to help, those named in unsubstantiated or low-risk substantiated reports of abuse and neglect. (Research shows that such families are often involved in more serious reports later on.) An extra \$2 million was awarded to counties that targeted children under age 4.

The recruitment of community partners coincides with the Michigan agency's effort to become more solution-focused and family-friendly in all of its interactions with families. Statewide, all protective services workers are being re-trained to involve families in making decisions about how to keep their children safe and to collaborate with community agencies.

Kent County, home of Michigan's second largest city, Grand Rapids, provides a powerful example of community child protection in

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That's what Michigan
calls them.
Role is essentially the
same as in Clark Co.

practice. There, the death of a child from abuse caused years of community soul-searching, leading in 1996 to a community-wide effort to strengthen families.

Since early 1997, all calls to the child-abuse hotline in Kent County have triggered a response, ~~whereas~~ ^{afe} resource constraints had previously meant that allegations judged to be less serious often drew no attention at all. State investigators still look into allegations of sexual abuse or serious physical injury or neglect, and recommend intensive in-home services or foster care as indicated. But ~~now~~ a community-based [Early Impact] prevention specialist links low-risk families to in-home services they can access without stigma. In 1997, about 1,100 more families received help than the year before, with community partners like the Grand Rapids Foundation and Heart of West Michigan United Way picking up the extra costs.



across the state, many other communities ^{afe} using their share of the new state grants to help protect children:

- St. Joseph County has adopted a [No Wrong Door] approach to families, which means that a parent can get information about help from any of 17 partner agencies. And since 1998, a trained volunteer or public health worker has been visiting the home of every newborn, linking the family to follow-up services as needed. The county also offers in-home help to all families with unsubstantiated maltreatment reports.
- In rural Macomb County, the Family Coordinating Council is offering voluntary in-home services to all families reported to the hotline and judged to be low-risk. On busy shopping days, volunteers fan out to grocery stores to hand out fliers about community resources.
- The Barry County Resource Network has enlisted community agencies to provide in-home counseling, drug treatment and homemaker skills-training during evening and week-end hours to families with unsubstantiated or low-risk substantiated abuse or neglect reports.

Re-cycled per instructions

Through a three-county collaborative, Mason, Lake and Oceana counties are offering parent education classes, an 800 number for information and referrals, and a special parenting program for teen mothers.

Family Navigator Project, Nanakuli, Hawaii

It's mid-morning on Oahu's remote Wai'anae coast, and Binnie Rosa is on his way to visit a family involved in the Nanakuli Family Navigator Project. The father died a few months before, and the grief-stricken mother is having trouble getting out of bed. For no good reason, two of her children are home from school today.

Binnie stops by a grocery to pick up breakfast. It's a Hawaiian tradition to bring *ho'okupu* - a gift - when you come calling.

Farther up the valley, Auntie Leina Hoochuli, the project's other navigator, has just helped Irma, a 49-year-old grandmother, into her minivan. The grandmother recently lost a foot to diabetes. She's the primary caretaker for her daughter's four children, so it's important to restore not just her mobility, but her spirits, too. Auntie Leina is taking her to sign up for the area's call-a-ride service. And then they're going to lunch. To talk story, Auntie Leina explains, using the local phrase for sharing troubles.

These two scenes from a late winter day capture the essence of the Family

Navigator Project's approach to child protection.

The Wai'anae Coast Coalition and the Legal Aid Society launched the three-year pilot project in May 1997, with a grant from the Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center and the blessing of the state child protection agency, which views the project as a way to help families without enmeshing them in the more legalistic child protection system.

The Navigator Project aims to prevent child abuse and neglect by linking families to a range of community resources, including drug treatment, emergency financial assistance, parenting classes, legal

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clear from the content (Binnie
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aid, and counseling. It operates in the native Hawaiian homestead of Nanakuli, home to 1,000 families, many with three or four generations living under the same roof. Unemployment, drug-use, welfare dependency and referrals to child protective services are high; incomes, test scores, and health indicators are low.

The work in Nanakuli is just one example of Hawaii's statewide effort to build a more localized, strengths-based system that brings the community and state agency workers together around issues of child safety. In 1998, two other three-year demonstration sites for the community-based delivery of child welfare services began operating on the Kona Coast of the Big Island and in the Waipahu area of Oahu. Meanwhile, the CPS agency is planning to out-station child protection workers in communities to help them forge closer ties.

Hardwick Area Patch, Hardwick, Vermont

A storefront on Hardwick, Vermont's Main Street is a highly visible symbol of a new approach to human services in this isolated rural town.

Hardwick Area Patch opened its doors in March 1996 with the goal of involving the area's 8,000 residents in making sure that the community's children are ready for school, growing up in safe, stable, supported families, and choosing healthy behaviors when they reach their teens.

For years, Hardwick residents had to travel to other towns to find out about services. Now, on any weekday they can walk into the Patch office and get help from any of eight partner organizations ~~1 - five state~~ agencies (including the child protection agency), a mental health center, a school district and a day-care center. The partners share the costs of operating the office, and a dozen Hardwick residents serve on the steering committee that runs it.

The Patch concept comes from England, where the word *lpatchl* is slang for neighborhood. The Patch principles are the same as those of the community child protection movement: neighborhood-based

Ans. to Q:
They share the costs of
renting + running the
storefront, with each
partner providing staff
on a rotating basis.

workers, co-location of key services, shared caseloads, community networks of services and informal supports, and partnerships with residents. The Patch approach has been implemented in five other Vermont communities, plus a few other places around the United States, including Tioga County, Pennsylvania, and Linn County, Iowa.

In its first two years, Hardwick Area Patch:

- ~~developed~~ a single intake form for the eight partner agencies.
- ~~conducted~~ a door-to-door outreach campaign to identify community needs and resources;
- ~~sponsored~~ "Hand in Hand," a month-long celebration of community, in May 1998;
- ~~set up~~ a Job Club, which offers regular workshops on such topics as effective interviewing and resume-writing.
- began two weekly playgroups for preschoolers.

The Patch program builds on the other child protection system reforms under way in the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Vermont's CPS agency. In many counties, Child Protection Teams comprising representatives from schools, the community mental health agency, family support centers and the CPS agency, meet regularly so they can better help families. And in several pilot projects, state child protection specialists are using the problem-solving technique called "family group decision making" to involve relatives and friends in resolving child safety issues, rather than leaving solutions to legal authorities.

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PATCH office, but in some
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community is too small
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MILITARY PROGRAMS

In each of the nation's military services, responsibility for child protection stretches from the parent all the way to a base's commanding officer, with multiple partners in between. The importance of the community's role is reflected in the names some service branches have chosen for their responses to family violence: **ICoordinated Community Response** for the Marine Corps, **ICoordinated Community with Care** for the Army.

Military families face the same challenges as all families, and then some. Parents are more likely to be young when their first child is born. They're often thousands of miles from the natural support system provided by family and friends. A spouse can be deployed away from home for months at a time, making the remaining parent a *de facto* single parent. Moves are frequent, making it hard to put down roots.

Devising a strategy to help families face these challenges would be daunting even if they all lived in one place. But the 1.2 million children in America's military families live on or near almost 300 military bases around the globe. Base-level prevention strategies and interventions differ, depending upon local resources, but they're all guided by the over-arching goal of strengthening families.

How does the military's approach to child protection look in the field? A visit to Camp Pendleton, the nation's most populous Marines Corps base, provides a glimpse.

Camp Pendleton has about 40,000 active duty Marines who have 16,000 dependents living on or near the sprawling 125,000 acre base north of San Diego. On any given day, nearly a dozen social workers and nurses with the New Parents' Support Program are visiting families with young children, right in their own homes, and some fathers are honing their parenting skills at **IDaddy's Baby Boot Camp.** At the Armed Forces YMCA, several moms are talking about

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common concerns as their toddlers play together nearby, while the base's television station, KPEN, is airing a program called **|Challenges Facing Military Families|**. At kitchen tables in mobile homes and apartments, volunteers from the base's LINKS program are helping spouses new to military life understand the special stresses of life in the armed forces. And all around the base, prevention specialists from the Family Services Center are convening classes on anger management, single parenthood, power and control issues, and household finances.

Tf maltreatment of a child is suspected, intervention is swift. A case manager from the Family Advocacy Program, the military agency that deals with family violence issues, assesses the family. (If the allegation meets the state's standard for a formal abuse or neglect report, the local civilian child protective services agency will co-investigate.) Once a month, the base's multidisciplinary Case Review Committee studies all reports of child abuse or neglect, regardless of whether a civilian agency has substantiated maltreatment. The team advises the commanding officer on the case and suggests services that might help the family. Help comes not just from military sources, but from community agencies and organizations, too.

The Department of Defense credits its comprehensive, community-based approach to child protection to helping keep the rate of substantiated child abuse or neglect reports to 6 per 1,000 children per year since 1990, less than half the civilian rate of 15 per 1,000 children per year.

Forging Community Partnerships

Since 1995, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has provided seed money and technical assistance to community child protection partnerships in four cities: Jacksonville, Florida; St. Louis, Missouri; Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Louisville, Kentucky. Each site has its own hallmarks, but all share the common goal of refocusing responsibility for the safety of children in the community.

At each site, the state or county child protection agency, local residents, community organizations and public agencies have adopted clear goals to improve the lives of children and families. The Partnerships are:

- organizing a network of neighborhood and community supports to reach families at risk.
- helping child protective services agencies change their traditional policies and practices to become more family-centered and to share some responsibility for child safety with community groups and partner agencies.
- making sure there's a carefully tailored plan of action for each child at substantial risk of abuse or neglect, and work more intensively with families with a pattern of mistreatment.
- developing a new decisionmaking process to guide community child protection.

Jacksonville Community Partnership for the Protection of Children

When a call comes into Jacksonville's Project Reach about a family in need, someone like Janice Dorsey responds. Whether the problem is a family without housing, a teen parent in need of day care, or a mother who's on the verge of abusing her child, Dorsey and her colleagues are at the ready with referrals to organizations - and people - who can provide help.

Norsey, a family liaison worker for the Florida Department of Children and Families, is one of the frontline workers in a new approach to child protection in Florida's largest city.

The Florida Legislature paved the way for child protection reform in 1993 by mandating a change in the state child protection agency's approach to troubled families. ~~The legislation led to a system of locally tailored services for troubled families and greater use of informal community supports, such as neighbors, clergy and grassroots organizations.~~ (Reports of abuse and neglect that may lead to criminal charges are still investigated by police alone or in partnership with the ~~state agency~~.)

The Jacksonville Children's Commission, local schools, state officials and the United Way took the lead in establishing the Community Partnership for the Protection of Children. Other partners include ~~managers of housing complexes~~, providers of services to domestic violence victims and substance abusers, clergy, and business owners. Concerned parents and local residents serve on the oversight committee that sets policy for the Partnership.

The hub for the Partnership is Ribault School, one of Jacksonville's full-service high schools, where Project Reach is based. Besides family support workers, Project Reach houses child protection specialists, juvenile officers, counselors, and workers who help families apply for public assistance.

How is community child protection practiced in Jacksonville?

- Some state workers who provide child protection services are based in the neighborhoods they serve.
- Anyone can seek help for any family by telephoning (First Call), a 24-hour hotline.
- Local residents regularly canvass their neighbors to find out what help they need and what resources are already in place.

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At Hilltop Village Apartments, management set up a Family Resource Center, complete with parenting, crafts and GED-preparation classes, a computer lab and recreational activities. And residents took the initiative to designate a safe house for women and children who feel threatened at home.

- ~~Parents Anonymous groups have formed in each targeted neighborhood to enable parents to get help with childrearing issues from their peers.~~
- ~~The Department of Children and Families has paired a caseworker from every child protection team with a caseworker from Hubbard House, a shelter for victims of domestic violence, so they can work together with families affected by both child abuse and domestic violence. Together, the agency and Hubbard House are developing a protocol to use when working with such families.~~
- ~~Scores of neighborhood residents have signed community support agreements, contracts in which they pledge their eyes and ears to help assure a particular child's safety in his home. With agreement from the local child protective services agency, they check on the child regularly and help make sure the parents are getting the help they need.~~

Louisville Community Partnership for Protecting Children

When parents walk into Neighborhood Place Ujima, a one-stop family resource center in an economically distressed area of Louisville, Kentucky, they can be sure of getting whatever help they need whether it be emergency cash assistance for an unpaid heating bill, treatment for a drug or alcohol problem, or advice about dealing with the everyday stresses of family life.

Neighborhood Place Ujima, in a wing of the ~~family-friendly~~ Duvalle Education Center, is the hub of activities for Louisville's Community Partnership for Protecting Children. In Swahili, Ujima means "collective work and responsibility."

Louisville was selected as a Clark Foundation site because of ongoing efforts by human services agencies there to provide a seamless web of family support services at eight Neighborhood Places—family resource centers located throughout Jefferson County. All Neighborhood Places share common goals of serving families better and increasing school attendance. As a Clark site, Neighborhood Place Ujima took on the additional mission of reducing child maltreatment in its service area, ~~which at the time had~~ a higher rate of abuse and neglect reports than other parts of Louisville.

~~The Partnership was~~ formed by 15 public and private agencies and has since been joined by scores of community partners, including ministers, day-care providers, and parents.

How do families connect with the Partnership? Mostly, they're referred by school officials, health care providers, ministers, or the child-abuse hotline. But many ask for help themselves. Every parent seeking help undergoes a comprehensive assessment to identify unmet needs. All of the partner agencies, of course, have specialized services to offer. But members of the Partnership's Community Resource Team, which includes "neighborhood partners" (residents who receive training and a stipend) and "natural helpers" (trained volunteers) provide early intervention services not customarily available from agencies — practical advice, some material assistance, and referrals to community-based help.

Tn one typical situation, a member of the Community Resource Team obtained phone service for a distraught mother who was in danger of losing custody of her severely disabled son if she didn't obtain a phone. The team member also delivered a week's worth of groceries, since the family's food stamps had been cut off when the mother missed a recertification appointment while her son was hospitalized. In another case, a Community Resource Team member helped a pregnant teenager obtain housing, prenatal care, and food

stamps. When the baby was born three months prematurely and seriously ill, ~~the team member~~ checked with the mother frequently, providing moral support and links to services.

She helped me get through it, the mother says. I feel as though I can make it on my own now. They should have places like this everywhere.

Central to the Partnership's approach to families is use of a family solutions problem-solving model that helps parents identify concrete actions they can take to reduce the risk of harming their children. And a "family group decision making" process is being used to involve relatives and close friends in helping keep children safe, particularly when parents' problems make it necessary for the children to live apart from them.

One of the unmet needs the Partnership identified in the neighborhood was for follow-up services for parents who had undergone drug treatment. Drug or alcohol abuse are factors in many child maltreatment cases, and relapse is common. In 1998, the Partnership hired a case manager to help recovering drug or alcohol abusers stay drug- or alcohol-free. And because of requests from the community, the Partnership made eight mini-grants for drug abuse prevention programs aimed at youths.

Within a few years, several other Neighborhood Places in Louisville expect to organize community partnerships around the goal of child protection. And the Louisville Community Partnership is providing leadership to five other community partnerships forming around Kentucky. State leaders are enthusiastic about the approach, and eventually the community partnership approach may be adopted statewide.

St. Louis Neighborhood Network

Safe children. Healthy families. Strong communities. Those are the goals of the St. Louis Neighborhood Network.

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he Network, operating in an economically distressed area of south St. Louis, sits on top of several key building blocks:

- The launch, in 1989, of Caring Communities, an integrated, inter-agency, service delivery system at selected Missouri schools;
- The establishment, in 1993, of a statewide public-private partnership, called the Family Investment Trust to promote state agency collaboration with communities;
- The passage, in 1994, of a law that permitted 16 pilot sites across Missouri to test a flexible state agency response to reports of child abuse or neglect. In the pilot areas, most reports trigger an assessment of the family's strengths and needs, followed by an offer of voluntary services. Reports of sex abuse, serious injuries and chronic life-threatening neglect are co-investigated by the agency and the police. An independent evaluation has found that the dual-track approach has improved child safety, gotten help to families earlier, and reduced repeat reports of abuse and neglect. In 1990, the Legislature has authorized expansion of the dual-track approach statewide.

Ans. to Q. 2
Evaluation
conducted as
described. Prosecutions
not an issue in
SLS area.

The St. Louis Neighborhood Network built upon and extended these state-initiated reforms in two zip codes in south St. Louis that are characterized by a highly transient population, high levels of economic distress, and a rate of reported child abuse and neglect thrice the national rate. Here, parents, teachers, community leaders, private agencies and the Missouri Division of Family Services are collaborating on services that help parents take better care of their children.

Four hubs, based at schools and a neighborhood organization, serve as centers of activity for localized networks of social service providers, teachers, clergy, business owners and parents. Among the hubs' projects in their first two years were establishment of Parent Welcome Centers; organization of parent support groups (including Parents Anonymous); sponsorship of several family fun

nights and community celebrations, and a computerized map of the neighborhood that helps residents recognize and locate resources.

At each hub, trained family support workers, drawn from the community, help families work on their problems and build on their strengths so they can keep their children safe. The families are encouraged to seek written "community support agreements" from relatives, friends, neighbors, or community agencies willing to pledge their help. At the Sigel Community Education Center hub, a family support worker provides intensive in-home help to families with children who are at risk of chronic neglect. At a local day-care center, another family support worker coordinates prenatal and postnatal services for families with very young children, those at highest risk for abuse or neglect.

Meanwhile, ~~the state child protection workers who are involved with the Network~~ are undergoing intensive training to help them learn better ways to interact with families. About a dozen have actually been out-stationed at the Sigel hub. And more and more, CPS workers are using family conferencing — a problem-solving technique in which a family's key formal and informal supports help them develop individualized action plans to ensure the safety of its children.

Partnership for Safe Families, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

The motto of the Cedar Rapids Partnership for Safe Families says it all: Help is right next door.

Help is literally right next door or only a few blocks away in the neighborhoods served by the Cedar Rapids Partnership, which operates out of ~~three~~ Cedar Rapids family resource centers. The centers provide traditional social, public health and income maintenance services, plus recreation, parent support groups, preschool and community-building activities.

Five changed to
three as per info
from Fran

Section re-organized

Cedar Rapids, Iowa's second largest city, was fertile ground for a community child protection partnership, since several inter-agency and public-private collaborations were already under way. In 1991, the Brownstone Family Resource Center had begun using the "Patch" approach to community-centered services. (In the Patch approach, CPS staff and private service providers work together to coordinate services for families in their own neighborhoods.) In addition, Linn County was one of five areas of the state piloting a flexible response approach to abuse and neglect reports — tailoring interventions to each family's needs and strengths.

Among the groups and individuals who formed the Partnership to build on these ongoing reforms were the state CPS agency, a community action program, a child welfare agency, the YWCA, a settlement house, county government, the United Way, public schools, neighborhood associations and parents' groups.

Today, the Partnership's family support workers help keep children safe by assisting their families with parenting issues, housing problems, domestic violence, health care and job-training and employment services. They're augmented by 20 trained community residents, called "Neighborhood Partners," who provide all kinds of aid, from referring families to community resources to lending them household cleaning supplies to organizing block parties. Through the efforts of the Partnership, numerous families have solved their problems without becoming statistics in the state's child-abuse caseload.

One of the most striking characteristics of the Cedar Rapids Partnership is the strong sense of shared mission that's been forged between the child protection and domestic violence communities. Research shows that the two problems are intimately connected. Through cross-training and regular case discussions, child welfare and domestic violence caseworkers develop individualized case plans for families that address the complex dynamics of family violence. As domestic violence expert Susan Schechter says,

"Children can't really be safe until their mothers are safe. The community partnership approach may at long last help the child protection and domestic violence communities to work together and to create a more unified system for child and family protection."

A Growing Movement. . .

The places you've read about here aren't the only ones in which the community child protection movement is building. Locally based collaborative approaches to child protection are being tried all over the United States, and in some places, they're already operating statewide.

Tn Los Angeles County, about two dozen community-based networkers of service agencies, schools, and county departments have formed to provide a more coordinated, integrated approach to assuring child safety in families in eight distinct neighborhoods. The effort, called the Family Preservation Network, serves families who haven't had substantiated abuse reports, but whose children are at risk of being neglected or abused. Each network tailors its services to meet the needs of the particular community it serves.

In New Orleans, a private community agency, Kingsley House, is both assessing some families for the local CPS agency and providing services to children in families that have been reported for neglect. And in Washington, D.C., seven community-based collaboratives called Healthy Families/Thriving Communities are developing neighborhood-driven child protection and family support service delivery systems.

Tn addition to these local initiatives, many states are rethinking their approaches to child protection. Throughout Oregon, the child protection agency is using a family decision-making process that utilizes family strengths, natural support systems (like relatives and close friends) and community partners to ensure the safety of children at risk of abuse or neglect. In Virginia, five counties and the city of Portsmouth are operating a legislature-authorized, two-year pilot program to test a dual-response system. In these areas, most reports of child maltreatment are now being handled through a family

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needs assessment approach, and local child protection agencies are enlisting community partners to help provide services.

Since the early '90s, almost a dozen legislatures have mandated sweeping changes in their child protection systems. The most common reform is adoption of a flexible-response system. For the least serious reports of child maltreatment and those likely to be unsubstantiated, this system generally permits state or county agencies to assess the family's total situation and offer help as indicated. Traditional investigative methods are reserved for serious cases, such as sexual abuse, physical injury or life-threatening neglect. In 1997 and 1998, seven states adopted flexible response systems: South Carolina, Washington, Delaware, Texas, Arizona, Nevada and Oklahoma.

In addition, several legislatures have required their CPS agencies to link with community-based organizations, such as schools, churches, neighborhood organizations, and mental health providers, to help support families. Iowa and Missouri were in the vanguard of this approach. Similar reforms are expected to be considered in several other states in 1999.

With the increasing devolution of formerly federal responsibilities to the states, more and more state legislatures and CPS agencies are beginning to recognize that they need new partners in the important work of keeping children safe from abuse or neglect. The job is too big — and too important — for government to take on by itself.

Gary Stangler, director of the Missouri Department of Social Services and president of the American Public Human Services Association, sums up the philosophy of the community child protection movement this way: *"We are in this together."* he says. *"Neither state agencies nor communities can do it alone."*

2.
Joanne:
Would this work
as a conclusion?
I'd still like to
end with
Gary's quote.

In the Words of Parents

Two parent talk about how community child protection partnerships in their cities helped their families.

. . . . A Blessing in Disguise

When Christy first sat down in the Project Reach office in Jacksonville, Fla., all she could do was cry. A spiteful relative had told the state's child-abuse hotline that she was using drugs and neglecting her children. It wasn't true. But Christy, a 34-year-old single mother of two teens, did need help.

[We were living in a real bad neighborhood where the kids couldn't even go outside,] she said. *[We needed to move, but I didn't have any money.]*

A community liaison worker helped Christy move to a small house in a better neighborhood. Then she and Christy set to work on the family's other problems. The worker found beds for the children, who'd been sleeping on the floor. She talked Christy into getting treatment for her chronic depression. And she helped Christy enroll the children in an after-school youth leadership program. Over time, Christy's self-confidence improved so much that she traded her welfare check for a job at a boarding home for the elderly.

For the first time in years, Christy looks forward to getting up every day. *[My relative thought she was going to hurt me by calling the hotline, but it ended up being a blessing in disguise,]* Christy says.

.It was the only place I felt safe

One day, Cheryl B. wandered into Neighborhood Place Ujima in Louisville's Duvalle Education Center, where her youngest children attended preschool.

Titles OK

~~Administrator~~ Sylvia Johnson and ~~Coordinator~~ Georgia Eugene were talking in a hallway when Cheryl approached them, told them her problems, and burst into tears.

I was a desperate mother who needed help, I said Cheryl, 32. I had five children I wasn't taking very good care of, and I was pregnant again. I had been through a lot of physical and emotional abuse, and I was on drugs. I had all these thousands of problems on my shoulders, which made me angry about everything.

Miss Johnson looked at me and said, 'I'm going to see what we can do.' I

Cheryl agreed that her children needed to go into foster care until she got control of her own problems. And for the next 18 months, she took advantage of nearly every service Neighborhood Place Ujima offers, including psychological and drug abuse counseling, parenting and household budgeting classes, a GED preparation course, and vocational training. They helped me take my problems off my shoulders, one by one, Cheryl says.

Today, Cheryl works as an arena vendor and studies in a nurse's aide training program. She hasn't used drugs for almost a year. She's gotten her children back. And by everybody's account, she's a much better mother.

"If it wasn't for everybody at Neighborhood Place Ujima, I'd be in terrible shape," Cheryl says. "Most places you go to for help, they work with you on one problem, or they can give you help just one time a year. Whatever type of help I needed, they had it here."

CSSP to provide a resource page.

¹ Annual reports of National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect and National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect.

² National Incidence Study, Department of Health and Human Services, 1996.

³ Voluntary Cooperative Information Systems (VCIS), February 1998.

⁴ Estimate of National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.