



GUIDES TO COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Building Villages To Raise Our Children: Community Outreach



THE HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Building Villages To Raise Our Children: Community Outreach

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“It takes a village to raise a child” is a fundamental theme in family support and education efforts. This African proverb is so powerful because it conveys what children and families need: personalized, accessible, and interconnected support. The village is an inclusive concept built on the idea of mutual responsibility. It captures the fact that the whole community and all its members, not just a particular program or agency, are responsible for what happens to children and families. The village theme explores anew a vision of family support services: No longer is it sufficient for a community to increase self-contained programs; instead, a community needs to develop a system of interrelated services. Such a system encourages agency collaboration and public-private partnerships, while nurturing the capacity of individuals to help themselves and each other.

The *Building Villages* series includes an overview volume and guides on five topics: collaboration, funding and resources, evaluation, community outreach, and staffing. The goal of the series is to provide information that will help you create a caring community for children and families, a village of services that will give children a healthy start and the family a supportive and comprehensive network of services.

Each guide provides a framework for thinking about its topic and information to apply to your own program planning effort. The guides contain practical suggestions based on the experiences of many programs. The guides also describe typical problems and the ways practitioners have chosen to resolve them. The information is relevant for programs in the process of being designed, as well as those already established.

A core group of family support principles lays the foundation for each guide. The series provides a set of building blocks for a community approach to supporting families.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH consists of three phases: recruiting people into your program; sustaining participation; and preparing families to graduate as empowered community members. Effective outreach involves more than bringing families through your doors. It is about forming lasting relationships with program participants, service providers and community members. This guide provides sound advice on how to carry out each phase of outreach in order to involve and empower families.

Acknowledgments

Building Villages to Raise Our Children grows out of a decade of research about programs and policies to strengthen and support families with young children and the communities in which they live. The Harvard Family Research Project sought to capture the voices of those who work intimately with families across a broad range of settings — schools, social service agencies, youth-serving organizations, daycare centers, and various types of nonprofit entities. Because so much of what is contained in this series is practitioner based, we acknowledge the cooperation of directors and staff of the family support programs we were privileged to know. We thank our informants for the time they spent answering the many, many questions we posed in telephone and on-site interviews. We appreciate their allowing us to conduct field visits and the opportunity to observe first-hand the different facets of their work. Their reflections on their experiences are invaluable in helping us understand what good programs are all about as well as in framing the future directions of family support and education.

The *Building Villages* series evolved as a team effort within the Harvard Family Research Project. We met bimonthly with Heather B. Weiss, the project director, to define the issues, elaborate the themes of the series, and learn to write with a single voice. We involved other project research staff who shared information with us and commented on the manuscripts as they went through several revisions. Their challenges as well as support contributed to a much better synthesis of emerging issues in child and family services. Marji Erickson Warfield, Julia Lieblich, Ann Rittenburg, and Vicki Magee gave their critical analyses of our manuscripts. Our series coordinators and editors, Anne Pender, Elena Lopez, and Katherine Wrean, did a fine job of nurturing the writing process and keeping us to our timelines. Our research assistants went about their work with persistence and careful attention to detail. In particular, we wish to acknowledge the help of Karen Body, Stephanie Geller, Mia MacDonald, Sarah Ng, and Elaine Replogle.

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Introduction

Anna Rodriguez, a Mexican migrant worker in California, remembered receiving the flyer. It said something in Spanish about a school visit by a doctor. Rodriguez had young children who occasionally fell ill. "I thought if I went," she says, "I might learn something from the doctor."

It didn't take her long to find out that the visitor was not a medical doctor, but a children's book author (who had a doctorate). She had come to talk about a book discussion project offered by a school program for migrant parents.

For several hours "the doctor" read stories in Spanish, beautifully illustrated tales about Latino children. These children, she told the migrant workers, were the future of the world. As parents they could help shape the future by reading to them in their mother tongue.

Rodriguez left the workshop with a Spanish-language book. "I read it to my children and it was a big surprise," she says. "They always used to fight at night. But they listened to the story and were very, very happy." She returned the next week for another book and the week after that. Noting her enthusiastic participation, the program's outreach team asked Rodriguez if she would be willing to work as a parent educator, talking to others in the community about the value of early childhood education.

The prospect of public speaking frightened her at first. "Old feelings came back," she recalls. "When I was a child my father and brothers told me: 'Keep quiet. You have nothing to say.' But I remembered the words of 'the doctor': 'You can do it. You are an important person.'"

Today Rodriguez tells parents how she learned to read to her children in Spanish and how she mustered the courage to study English at a community college. She lets them know she is serving on committees in the very schools she was once afraid to visit — and that she plans to become a kindergarten teacher herself. "She's a real role model," says the school psychologist. "Because she is from the migrant community she got the point across with a lot more impact than we could. And when migrant parents see she has trust in us, they are ready to listen. Anna Rodriguez gives us credibility."



WHAT IS COMMUNITY OUTREACH?

Effective outreach in your community involves more than getting families in the door. It is about forming lasting partnerships, partnerships like the one between Anna Rodriguez and the staff of the parenting program. Even your most modest outreach efforts should promote the building of trust and communication necessary for an effective partnership. A parent like Rodriguez was won over by a culturally sensitive demonstration of a parenting activity and a message of hope for her children's future. The program's outreach strategy reflects a basic tenet of family support programs: all parents want to be good parents. They simply need the opportunity and support to strengthen their parenting skills.

Community outreach consists of the activities that recruit people into family support programs, invite continuing participation, and prepare families to graduate as empowered community members. The initial step, recruitment, can involve logging long hours contacting families, especially families who are mobile or difficult to reach. Moreover, it is not enough to bring parents through your doors once. You will need to keep them interested and sustain their participation long enough for them to benefit from the program.

Although your program will form a lasting partnership with parents, the nature of that relationship can change over time. Rodriguez entered the program as a participant but her exit actually involved re-entry into the program in a new role as parent educator. As Rodriguez begins to recruit new participants, the outreach process comes full circle. Her involvement with the program illustrates another principle of family support programs: parents need an environment that empowers them to overcome self-doubt, build positive self-esteem, learn to understand and use the network of services available to them, and be productive members of the community.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE OUTREACH

Effective community outreach strengthens what we call the village, or the community in which children and families interact and grow. The most important resource you have to promote your program are villagers themselves. More than 67 percent of program directors surveyed by the Harvard Family Research Project said that "word-of-mouth" is their number one method of bringing people into their program.¹ A few good words from a mother like Anna Rodriguez are worth a thousand flyers.



The outreach process is not an easy one but will be worth the time and energy you put into it. We encourage you to practice the following principles in all your outreach efforts:

Get to know the families in your village. Knowing and understanding the unique characteristics of your potential partners is important in gaining their trust. You must understand the cultures from which they come and their beliefs about family life and childrearing. You should be sensitive to the special needs of families. Most importantly, you must be able to speak to people in their own language and on their own terms, and be prepared to meet them more than halfway. Your initial encounter should mirror the kind of communication and interaction you encourage within your program.

Listen to what each family wants and tailor your services to meet their needs. When designing outreach strategies, listen to the very people you hope to attract. You will need to develop feedback mechanisms to determine family concerns and interests. Remember, too, that family situations change and your program will need to be flexible and responsive. In many cases this will require creative problem solving as you and your staff pull together the resources to meet individual family needs.

Encourage family participation in program planning, problem solving, and assessment. Because parents or primary caregivers are the most important individuals in their children's lives, they need the confidence to take responsible action on behalf of their children and themselves. This process of empowerment must be carried out in a way that helps participants believe in themselves, their own knowledge, and in their ability to know what it is they want and the actions needed to bring that about. Consequently, your program staff should involve parents in identifying priorities, developing family plans, and working on personal and family goals. Staff members should seek opportunities to model behavior and encourage parents to reflect upon their own progress.

Form reciprocal relationships with community agencies. Your program is just one resident in an interdependent village. The needs of families today are so complex that no one program could possibly meet them all. Consequently, as you build relationships with families you must continue to build reciprocal partnerships with schools and other agencies to coordinate crucial family services. In addition to enlisting other programs as partners in your outreach efforts, you will also want to form alliances with the key people in your community who have access to the people you want to reach. Whether a minister, the local pediatrician, a daycare provider, or public housing manager, their endorsement can save your staff many hours.



MYRIAD METHODS, NO ONE SCRIPT

We will describe several outreach methods, while reminding you that there is no one script for all programs. Expect the community outreach process to be one of trial and error that demands a high degree of flexibility. It may take some time to learn the subtle preferences of the people you hope to reach — and even longer to gain their trust.

Successful family-based programs have moved beyond the occasional recruitment poster to creative and comprehensive programs that use the support networks available in their communities. We encourage you to plan your outreach strategy with future needs in mind and with greater involvement of your village resources. We view the development of community outreach as a continuum along these lines:

STAGE 1:

Self-contained outreach: A program develops procedures and activities for recruitment, participation, and exiting the program. It maintains informal links to other programs from which it draws referrals.

STAGE 2:

Interagency outreach: A program still has its own outreach procedures and activities but, in addition, formalizes arrangements with community agencies for referrals, services, and participant transition to other programs. For example, a family support program has an agreement with a social service agency to receive families in a welfare to work program and provide early childhood education, wrap-around daycare, and parenting sessions.

STAGE 3:

Joint outreach: A program is part of a collaborative effort with many community agencies to standardize referral systems, services, and exiting procedures. One step in this direction is the development of a common set of forms that allows a family to gain entry to many service agencies.

STAGE 4:

Integrated outreach: This stage involves community-wide planning toward a reformed service system in which community programs and agencies link the full range of their services. Services are integrated so that a family's entry to one program, for example, housing, opens the way to information, choices, and access to other community-based services such as child care, family support, health, and recreational programs. The system is designed to offer continuous services to meet the needs of children and families.

The development of community outreach is not a prescribed linear process. Family support programs may begin at any stage and weave a network of community ties. These linkages are formed to broaden the population a program



serves, provide service continuity, or create greater efficiency in delivering family services. Let us take a look at how the development might proceed:

Suppose the staff of the school-based parenting program that Anna Rodriguez attends receives frequent questions about children's health. The school psychologist contacts the coordinator of preventive health care at the public health department. Together with the staff they discuss the health needs of migrant families. The coordinator agrees to send the staff brochures and written information about health and nutrition programs for migrant families. She agrees to be their contact person for referrals.

Over the next year the coordinator not only receives referrals from the parenting program, she also directs mothers to it. Noting the favorable response of participants, as well as their increased interest in preventive health care, the school psychologist and coordinator plan for more systematized referrals. The staff of the parenting program comes to the public health department's clinic bimonthly on well-baby days. While parents sit in the waiting room, a parent educator like Anna Rodriguez recruits them to participate in the program.

Without a strong outreach effort, it is doubtful that you will reach the families that need you most. Successful programs make outreach a top priority. In this guide you will learn from the first-hand experience of program directors who have discovered through trial and error what outreach strategies work best and how to overcome barriers to participation.

Again, we emphasize the importance of respectful, caring, and trusting relationships with families. And we urge you to think of yourselves as members of a larger village and to work with community leaders and agencies in building your program. Remember to think broadly about your support base and potential outreach partners. Cooperation among programs benefits the individual, the family, your program, and the entire support village.

Part 1 of this guide focuses on recruitment. Part 2 provides suggestions for sustaining program participation. Part 3 discusses exiting, or preparing participants for life beyond your program. Part 3 also covers how to ease participant transition from an early childhood education and family support program to the school system. A brief section on recruiting teen parents and fathers is included in the Appendix, followed by the Resource Guide listing further sources of information about community outreach.



"If you can't reach parents in the community and get them involved, nothing is going to work. At a minimum outreach takes 50 percent of your staff's energy."

Jocelyn Garlington, Author
Helping Dreams Survive

1

The Building Blocks of Effective Recruitment

Anna Rodriguez went to the school hoping to receive health information from "the doctor." Flyers can be double-edged media. You may think they accurately convey your program's activities, but they may also contain words or phrases that your audience can misinterpret. When that happens, turn a setback into an opportunity. Provide a rewarding experience that will attract a parent to your program. Listen to what parents expect from you and meet their interests.

Effective recruitment requires flexibility, creativity, and an awareness of your participants and their community. As you begin to design your recruitment strategy, think about who you want in your program and what contacts and resources you have to help spread the word of your services.

GETTING TO KNOW AND ENLIST FAMILIES

The St. Louis Parents as Teachers program reports that parent educators spend the better part of the first two months of the program year locating and re-establishing contact with new families.² At Project AHEAD in Los Angeles, staff members estimate that they have to knock on one thousand doors to recruit 30 participants. These examples show that determining which program components maximize participation is critical, especially when resources are scarce.

Whether you recruit participants through door-to-door canvassing, school teacher references, or brochures and posters, your program should be clear about the people it hopes to draw in. You might begin by asking these questions:

- *Will the program be universal or focus on specific groups?*
- *What should the outreach staff know about the values, roles, and concerns of different cultures in your community?*
- *How can the outreach staff meet and enlist potential participants?*

UNIVERSAL OR FOCUSED OUTREACH?

You must determine whether you want your program to be universally accessible or concentrate on particular groups. Bear in mind, however, that even so-called universal programs are rarely universal. Many tend to resort to "cream-



Rachel Ramos, a resource teacher for the Baldwin Park Unified School District in Watsonville, California, says the point is “not to tell parents what you think they should want. Ask instead: ‘What do *you* need?’ And let them know what you can do to help.”

ing,” however unintentionally, reaching only the most eager parents while neglecting those most in need.

Or, if you decide to court a very focused set of participants, such as families with special educational and emotional needs who require a greater allocation of staff time and money, remember that bringing a family into a program means you also need to be capable of sustaining the relationship. Be sure you have the resources to give families the time and services they deserve once they are involved in your program.

After you have determined your audience, you will want to find out as much as you can about their lifestyles and educational needs. Ask yourselves:

- *What do parents want to learn about?*
- *What are their concerns about their children and themselves?*
- *What kind of activities do they enjoy? (Picnics? Potlucks?)*
- *What are the best times to offer programs? (Weekday evenings? Weekday mornings?)*
- *What are the factors that could prevent them from participating in your program? (Lack of money? Lack of transportation?)*

To glean such information talk to the parents in your community and the people who work with them. You may need to conduct surveys to supplement the information you have from intake forms and other data sources in the community. The evaluation guide of the *Building Villages* series discusses these and other information gathering methods.

WORKING WITH A CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY

It is important to have staff members from the cultures and ethnic groups you hope to serve. You can also seek out minority members of community organizations and invite them to work with you on developing an outreach strategy.

Remember that there is a high level of intercultural variability within every ethnic group, particularly in terms of their adaptation of the “national culture.”³ Be skeptical of generalizations. To discuss Hispanics as one group, for example, is to ignore the very real differences between Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans — as well as the differences *among* Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans. There may be a high level of variability within the same family, with younger members assimilating to the mainstream culture more rapidly and older members holding onto their traditions.

Therefore, it makes most sense to focus your efforts on understanding the unique characteristics of the individuals within a cultural group. “Pitch your program to



the home culture of *each* family," advises Emily Vargas Adams, executive director of CEDEN Family Resource Center for Development, Education, and Nutrition in Austin, Texas. "Doing this permits intercultural variability to be handled on a case-by-case basis. Differing strategies can be used to assist specific family members or types of families, as needed."⁴

Experienced outreach workers recommend asking the following questions about the communities you hope to serve:

- *Are the outreach materials sensitive to the culture in question?*
- *With what type of outreach worker would parents be most comfortable?*
- *What type of activity would best facilitate a reciprocal interaction?*
- *What are some common cultural assumptions about child care and childrearing and how can the outreach staff build on traditional parent-child interaction?*
- *What are the special stresses faced by this particular group?*

The inability to read and write in English, coupled with a lack of familiarity with the dominant U.S. culture, is a significant obstacle for foreign-born parents. Many immigrant parents cannot read school newsletters and notices and are left to rely on their children to translate. It is not surprising, then, that many immigrant groups — many with quite large populations — are often underrepresented in community committees. Here are some ways for family support programs to overcome cultural barriers:

Speak the language. The most important advice outreach teams have to offer is: whenever possible, talk to people in their own language. Produce or translate materials in foreign languages, provide interpreters at English-speaking meetings, and when possible, conduct meetings and hold events in the native language of your audiences.

Says one father who attended meetings held in Spanish: "In these meetings, we can learn to talk without being embarrassed or shy. It's very important to get rid of our inhibitions, because it is very difficult to talk in public."⁵

Form partnerships with community organizations. Form liaisons with grass roots community organizations and religious groups that cater to non-English-speaking communities. Seek out bilingual groups and exchange references with them.

Advertise in foreign-language media. Don't forget to run announcements and advertisements in media popular with the groups you are trying to reach.

Create materials and plan events that reflect the culture of the people you hope to recruit. The Pajaro School District in California produced an educational videotape called "Los Padres Son Maestros — Parents are Teachers" with a soundtrack containing folk songs from several regions in Mexico. Because sound



trucks are used in some Latin American communities to inform people of upcoming events, one family support program decided to use trucks to announce its activities.

MEETING THE COMMUNITY

The easiest way to meet families is to be part of the village. "You should go to community functions where you meet parents as a member, not an outsider," suggests one program director. That means attending town meetings, ball games, barbecues, and other events where people congregate.

Some staff members prefer to just "hang out." In Upper Tanana, Alaska, Parent-Child Regional Program workers drop by the post office in the afternoon to chat with potential participants. Some staff members talk to parents at the mall. Others stop by local schools in the morning when parents drop off their kids and in the evening when they pick them up. Says one staff member, "It's the personal touch that works best."

"You see someone waiting at the bus stop with a baby, standing in line at a the grocery store and you just say, 'Oh what a delightful baby.' Then you begin to tell people about your program. We go to play groups; we go to PTA meetings. During holidays, we'll go to Guiliani's Carnival Supply. What you have to do is identify places where people who have children go. And then you have to make yourself visible to them at those points."⁶

Wilma Wells, Director
Early Childhood and Development
St. Louis Public School District
St. Louis, Missouri



HOME VISITING

A rule of thumb in recruitment is that if parents won't come to you, you must go to them. Many programs report that home visits are the backbone of their recruitment efforts. Home visits are the most labor-intensive form of recruitment, particularly among families that do not have telephones. Visits can be conducted by staff members, teachers, social workers, and parents. To increase the likelihood of successful outreach choose staff members who can establish rapport with parents. It is also essential to provide training on home visiting techniques and ways to deal with stressful home environments. Some programs find parents to be particularly effective home visitors, especially those who are already participating in the program.

Here are some general rules when conducting home visits for recruitment:

Plan your visit in advance. It is a good idea to think about what days and times are likely to work well for visits. Some program staff members conduct Saturday visits when it is likely that families will be home. Safety is an issue in high-crime areas. In many cases, staff members travel only in pairs or during daylight hours. Many programs do preliminary scouting of an area before knocking door-to-door.

Keep unannounced visits brief. It is important to understand that parents may be wary of surprise visits. In some neighborhoods bill collectors, rent collectors, insurance salesmen, police, and social workers are likely to drop by — unannounced. If you do not have an appointment, keep the first visit brief. Program staff members report that initial visits may take place on a porch or even from a window. The first meeting may involve only an exchange of pleasantries and telephone numbers so that you can schedule an appointment for a visit or invite a parent to an upcoming school event.⁷

Convey your purpose. Be sure to explain the goals of your program in clear and concise terms. Try to describe how your program can be tailored to meet the needs of the family in question. Remember, no matter what you say about your program, what is most important is your attitude. The way you interact with parents during the very first visit should reflect the philosophy of your program and the kind of relationship you hope to foster.

Encourage parents to ask you questions and express their needs and reservations about the program. Let them know that you appreciate candidness. Some parents may be hesitant to say anything critical, or even to express a lack of interest, for fear of offending the home visitor. Outreach workers have found this particularly true in Hispanic communities in which a high premium is placed on hospitality and graciousness.



To encourage people to be frank, you can ask parents to fill out a simple evaluation form to record likes and dislikes. Through this process your program gains feedback about the structure of the home visit and can seek to match home visitors and families.

Present a neutral attitude. When you go into a home for the first time, be particularly careful about what attitude you project. Some parents may be embarrassed about the condition of their home. Visitors who look startled upon entering low-income housing will convey more with their body language than with words. Their hosts will feel humiliated, and the first visit will be the last.⁸ Lupe Soltero, a teacher in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District in California, always tries to find something to compliment when she visits a home. "Often it's a picture of the family," she says.

Try to determine who the key players are in a child's life. The most influential people in children's lives may not be their parents. It might be a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or family friend. In some communities, many members of the extended family will want to participate in the visit. Says one Appalachian home visitor: "When you're ministering to one, you're ministering to a whole group. You show a video, the whole clan will be watching."⁹

Try to put families at ease as you survey their needs. Let parents know that your first concern is learning *their* needs. In general, limit yourself to the questions necessary to determine a family's needs. Some home visitors, particularly those who come from backgrounds similar to program participants, choose to tell about their own experiences before asking parents to share their stories. The unspoken message is: "I wouldn't ask you to reveal anything I wouldn't be willing to discuss myself." In one program, outreach workers bring a photo album with pictures of their own families. It breaks the ice and helps both the staff member and parent feel more comfortable.

"Because we feel we have something good to offer, the community does not give us carte blanche to dig around in other people's personal lives. Our primary concern was identifying adults who could share in the responsibility of monitoring and participating in the student's school life. [People] would prefer not having to lay bare their lives in order to 'qualify' for assistance in obtaining the basics they need to survive. It is a humiliating process that some people must endure throughout their lives."¹⁰

Jocelyn Garlington, Author
Helping Dreams Survive



Avoid asking for an immediate commitment. Give families time before asking them to sign on the dotted line. "If you reach out, make it like an offering," says one teacher. "Give them something before you ask for something back." Be flexible. "I have parents who say, 'I can only come to ESL once a week,' and we say, 'Fine, you be there,'" says another teacher.¹¹

Some parents will be glad to see you. Many program staff members report that the parents they visit are happy to have someone who cares enough to come see them and is interested in their children's education. If a family is not receptive, however, don't push it. Be polite and try again later.

Finally, *don't give up*. Persistence almost always pays off in the end. Through phone calls, window conversations, and other creative means, you should be able to gain entry into the homes of families your program can help.

FORMING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Establishing ties with key people and community groups is critical for launching a program that hopes to be integrated into the larger village it serves. The collaboration guide in the *Building Villages* series explains this partnership concept in detail. A key factor, however, in forming such partnerships is reciprocity. Ask yourselves: How can this relationship be mutually beneficial in terms of sharing services, facilities, and training resources?

Most program directors have a favorite story about how they gave a party and nobody came. Take a small southern program designed by white staff in a predominantly African-American neighborhood. When three parents showed up at their first open house the staff members knew they were in trouble. So they asked themselves, "Who are the gatekeepers in this community? Who can we contact to spread the word?" They determined that the black minister was a powerful voice in the community and they paid him a visit. He agreed to call on every member of his parish and talk to them about why they should participate in the program. The next open house was a big success.



It is worth brainstorming with your staff to come up with a list of key individuals and groups who interact with the families you hope to reach. Do some preliminary research before reaching out to prospective allies. Not every pastor would make a good partner. If you are interested in a particular church, find out what population it serves and how it defines its mission. Providing adequate housing may be the priority of one religious community, while another may consider education its domain. Once you understand its mission, formulate specific plans for a proposed partnership. Do you want the minister to provide an occasional referral, or are you hoping for a more sustained partnership? Again, think about ways the relationship can be mutually beneficial.

FORMING LIAISONS WITH SCHOOLS

Whether or not your program is connected with a school, it is critical to forge a good working relationship with school personnel. Some program directors recommend having a school staff person who has a good rapport with parents and is good at recruiting affiliate with the program. Many school-based programs rely on teachers to recommend their services during parent-teacher conferences. Some programs ask teachers to make home visits or let their staff speak in classes.

School literature, such as a district newsletter, can publicize your activities. Pamphlets describing your program can be mailed in school packets. Ask your local parent-teacher organization to mention your services to parents of school children.

Finally, do not forget to befriend the school nursing staff. Nurses can help you track down specific population groups. In Madras, Oregon, school nurses have been integral in the Jefferson County Teen Parent Program's efforts to recruit teen mothers.

FORMING PARTNERSHIPS WITH HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

Almost 20 percent of programs surveyed by the Harvard Family Research Project say they rely on referrals from social service agencies to locate program participants.¹² Agency personnel can be particularly helpful in finding families who fit specific criteria. Be sure to put all relevant social service agencies on your mailing list and tap them for potential program participants.



The St. Louis Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, for example, works closely with the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The PAT outreach staff contacts the WIC staff for referrals. Periodically, a PAT parent educator spends a day in the WIC waiting room so the WIC administrator can refer people to PAT on the spot.

Rather than duplicating the efforts of other programs in your community, take advantage of data that other groups have compiled. Such information can be particularly useful in tracking down specific populations in a given community.

- The outreach team at Children with Teachers at Home in Campobello, South Carolina checks birth announcements in local hospitals to identify new parents, then sends them brochures about child development and parenting issues.
- The Early Developmental Awareness Project of Mequon, Wisconsin has used census data to identify parents whose children are not enrolled in preschool.
- Three times a year SHAPE Plus of Bloomington, Minnesota sends out information about its family support activities in welfare check envelopes.

EDUCATING YOUR PUBLIC

The more your community knows about your program the greater the likelihood of receiving referrals, volunteer services, and overall support from the community. One of your goals should be to make everyone in your village aware of child and family issues, think positively about family support programs, and take action. Whether you are thinking in terms of advocacy, public relations, or public education, you will need to tailor your outreach efforts to different audiences. Consider these questions:

- *Who are the different audiences you would like to reach?*
- *Why are you informing them about your program?*
- *What kind of information fits the interests and concerns of this particular audience?*
- *What strengths of your program should be highlighted?*
- *How do you want to describe the families who participate in your program?*



MAKING THE MEDIA WORK FOR YOU

A recent Harvard Family Research Project survey found that more than 36 percent of families learned about the programs in which they participate through television, radio, or the newspaper.¹³ Therefore, you should seriously consider placing your message in the media favored by the people you hope to recruit, such as Spanish radio or television. Announce upcoming events on the radio and be sure they are included in your newspaper's free calendar section.

Your local media is a powerful publicity resource and frequently provides coverage free of charge. Here are some useful hints and guidelines to follow as you build your public relations image:

Know how to describe your program. Before you work with the media, you will need to develop a snapshot of your program. It is important to let people know in clear, concise language precisely what services your program offers, who provides the services, and if there are any requirements for joining the program.

Ideally, you should be able to describe your program to a news director in a one-minute phone call. Although you will want to project a positive, upbeat image, avoid creating a false picture of a too-good-to-be-true program that can make it without community support.

"Talk about the good things that your program is doing, but stress that things can be improved and you need the support of parents and the community. Don't make it all sound too rosy. If it sounds too perfect people will feel comfortable when they shouldn't feel comfortable. Promote the image of partnership in the community. Education should not be contained within the walls of a school. It involves seniors and young professionals. It's everybody's cause."

Jocelyn Garlington, Author
Helping Dreams Survive

Do your homework before dealing with the press. Find out which media news people, feature editors, and reporters cover family-related social issues. When you contact them, be sure to identify them by name. Never send a press release to "The Editor."



Write a press release. Find a qualified staff person or friend of the program to write a newsworthy press release to send to local papers and radio stations. In the release, provide concise information about your program and let them know your staff members are available for interviews and guest appearances.

Have photos on hand. Be sure to have some five-by-seven-inch photos of your program in action to include in your information and publicity packets.

Make connections with a local radio station. Establish a partnership with a local radio station that will allow you to run public service announcements or a program. Citizens Education Center in Seattle, Washington has developed a Saturday morning talk show that airs once a month. It features speakers on parent involvement issues and a question and answer session for parents.

Learn to produce a public access TV show. If you have the time and interest, many cable systems offer training to nonprofit groups who want to learn to produce television segments. Contact your local cable company for information.

Start a media resource file. In addition to keeping track of when the deadlines are for placing advertisements, announcements, and articles in the local press, be sure to keep an accurate record of who was contacted when. Always take the time to make thank you calls and send letters of appreciation to media people. A special effort on this end can make a lasting impression.

Penny Robinson, director of the Goose Rock Family Resource Center in Kentucky, uses a range of strategies to educate her public. She spreads information about her program by writing a column in the local newspaper as well as advertising in it. She also sends out flyers to school children. She makes her presence known by working in other community programs, such as the Clay County Cancer Society, in a reciprocal effort to make all programs meet their goals. Robinson throws potluck dinners and tries to bring teachers, parents, and community members together. She once threw an "Appreciation Fish Fry" to "give a little boost" to everyone who had volunteered in her program.



PUBLIC SPEAKING

Do not let shyness keep you from speaking in public. Presentations are one of the most effective forms of recruitment. Some program staff members regularly talk at scheduled meetings of school teachers, the parent-teacher association (PTA), the board of education, and other groups that attract an audience. Think about where and when your audience gathers. For instance, the beginning of the school year is a good time to address parents and school organizations. Or, if you want to reach new mothers, speak at your local Lamaze class.

Program participants are often the best spokespersons, because other parents can identify with their experience. Staff members who share similar backgrounds with the audience also make effective speakers. The director for a family literacy program regularly spoke to parents about her inadequate education and the difficulties she had faced as a single mother. She talked about how she made it and how other parents could as well. A colleague says she was an inspiration and increased the parents' determination to enter the program.

INVOLVING COMMUNITY PROFESSIONALS

Community professionals are in a position to help spread the word about your program and may have contacts with families you would like to draw into your program. These professionals may include:

Doctors and nurses. Doctors (pediatricians in particular) and nurses are an invaluable source of referrals. They can be particularly helpful in referring patients who fit specific criteria, such as low-income pregnant women and women with infants.

Many programs regularly send out letters to doctors requesting referrals. Ellen Cohen, a teacher coordinator at the Consultation Center/Parent-Child Program in Bridgeport, Connecticut, visits the pediatric unit of a local hospital to introduce doctors to her program.

Note: Be aware that not all doctors will be receptive to your overtures. Some physicians, for example, disapprove of paraprofessionals delivering services usually performed by health care professionals.

Local businesses. Partnerships with members of the business community can produce good results. Diana Rigden, director of precollege programs for the Council for Aid to Education, recommends approaching organizations that have a record of partnerships, such as your state affiliate of the National Association of Partners in Education, the education committees of industry councils, and your local chamber of commerce.



It is best to approach companies and councils when your program is in the planning stage. Executives can help set up community task forces that contain business people, and they can help publicize your program in the community, possibly recruiting their marketing departments to create promotional materials.

The Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce designed payroll inserts for businesses that emphasized the role of parents in education, and it produced an educational videotape on the subject which it provided to local businesses at cost. The Chamber of Commerce also encouraged businesses to give parents time off for school conferences and events.

Rigden recommends making the most of any personal contacts when approaching company leaders. "If there's a person who's connected with someone at a company, use that as a way of getting an interview." Encourage executives to meet with children in the community. "Then they'll have an emotional commitment to the program that will involve their hearts as well as their pocketbooks," she says.

Real estate brokers. You might think real estate brokers are unlikely partners, but many programs report that brokers are an excellent source of referrals. The relationship benefits both parties, as being able to tell prospective home buyers that the community has a first-rate early child education program is an effective selling point for realtors.

ENLISTING PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS

In many programs, parents have agreed to be responsible for publicizing activities. The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program in Kennewick, Washington uses a "welcome wagon" approach. A group of parents meets with others who come to enroll at the program site.

Grandparents, guardians, and other caregivers also can be active recruiters. Early Childhood Family Education in Duluth, Minnesota asked a foster grandmother to work as an early childhood aide. She, in turn, brought in her daughter who had a child eligible for the program. They spread the word around the community and family after family began to enroll. "I know someone who needs this," was the common refrain.



Parents as Teachers in Hollister, Missouri makes a special effort to get grandmothers involved in everything from babysitting to serving on panels on childrearing. The hope is that once they are involved they may encourage the entire extended family to attend.

SPREADING THE WORD, CAPTURING THE IMAGE

Twenty-six percent of programs the Harvard Family Research Project surveyed claimed families learn of their programs through written material.¹⁴ Programs publish a wide array of literature describing their work. We suggest trying one or more from the following list:

Produce an orientation brochure. Make it concise and free of jargon. Consider designing an envelope, folder, or binder in which families can keep the brochure and other important records. Lost program information is a frequent reason why participants neglect to show up.

Publish a newsletter. Many groups produce bimonthly, monthly, or quarterly newsletters to send to parents, teachers, administrators, child care providers, and social service agency personnel. Newsletters can be two-page mimeographed lists of upcoming events or glossy publications supported by paid advertisements. Many outreach teams report that parents produce the most effective newsletters.

“Not until primary writing responsibility shifted to parent coordinators did people start reading newsletters. They [parents] shaped a letter that was more friendly, mentioned names of parents and their children, thanked people for support, mentioned birthdays, etc.”¹⁵

Jocelyn Garlington, Author
Helping Dreams Survive

Produce a directory. Collaborate with other groups on a comprehensive directory of programs. Parenting Education Center of Falls Church, Virginia publishes and distributes 4,000 copies of the Fairfax [County] *Guide to Parenting Program* to public and community-based agency personnel.



Make a film, video, or slide show. FAMILY MATH of Berkeley, California shows a 17-minute film to thousands of people each year. Project Empower of the San Diego City Schools produced five versions of a promotional program using five different sets of actors speaking their native languages. Another program videotaped kids in their preschool program and showed it to parents so they could see what their children were up to.

Decorate bulletin boards. Tacoma-Pierce County Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools has an annual art show featuring the work of program participants. Each school principal sets up a bulletin board displaying toys and books made by the parents to advertise the program to other parents.

Don't forget the old faithfuls: flyers and posters. Creative and colorful flyers and posters with catchy messages are an inexpensive and effective form of outreach. Do not limit yourself to putting a few posters in schools and libraries. Remember to put them in grocery stores, Laundromats, and at bus stops. One program reports that its most effective flyer said simply: "You need never feel alone in school matters. Call us." You may also want to include educational material on the back of a flyer, such as tips on making a toy for a preschool child or a list of free family outings in the area. That way a single effort can have double the results.

WHEN PARENTS SAY NO

Virtually every program reports that there are some parents who fail to respond to even the most persistent efforts. These parents are simply too troubled or demoralized to respond. It is important to remember that *every parent has the right to say no to an invitation to participate in your program*. No matter how laudable your goals, your program may simply add too much pressure to the life of a harried parent. A single mother who is trying to raise children, hold down a job, and attend night school courses to advance her career may decide that your program does not fit into her life right now.

We recognize that whether or not to persist in a recruitment effort is a difficult judgment call. Some of your staff members may be willing to make many visits to a family while others may feel that limits should be set. Beyond differences in personalities, deciding when to stop courting a family carries both ethical and management implications. Families' right to privacy has to be respected. In addition, staff time can be spent recruiting other families or attending to the many activities of your program.



"[We had to ask:] Could we in good conscience write off families? We finally decided that pursuing families who would not meet us halfway was draining valuable staff time and energy that would be better spent with parents who wanted to work with us toward positive solutions for kids.

"We continued to do what we could to keep the parents informed, we accepted the fact that we could do little to change the level of their involvement. We continued to mail to the uninvolved, but we stopped chasing them. One parent coordinator had a very difficult time with that. She said, 'We're here to reach people who need us most. We know from experience that it is the silent parents, the ones who feel the most frustrated and cut off, who need us most. How can we abandon them?' I said that we were not abandoning them, but we could no longer chase them with such ferocity or we were abandoning the people who have made contact with us and need our support."¹⁶

Jocelyn Garlington, Author
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2

The Challenge of Sustaining Participation

In our opening story, Anna Rodriguez, the Mexican migrant worker, returned week after week to the school's parenting program. She says, "I love the parenting program because I learn so many things about myself and my children. I am participating a lot in the program. I feel more confident in myself."

By definition, successful family support programs are able to keep parents like Rodriguez returning. They have very few dropouts and a waiting list for participants. As you design your program, think about how to sustain program participation:

- *Are all the staff members trained to be friendly and welcoming? Do they inspire trust?*
- *Is the program accessible both physically and psychologically?*
- *Are activities planned to meet the schedules of parents?*
- *Is child care available while parents are engaged in other activities?*
- *In addition to parenting sessions, are there activities that meet the interests of parents?*
- *Does the program receive feedback from parents — and act on it?*
- *Does the program try to win back those who dropout?*

TRAINING YOUR STAFF

A staff person is usually a potential participant's first contact with a program, and that first impression could be the last. Training your team to initiate and maintain relationships based on openness and trust is time and money well spent. The rapport staff establishes with participants is key to their continuing participation. The staffing guide in the *Building Villages* series offers more extensive information about staff and family relationships, but we include a few suggestions here:

Train your entire staff. When training, remember to include the bus driver, the school nurse, and the receptionist. A parent educator may be committed to welcoming parents *into* the program while a receptionist may be used to keeping people *out*. Be sure the staff understands what the program is trying to achieve.

Encourage your staff to be nonjudgmental. Discuss how staff people can convey a positive, nonjudgmental outlook to the community. Be aware that negative attitudes on the part of staff members can be transmitted through body language



as well as words. It is important to approach the families you serve from their strengths, not their deficits, and to try to understand their value systems and cultures. At the Family Services Center in Gainesville, Florida, staff members enjoy a reputation of professionalism combined with empathy. Says one parent, "It was wonderful to know that people loved you as a human being, no matter whether you're black, white, green, or whatever."

Use staff meetings to reflect upon your relationships with families. It is important to encourage your staff members to talk openly about their assumptions about families in order to separate fact from fiction. Some staff members may assume incorrectly, for example, that they know more than parents and will be prevented from helping parents learn for themselves. Others may be all too eager to do things for parents who are in a position to act for themselves. Staff members who work with specific families need the feedback of co-workers to gain a balanced perspective. This self-analysis with peers also models a style of interaction for staff to apply in their own work with families.

MAKING YOUR PROGRAM ACCESSIBLE

Your program's services should be easily accessible and convenient for families to use. They should be located in a setting that carries a positive image in the community, such as a school, church, or community center.

TRANSPORTATION

You can meet families on their home turf or provide transportation to your program. Parents as Teachers in Hollister, Missouri operates a traveling library to reach isolated families. According to the outreach team, the program "has been an enormous success." Other programs conduct activities in shelters and welfare hotels.

You may also want to consider:

Securing a van or bus. Many programs provide transportation for people in rural areas or in urban neighborhoods with poor bus service. Some programs borrow vans from local church groups, community centers, or corporations, while a school-affiliated program has access to school buses. Still others seek the help of volunteers to transport families.

Arranging carpools. Some programs coordinate carpooling among parents or encourage parents using public transportation to travel in pairs. This "buddy system" is not only safer, some lasting friendships have formed on the way to meetings.



Providing transportation vouchers. St. Louis Parents as Teachers spends some of its state funds on transportation vouchers and taxicab fares to bring mothers and children to and from group meetings. The program reports: "More than almost every other technique, this simple procedure helps get families to group meetings. Innumerable telephone calls between the families and taxi companies become part of the routine. Secretaries and parent educators are busy arranging this."¹⁷

Working with the transport authority. The Parent Child Workshop in Muskegon, Michigan was both creative and persevering. It held lengthy negotiations with the transit authority to get a bus route changed to include a stop at the building that housed their program.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

It is a good idea to survey parents to find out when they are free. To reach dual-career couples and single parents and guardians with tight schedules, many programs hold evening and weekend classes and activities. However, if you discover that parents are afraid to travel after dark, be sure to schedule your meetings earlier in the day.

Activity, Book, and Toy Parent Resource Center in New Market, Maryland extends its hours by appointment to encourage single-parent and dual-income families to participate. Other programs hold Saturday workshops. Neighborhood Family Resource Centers of Detroit holds an eight-week early evening series of light suppers and discussion for couples.

Work site meetings are another alternative. The Parents Place in San Francisco conducts its Worksite Speakers Bureau to meet the needs of parents unable to participate in daytime programs. The program staff organizes parent education workshops, seminars, and discussions for parents at their work sites.

The Working Parent Resource Center offers 45-minute noon-time seminars to parents working in downtown St. Paul, Minnesota. Corporate sponsors donated space for the center and five additional downtown sites. Seminars vary in length from one to ten sessions.

MAKING ACTIVITIES AFFORDABLE

While many family support programs offer core activities free of charge, they also hold special events that involve payment. Making these social and recreational events affordable encourages participation. For example, The Center in Leadville, Colorado sponsors monthly dinner nights when parents can eat with



their children and meet teachers for \$1 per person. At Project Peace, a school-based program in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a “mom’s night out” promotes informal social support and respite for mothers of infants and toddlers. The mothers pay for their low-cost entertainment, usually a movie or a pizza dinner.

PROVIDING CHILD CARE

Many programs provide child care whenever they hold a function for parents. These programs rely on volunteers and staff members to work with children while parents are attending classes or other activities. The arrangement provides parents respite and an opportunity to meet and interact with other adults. One parent says of the program she joined, “It’s a relief for me because my two kids are a lot of work. I drop off my three-year-old and the baby crawls around the [infant-toddler] room and everybody always wants to hold him, and I get a break. I can sit and talk with adults instead of just talking with children all day long.”

MEETING FAMILY NEEDS THROUGH LINKAGES

Your program will need to be prepared to deal with diverse families and many different family concerns. It may be necessary to help families obtain basics such as food, clothing, and diapers. For example, a mother came to a meeting without her children, explaining that it was too cold to bring them outdoors. The program staff found two winter coats for her. She brought her children to the next meeting. Other programs report great success with clothing swaps, when parents bring in clothes in good condition to trade with other parents.

Some families may have complex needs that will require you to refer them to other community services. Many program directors find that parents with housing, domestic, or employment problems are overwhelmed. They need extra support to sustain their participation in parenting activities. That is why Early Education Services in Brattleboro, Vermont, which began with a parenting program, has formed partnerships over the years with agencies to provide families with health, mental health, vocational training, and adult education services.

Again, the key to developing agency linkages is reciprocity. Think in terms of establishing an ongoing relationship in which you provide a service for the partner agency as well, whether it be giving them referrals or inviting agency personnel to your training sessions. Forming a cooperative partnership with an agency that differs with yours in terms of philosophy and practice can be difficult, but many programs have found it beneficial to negotiate agreements, in the interest of sharing resources and serving families more effectively.



“We try to gear our events to what was culturally interesting to our families,” says Jocelyn Garlington. “Another school might have a spaghetti dinner, but for black folks that isn’t their thing. We get more mileage out of having a soul food fest.”

Once you have established agency partnerships, it is crucial to maintain them. In order to coordinate outreach and other services in a community with numerous programs, it is essential that you develop a network of providers. It is much easier to refer a family to another program if you are up to date on its services. Project Hope of Warwick, Rhode Island holds weekly networking lunches with other community service providers. Many groups publicize their programs in a single guide, thus serving as a clearinghouse of information for an entire community.

KEEPING ATTUNED TO PARENT INTERESTS

Parent participation will depend on the flexibility and responsiveness of your program. Bear in mind that losing parent interest may well mean losing both parent *and* child participation. Some family support programs that began with child-centered activities have added parent-centered activities, because staff members realized that parents have interests aside from parenting.

Balanced programming means meeting the separate and mutual interests of children and parents. As your program evolves, remember to plan with parents, provide incentives, and reward participation:

Sponsor recreational activities. Many parents seek activities that are family-centered. Program staff members report great success with parents at outdoor gatherings, parties, potluck dinners, open houses, creative play groups, and multicultural fairs. Early Childhood Family Education of Duluth, Minnesota hosts an annual “Family Affair” at a local shopping mall.

Give careful thought to logistics when planning special events. Co-sponsoring an event with another agency can help defray costs. Hold an activity locally or provide transportation for families who need it. Consider safety concerns. Some parents may be reluctant to leave their homes in the evening for fear of walking on the street and leaving their homes empty.

Rethink the traditional meeting. While some parents shun meetings, others prefer formal gatherings. There is a sense that a meeting means business and serious discussion of the problem at hand.

Meetings should be well planned with a clear agenda, and the straight lecture format should be avoided. Instead, plan an interactive conversation with your audience and address topics that will help strengthen parents’ role in their community.



"Fifteen parents came to meetings when I set the agenda. Now 70 come because they are the ones who set the agenda."¹⁸

Paul Nava, Director

Migrant Parent Training and Involvement Program

Pajaro Valley, California

Cater to the different roles of parents. Many programs have expanded the repertoire of parenting sessions to include adult development. These sessions include informal parent-to-parent support, building self-esteem, and informational talks by community representatives on education, training, and employment opportunities and on local services. The Parent and Child Education program in Kentucky offers a "Parenting Time" that addresses the roles of parents as individuals, parents, family members, students, workers, and community members. (See the Appendix for suggestions on reaching fathers.)

Provide appropriate incentives. Some programs offer incentives for groups that are difficult to reach. Recreational activities and field trips often motivate family participation. In rural areas and isolated urban neighborhoods a pizza party or visit to the zoo can be a special treat. A well endowed toy- and book-lending library, too, can sustain interest, especially when families have limited budgets for such items. To attract and retain teen parents, some programs provide free diapers, baby clothing, and meals. (See the Appendix for more information on reaching teen parents.)

Encourage parents to organize activities. Parent involvement is the key to successful program activities. Listen to parents — they are your program's most astute critics — and whenever possible let parents take charge. Involve them as decision makers in your program. Invite them to become members of your advisory committee. Some activities that parents have organized include recreational events, open houses for recruitment, fundraisers, and neighborhood safety campaigns.

"We decided among the staff that it would be nifty to create a club for parents, to have a nice warm place where they could come. We envisioned a club where people would roll up their sleeves and address pressing education issues. We promoted the club for eight to ten months in a newsletter and it went over like a lead balloon. The parents had rejected it.

"One Sunday we had a parents meeting; the parents exchanged numbers on their own and they formed a club. Their main concern was providing more recreational and afterschool activities for their children because the streets were getting more and more dangerous."¹⁹

Jocelyn Garlington, Author
Helping Dreams Survive



Start a parent resource room. A parent resource center offers a place for parents to drop in, have coffee, review resource materials, make telephone calls, work on resumes, take part in workshops, and talk individually with staff members. Many programs offer a library or educational resource center, which in addition to books, magazines, journals, and article reprints, make available a collection of children's books. Often Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) and other adult education classes are held here.

To create a parent center you need a physical space, adult-sized tables and chairs, a telephone, and a coffee pot, hot plate, and occasional snacks. If money permits, or if you find donors, consider acquiring audiovisual equipment for viewing resource materials. A word processor and printer would also be useful for parents in the job market.

Dedicate a phone line for information. Telephone lines for parents and/or children calling into the program can provide a wide range of information. Besides stating your hours of operation, you may want to use a machine to record messages about upcoming events that change weekly or monthly. A homework hotline that allows children to ask teachers questions after school is another popular option.

Several programs have established "warmlines," which offer parents information, counseling, and referrals. The tone of your warmline should reflect the needs of your families. Beatrice Fennimore's *How to Set Up a Warmline*, listed in the Resource Guide at the back of this volume, provides information on setting up a telephone consultation system.²⁰

The benefit of setting aside a phone line exclusively as a parents' line is that they can get more immediate responses to their questions. Print flyers telling parents about the special phone line, provide telephone number labels to stick on their phones, and find a knowledgeable and friendly person to answer the line.

Finally, **don't forget to reward parent participation:** Project AHEAD in Los Angeles hosts an annual awards event to honor parents participating in the program. The Pajaro Valley Migrant Parent Program in California gives door prizes to parents who come to the program three times in a row, usually a book to read aloud.

FOLLOWING UP WITH FAMILIES

Your program will experience different levels of enthusiasm and participation among families. Be prepared to deal with some families who seldom show up or even drop out of your program. These may be the very people who need your program most.



Some programs are located in neighborhoods with high mobility rates, making continuous participation difficult. At the Family Services Center in Gainesville, Florida, families who move out of the school zone served by the program remain eligible or are referred for continuing services in another area. The Way to Grow program in Minneapolis, Minnesota is addressing the mobility issue through a multiple strategy: It seeks to follow up on families through home visits; promote community-based locations for services, thereby making them accessible to families as they move through different locations; strengthen its referral network so that families are not lost in the service system; and work with community agencies to resolve problems in service delivery.²¹

As you keep in touch with families in your community, reminding them that your program is there to serve them, remember these simple principles:

Keep it personal. You can send out personal notes, especially to families without telephones, and make friendly calls. The most important calls and notes are reminders. Staff members say calling to confirm appointments and remind parents of scheduled activities is essential.

Many programs have found in-person visits conducted by sensitive and knowledgeable staff to be the most effective method of breaking down barriers to participation. Home visits provide an opportunity to learn about family problems that your program can help resolve. Staff members are also able to counsel participants and spark the motivation for attendance at the next meeting.

Show that you care. Caring and concerned staff members can encourage participants, especially those with unresolved problems, not to give up. Here is what one parent has to say about her family worker:

She shows me that there are people who care, you know. There've been a couple of times when I was thinking about dropping out of the program and she'd talk to me and tell me that education is the key, and if I were to drop out, what would become of me and my kids? She's motivated me to keep going.

Be patient. Some programs that focus on families with multiple problems have learned that participation evolves over time. It is not always a consistent and continuous process, and that can be difficult for staff. However, your staff members must be flexible and patient. They have to be prepared to deal with being let down and to be ready to offer support and encouragement when the participant knocks at the door. The parent quoted above adds:

There were a couple of times when I would not go [to class], and when I'd come back it was just like I'd never been gone...She'd[her family worker] just hug me, and say, 'Well, where have you been? I've been concerned about you.' She's real good. I don't think I would have learned what I've learned had it not been for her.



3

Preparing Participants for Life After Your Program: Empowerment and Exit

In our opening story Anna Rodriguez talks about growing up without self-esteem. Her participation in the parenting program was a turning point in her life. She says, "I learned how to love myself...I feel more confident in myself." Once a person afraid to speak before her family, she now speaks to dozens of families. Formerly a parent afraid to ask school personnel about her children, she now serves on school committees and aspires to become a kindergarten teacher. She has gone from being a participant to a parent educator.

At some point, families will leave your program. Some may leave for good and, hopefully, can be counted on to help recruit new participants by word-of-mouth. Some may leave your program and return as their children go through different developmental stages. Or, they may return in less fortunate circumstances. In the experience of program directors, families burdened by financial or domestic problems will need intensive support periodically as they confront new crises. However, other participants may graduate into new roles in your program. Like Rodriguez, they may become part of your staff or they may serve your program as volunteers, advisory board members, and advocates.

Consider these questions as you prepare families to exit your program:

- *Does the staff help parents recognize and work with their strengths?*
- *Do parents participate in making family plans?*
- *Does the program give parents information about negotiating with the school, health, and social services systems?*
- *Does the program provide learning opportunities for working with these systems through modeling behavior or role playing?*
- *Are there liaisons with schools or specific transition activities for families as they move from early childhood family support programs to the schools?*
- *Are parents given the opportunity to hold decision-making roles in the program?*
- *Are parents encouraged to reciprocate services received and become active participants in building the support village?*



EMPOWERING FAMILIES

As you nurture participants in your program you will also be weaning them away from it. Your goal is to support as well as empower families. What exactly do we mean by “empowerment”? We endorse the definition put forth by the Cornell Empowerment Group:

Empowerment is an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over these resources.²²

The process of empowerment must be carried out in a way that helps participants believe in themselves, their own knowledge, and in their ability to know what it is they want and the actions needed to bring that about. Dr. Heather Weiss, director of the Harvard Family Research Project, says of empowerment, “This process involves not just the improvement in the status or life chances of individuals but recognition of the interdependence of the individual’s family and community.”

One of the initial steps involved in empowerment is finding ways to help parents dismiss their self-doubts and build positive self-esteem. This process entails a change in attitude and beliefs about oneself and one’s environment and addresses problems that interfere with participation such as isolation, cultural differences, low literacy and the feeling of powerlessness. Activities organized to give parents the opportunity to become aware of their competence and define their own purpose, aspirations, and intentions are important.

“Modeling” behavior. Parents need to learn how to make use of community and school resources and improve the problem-solving skills that help them identify, choose, and realize their goals. The staff of Early Education Services in Brattleboro, Vermont models behavior for participants. A home visitor may make some of the initial phone calls to get information that a family needs but turns that into an “adult education lesson.” She will then sit and talk with the parent about the information and how it was obtained. The home visitor also combines instruction and assistance in helping a parent fill out school, health, or social service agency forms.

Enhancing life skills. Provide parents the opportunity to practice new skills. Adults learn best when activities are relevant to their experiences and can be applied to their own lives. Activities can be designed to maximize parent planning, decision making, and role taking. At Inn-Circle, a transition program for homeless mothers with young children, participants join groups with specific functions such as facility maintenance, security, children’s activities, and social and recreational events. Parents have the opportunity to enhance their commu-



"In the beginning I thought parents didn't care," admits one school superintendent. "They wouldn't come to conferences, wouldn't make their kids come to school. They were belligerent with us... [But I found out that] the problem was a lack of trust." Assume all parents care about their kids and operate from the standpoint that your job is to eliminate the obstacles that prevent them from participating in your program, be it lack of transportation or lack of trust. And be aware that you may have to help parents overcome negative stereotypes about *you*.

nication, organizational, and leadership skills. Chris Carman, an administrator with the community action agency that sponsors Inn-Circle says, "There's shared leadership in those groups. The parents are learning the kinds of skills that employers are impressed with — somebody who knows how to take responsibility for something, and to handle something well."

Encouraging parent involvement. Empowering parents to become involved in their children's education and development at home or in school, as a volunteer or serving on a governance committee, benefits the school, the child, the parent, and the community as a whole. Remember that the process of empowerment is a collective effort. Form liaisons with grass roots community organizations, religious groups, and local agencies to encourage parent roles as decision makers and advocates.

Filipino parents in one community seldom came to the PTA, so Filipino community organizations created a committee to organize a Filipino Parents' Association. The first event hosted a guest speaker who discussed differences between the U.S. and Filipino education systems and explained to parents how they could be advocates for their children here. Only a handful of parents came to the first meeting, but through word-of-mouth soon 20 to 30 parents were attending monthly gatherings.²³

Fostering parent-school partnerships. Often schools view parents from a deficit perspective and assume that parents inactive in the schools are incompetent, not interested in becoming involved, cannot help because they work long hours, or do not speak English. However, the truth is the vast majority of parents care about their children and possess the capacity to be part of their children's education and advocate for them.

Your family support program plays a key role in building positive relationships between home and school. Your program can empower parents by having them realize ways in which they are already involved with their children's education and envision other ways they would like to be involved in the future. Design activities that build skills specifically helpful for active involvement with a child's school and teacher.

Informing parents about the school system, how it functions, and the choices they may have is critical. Providing information about the purpose of parent-teacher conferences enables both parent and teacher to get the most out of them. Parents also need to know how to effectively work with the school staff and understand the difference between aggression and assertiveness. Practice at speaking in front of a group is also a good exercise.



In the Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy Program (META) in Oakland, California, the staff gives presentations informing parents of their children's right to an education. Sessions are translated into Khmer, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hmong, and Spanish as needed. "The parents we talk to are a sponge for this information," says West Coast director Peter Roos. "They really want to know."

At the Family Services Center in Gainesville, Florida, the staff serves as liaison between teachers and parents. They go through report cards with parents and explain the meaning of the grades. They also schedule home visits where they conduct role playing a parent-teacher conference.

The empowerment process does not necessarily reduce conflict between the family or special interest groups and the school. In fact, in some cases it is possible that conflict intensifies as a result of the availability of more information to parents who once felt isolated from the school. However, the equal footing created by empowerment can provide a context for discussion or debate that makes negotiation possible.

Remember, empowerment is not always an orderly, predictable, or comfortable process. But in general, it represents progress for individuals.

TRANSITIONS: FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS TO THE SCHOOLS

Bridging the transition for parents from the supportive environment of most early childhood family support and education programs into a frequently more impersonal school system needs planning and preparation. We believe that the responsibility for this important endeavor lies in the hands of both family support programs and schools, thus requiring collaborative efforts between them.

Head Start program staff members and parents are probably more experienced at guiding parents through the transition period than any other group. Whether your program operates within a school or is a separate entity, there are some very rich lessons and ideas to be gleaned from the work that Head Start programs have put into refining their transition activities.



SCHOOLS AS TRANSITION PARTNERS

Collaboration between programs and schools is essential if parent involvement is to be sustained throughout the move from an early childhood education program or preschool program into a kindergarten. Creating a liaison position and clearly documenting procedures facilitates the passage from program to kindergarten. Your program can:

Assign a staff person to serve as liaison with the school. Some Head Start programs actually create a liaison position such as a “parent support specialist” or “parent transition coordinator” to serve as a go-between for Head Start and the schools.²⁴ This person sets up and conducts meetings to promote understanding of the efforts and requirements of each organization. Some schools may have their own community liaison workers who can facilitate such partnerships.

It may also be useful and expedient for your program to cooperate with a Head Start program in your area, especially if its partnership with the school is well established. Remember, the idea is to build a support network, not to create separate entities that duplicate each other’s work. Cooperation among programs saves time and energy for everyone involved.

Formalize the linkage. Many Head Start programs have written agreements with elementary schools related to transition activities and responsibilities.²⁵ Such provisions include the development of common record forms to ease the transfer of records, the identification of key contact people in the schools, and sending school personnel to Head Start to screen and register children for kindergarten.

Exchanging information, developing expectations and goals, and sharing program philosophies and materials are all important ways of ensuring a smooth transition for families. The Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin Head Start formalized its relationship with the schools through a school board resolution, official backing that strengthened the partnership and collaborative efforts.

PARENTS AS TRANSITION PARTNERS

Many parents learn to become equal partners in their children’s education and active participants in an early childhood education program. We know that such involvement contributes to the success of their children’s education as well as to parents’ self-esteem. Parents need encouragement to continue to be involved throughout their children’s education. Your program can:

Listen to parent concerns. No doubt many parents will have questions and concerns about their children starting school, possibly combined with unvoiced misconceptions and uncertainties. If you make an effort to find out what they are and discuss them, addressing parent concerns as soon as they emerge, you may prevent later problems.



Provide school information. Parents want to know how school will differ from the program in which they are currently involved and what are the school's expectations of children entering kindergarten. They want to know what services schools offer and what children will be taught in school.²⁶ One early childhood education program in Seattle, Washington videotapes interviews with various elementary school specialists, the guidance counselor and the nurse, and presents the video at parent meetings. A slide show or video presentation could also include pictures of the kindergarten classroom, the school building, and other key people such as the kindergarten teacher, the principal, and parent volunteer coordinator.

The Parent Child Preschool in Columbus, Georgia takes many opportunities to get the parents actually into the school building, for parties or to visit the kindergarten classroom, "to detraumatize the transition to school." In Rockford, Illinois Head Start parents received monthly newsletters and home visits during their child's first year in kindergarten and were encouraged to volunteer in the kindergarten classrooms.

To teach effective interaction with schools, Head Start offers parent orientation sessions in the following areas²⁷:

Dealing with the school system. This includes learning how to be assertive and how to be an advocate for children in order to obtain school-related services (especially for children diagnosed with special needs or disabilities).

Children's educational needs and rights. Some parents with special needs children will want specific information and training regarding the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process.

How to gain access to health and social services. Many of these services formerly may have been provided by early childhood education programs. Bringing in representatives to parent meetings from medical, dental, mental health, and social services along with examples of forms can help alleviate the stress and difficulties often associated with dealing with unfamiliar agencies and services.

Developmental skills needed in kindergarten. Individual conferences with parents to discuss their children's development and readiness for kindergarten will empower parents by supporting them in being the "knowers" of their children's needs, strengths, and weaknesses. Then parents will be more likely to feel confident in passing on this information when they meet with the kindergarten teacher.

Parenting skills related to children's progress in school. These would include such skills as discipline, following-through, building self-esteem, communication, listening, and how to read to your child.



Encourage parent involvement in transition activities. Providing parents with opportunities to be actively involved in planning, implementing, and assessing the transition activities is critical. You might consider forming a transition committee with parents from various early childhood education and community support programs, parents from the school, and staff from both programs and the school. Keeping the committee fairly small and aiming for cultural and ethnic diversity in membership will enrich and strengthen the working capacity of the group.

If you offer home visits and parent conferences, be sure to involve parents by encouraging their input into descriptions of their children's interests, motivations, and learning styles or special needs. This will prepare parents for conferences with the kindergarten teacher by empowering them with the knowledge that they know their children better than anyone.

The South Central Community Action Agency Head Start in Twin Falls, Idaho had a great transition idea. They developed a buddy system linking Head Start parents with children in school with parents of Head Start children just entering school. Buddies serve as resources, emotional support, and advocates for the incoming parents. Buddies are given training and then assist parents with introductions to the school system, advocacy ideas, and overcoming language barriers.

TRANSITION ACTIVITIES

Parents want to understand what to look for and how to deal with their children's feelings and reactions to being in kindergarten. Plan transition workshops to address these issues and consider inviting the kindergarten teacher and principal to help answer questions. Joint planning for all transition activities is usually the key to success. Some helpful hints are:

Kindergarten visits. Kindergarten visits might be better attended if your program or school offers transportation and daycare. Children and parents can go together to meet the kindergarten teacher, visit the classroom, and perhaps attend a planned activity at the school. Involve parents, schools, and teachers in planning a "welcome to kindergarten day" as a field trip. Afterwards, parents discuss their observations after they meet with the liaison worker or kindergarten teacher. This could take place either at the school or after returning to your program.



Kindergarten registration. Attending to this transition activity in a thoughtful way can have a very positive impact. One kindergarten in Chicago holds a special preregistration just for Head Start parents so they will have up-to-date immunizations and can be informed of any other records they will need at registration. Another Head Start program gives parents the health summary forms needed for registration ahead of time and assists in completing them.

Record transfers. Medical records, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for special needs children, and certification of special needs conditions are records that are particularly confidential. Give parents the opportunity to review children's records and mark those they want released to the schools. Some Head Start programs have put considerable effort into working with the school to develop common record forms to ease the transfer of records.

Here are some additional transition ideas and activities used by Head Start programs²⁸:

- You can send the names and addresses of parents from your program to the school so that it can contact them by mail and hold individual conferences to recruit them as volunteers.
- Your program can develop individualized summer packets for transitioning children. Include a list of good books about going to school that parents can read to their children.
- Schools can establish kindergarten committees to promote parent involvement. These parent committees can meet monthly at the school to discuss classroom activities and concerns.
- The school psychologist can meet with parents to discuss techniques to use in supporting their children's transition.

In conclusion, be sure to note which transition activities are popular and effective. Then, working with your school and parent partners, try to develop ways to assure that they will continue.

NEW ROLES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Parents who leave your program satisfied often reciprocate the support and services they have received. There are several valuable ways of showing their commitment to a program:

Parents as recruiters. Parents are a program's most valuable partners in the most effective form of outreach: word-of-mouth. "The best outreach has been done by parents in the program who have experienced dynamic changes in their fami-



lies," says Lynette Patterson, program coordinator of Together for Children in Bend, Oregon. "Typically those parents will ask for pamphlets to bring with them to work or other activities so they can give them to their friends."

Parents as volunteers. Parents may also volunteer for your program by organizing a fundraising bake sale, providing child care, cataloguing your book- and toy-lending library, and other activities. At the Schaffner Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky, parents in the National Center for Family Literacy program volunteer in the kindergarten as a way of reciprocating for the services they have received. Their services contribute to the idea of a village where everyone shares responsibility for children and families.

Parents as advocates. Some parents may become politically and socially active in the community and work on behalf of children and families. Activism may involve working with the local school committee, writing to elected officials, or even testifying before the state legislature.

Mary Johnson smiles when recalling the public presentation she gave at a large hotel. Before an audience of hundreds of educators, she talked about how the seminars she participated in on self-esteem and family communication had changed her life and her two children. "I couldn't believe it," she said. "Two years ago I was afraid to leave my house. And there I was representing parents."

Parents as staff members. Many programs rely on parents to become parent educators after they have gone through a designated cycle of program activities. The Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) in Miami, Florida utilizes paraprofessional "parent partners" who work with parents on special activity units that parents complete with their children. Most parent partners are actually graduates of the program.

...



The outreach relationship is both a challenge and an inspiration. Recruiting participants and keeping them motivated will comprise a substantial part of your staff's time and take a lot of their energy, too. While you're pasting up posters or putting out fires, remember to:

Pat yourself on the back. Celebrate your victories, no matter how small they seem. Forget the fiesta that failed and focus on the intimate gathering in which a reticent parent spoke up for the first time. "I don't have to see hundreds of people making a change," says teacher Rachel Ramos. "I feel wonderful if I see two, three, or four people helped by the things we do."

Pat parents on the back. "I always applaud the parents at the end of a meeting," says teacher Lupe Soltero. "I say, 'You need applause because you're tired and you've come here after a long day of work.' I want parents to know that I value them. That's going to keep them coming back."

Finally, *keep the faith.* "Be patient and don't take rejection personally," says one program coordinator. "You may be surprised by the parents who eventually come around." When the coordinator asked one young mother why she finally became active in a program, she answered without hesitation: "You were so *persistent*," she said. "I finally broke down and came to a meeting. We knew you weren't going away."



Appendix: Recruiting Teen Parents and Fathers

Your program may want to devote particular attention to teen parents and the important men in a child's life. Both groups face a unique set of barriers to participation that many programs overlook.

TEEN PARENTS

Teen parents often face several obstacles to entering a program, including school phobia. Many teens will be recent dropouts from the very system to which you are trying to attract them. One program director says it can take six months of active outreach to convince a teen to participate.

Program staff members have come up with many creative ways of finding teen parents. They attend child development courses taught at area high schools. They get to know people who work with teen parents. Project Hope in Warwick, Rhode Island speaks to service providers in teen pregnancy organizations, homeless shelters, and churches. School nurses also can be particularly helpful in tracking down teens. To reach teen parents be sure to:

Design outreach materials aimed specifically at teens. Make sure posters and brochures are lively and graphically interesting. One outreach team designed a poster resembling an album cover.

Offer appropriate support services. Programs should provide instruction in basic academic skills and job preparation, as well as information and guidance relating to sexuality, family planning, prenatal care, and family life. Offering classes leading to a high school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) can help attract parents who have been out of school for several years.

Provide child care and special incentives. Receiving something tangible in exchange for attendance is a proven strategy. One program provides a free hour of babysitting for every hour a parent attends classes or workshops. Others offer free diapers, baby clothing, and meals to attract teens.

Meet teens outside of school. Teen parents are often reluctant to attend group meetings at school. Some prefer home visits or an individual meeting with a staff member on their own turf. Plan ways for your program and staff to be accessible off school grounds. "Be mobile," advises a staff member at Project Hope in Warwick, Rhode Island. "We'll go to a [fast food restaurant] if they don't want to meet us at home or come to the office."²⁹

Provide gentle guidance. Teacher Rachel Ramos points out that teen parents need a lot of hand holding. "It is important to establish a good rapport so they know you're there to help them. I let them know that I'm not the authority



“Ask the mother, ‘Do you mind if we send material to Uncle James? Your son talks about him. He’s someone the child looks up to.’”

telling them what to do. But I call to remind them about getting in touch with their counselor. And then I call to ask if they called.”

Combine flexibility and firmness. “You have to be flexible about what time [teens] can come and go,” says Ramos. “You have to find a schedule they can work with, and then expect it to change. At the same time you have to be firm about attendance. We let them know that after so many absences we have to let someone else take their place.” Kindness and discipline are an effective mix.

Treat teens with respect. Above all, treat teen parents with the respect they deserve and all too often fail to receive. Staff members need to be aware of stereotypes they hold about teens. As Jocelyn Garlington notes: “A youthful appearance, coupled with the way she speaks, dresses, or carries herself puts a young mother at a disadvantage when talking with school people.”³⁰ Teens learn from and are inspired by adults who act as their equals and guide rather than control their decisions.

FATHERS, UNCLES, AND FRIENDS

Recognizing the critical role men play in child development, many programs have come up with outreach strategies aimed specifically at fathers, uncles, cousins, brothers, and other important men in children’s lives. Often a male staff person is hired to work specifically with these men.

Before recruiting men into your program, you must identify who the key male role models in a child’s life are. You can surmise the influential male relationships from home visits or by directly asking children what male family members and friends are important to them.

Some men will respond to your outreach efforts. Others may require a more specialized approach. Experience shows the following activities can provide positive results:

Hold separate classes, lectures, or events for men, or at least special introductory sessions. Some men are intimidated by being the token male or two in a class that is dominated by women. At meetings for men and women, you may want to break into separate discussion groups of mothers and fathers.

Start a men’s support group or a father-child activity group. Plan field trips and activities geared specifically to men. Men’s program coordinator Barry Shaw of Early Education Services in Vermont works with home visitors to recruit men into parenting, training and social activities. Among the most successful activities have been a car repair workshop taught at the vocational high school, a bowling group, and a hiking trip. “Men want to have fun,” says Shaw. “Find out what fun is to them.”



Plan programs that do not conflict with work. When offering evening classes for working men (or women) you frequently run into the “fatigue factor.” A Saturday schedule tends to be more practical.

To spread the word to and through men:

- Send invitations directly to fathers and other influential men.
- Ask men in the class to bring a male friend along.
- Advertise in newspaper sections with a high male readership, such as the sports page.
- Include photos and pictures of men in brochures.
- Include a special men’s page in the newsletter.
- Recruit fathers through childbirth classes.

Gain the trust of men at their pace. Getting men to open up and talk is a great challenge. Barry Shaw says, “Men in our society are isolated. A lot of them are locked up. They have no one to talk to. I try to draw them out and get them to talk about their problems. The important thing is to be wherever they’re at and have that be enough for you. If they’re quiet, be quiet with them. Don’t fill up space with conversation if they need quiet.”

In the end, persistence may be the decisive factor. As you show that you do want a man to attend your program — by visiting him, talking, and trying to understand who he really is — you make it clear to him that he matters and you care.



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A Note on Research Methods

This series is based on data collected from a variety of sources. We did an extensive review of the family support literature using the Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC). Using the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) database we identified programs that would provide good examples of funding, staff development, evaluation, collaboration, and community outreach. We then wrote these programs to send us up to date information from annual reports, unpublished manuscripts, brochures, and other forms of descriptive literature.

HFRP's *Raising Our Future: Families, Schools, and Communities Joining Together* provided a wealth of information about programs. We did a secondary analysis of the original survey data on 75 programs. We also did a follow-up telephone survey of a sample of these programs to analyze patterns of change in their service delivery.

The series also utilized data collected from telephone and in-person interviews. A number of the series writers were simultaneously involved in field-based case study research. Their research yielded an enormous amount of taped interviews that were transcribed at the HFRP office and coded on Ethnograph software. The coded data as well as notes from telephone interviews with other programs provided a rich source of material. Statements from program staff that are quoted throughout the texts come from these two types of interviews.

Each of the volumes in the series contains a resource guide that provides the reader sources of additional information on a topic. The resource guide lists and annotates references and gives the addresses and telephone numbers of organizations where further information can be obtained.

Resource Guide

D'Angelo, D. A., & Adler, C. R. (1991). Chapter 1: A catalyst for improving parent involvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 72(5), 350-354.

This article looks at the Chapter 1 programs across the country that have taken significant steps toward involving parents in their programs. It is an excellent source for outreach, especially for designing written materials.

Davies, D. (1991). Schools reaching out: Family, school, and community partnerships for student success. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 72(5), 376-382.

This article is directed toward schools in an effort to help them reach out to parents. It is an excellent source for outreach strategies.

Davies, D., et al. (1992). *A portrait of schools reaching out: Report of a survey of practices and policies of family-community-school collaboration* (Report #1). Boston, MA: Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning, Institute for Responsive Education. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 343 701).

This report details the results of a 1991 survey of 42 schools that belong to the League of Schools Reaching Out, a national project that studies the ways in which collaboration between families, schools, and communities aids school reform. Appendices contain copies of the survey used.

Fennimore, B. (1986). *How to set up a warmline*. Pittsburgh, PA: The Parental Stress Center.

Developed by professionals who have successfully designed and implemented a warmline, the manual addresses the wide variety of needs and requirements for developing a warmline program including: fostering community support, getting funded, locating a place of operation, and staffing and training warmline volunteers. This manual is easy to read, well thought out, and graphically appealing. For more information contact:

The Parental Stress Center, Inc.
Magee-Women's Hospital
Corner of Forbes and Halket
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 647-4546

Garlington, J. A. (1991). *Helping dreams survive: The story of a project involving African-American families in the education of their children*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Developed in 1987 by the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE), *Helping Dreams Survive* is the story of the "With and For Parents" program in Harlem Park, Baltimore, Maryland. The project offers its own strengths and weaknesses as a guide in developing future family support programs. Lessons learned regarding various communities, families, and outreach measures are discussed. For more information contact:

National Committee for Citizens in Education
900 Second Street, NE, Suite 8
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-0447

Goodson, B. D., Swartz, J. P., Milsap, M. A., Spielman, S. C., Moss, M., & D'Angelo, D. (1991). *Working with families: Promising programs to help parents support young children's learning* (Contract LC 8808901). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Easy to read and well written, this source provides a good overview and detailed description of key outreach and recruitment strategies. It is based on a review of 17 family education programs. The selected programs serve low-income families with children between the ages of three and eight. Most are affiliated with public schools. For more information contact:

Abt Associates, Inc.
55 Wheeler Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 492-5219

Henderson, A. T., & Marburger, C. L. (1990). *A workbook on parent involvement for district leaders*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

This volume discusses how schools can increase the participation of citizens and parents in school affairs. Topics covered include school-based management, effective leadership and organization, and how schools can demonstrate their interest in parent and citizen involvement. For more information contact:

National Committee for Citizens in Education
900 Second Street, NE, Suite 8
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-0447

Hubbell, R., Plantz, M., Condelli, L., & Barrett, B. (1987). *Final report: The transition of Head Start children into public school* (Vol. I). Washington, DC: CSR.

This volume describes the 1986 special transition grants for Head Start programs, which investigated how to ease the transition of children in Head Start to public school. Parents, teachers, principals, and program directors were among the survey participants. Effective transition methods and barriers to transition are described. For more information contact:

CSR, Incorporated
1400 Eye Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 842-7600

Hubbell, R., Plantz, M., Condelli, L., & Barrett, B. (1987). *Formative evaluation of 15 Head Start to public school transition grantees* (Vol. II). Washington, DC: CSR.

Fourteen Head Start programs received grants to investigate a variety of approaches to the transition from Head Start to public school. The approaches are described and evaluated. Implementation, successes, and obstacles are discussed.

Kingsbury, K. J. (1991). *A guide for parental involvement*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Education.

This guide provides the reader with a set of guidelines for development of parent involvement plans. Emphasized are the components of such a plan. A significant portion of the guide is dedicated to addressing cultural and language barriers. Included are sample questionnaires and assessment forms. For more information contact:

Lois Engstrom, Supervisor
Family and Adult Education
Minnesota Department of Education
991 Capitol Square
St. Paul, MN 55101

Kurz-Riemer, K., Larson, M., & Flournoy, J. L. (1987). *Way to grow: A proposed plan to promote school readiness of Minneapolis children*. Minneapolis, MN: McKnight Foundation. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 303 243).

To help family support programs identify and build on the strengths of the family, this publication proposes a model plan to promote school readiness in children by coordinating a continuum of comprehensive, community-based services that support and assist all parents in meeting the developmental needs of their children from conception through age five.

Larner, M. (1988, November). *Lessons from the Child Survival/Fair Start home-visiting programs*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, Boston, MA. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 327 763).

Six implementation lessons for outreach and recruitment that were learned from the Child Survival/Fair Start home-visiting programs in poor unserved areas are detailed in an effort to guide similar development within family support programs. This is an excellent source for outreach.

Liontos, L. B. (1991). *Involving at-risk families in their children's education*. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 326 925).

Traditional methods of parent involvement do not always meet the needs of at-risk parents who often feel inadequate, have poor self-worth, and have had a negative experience with schools. This article details the problems at-risk parents encounter and suggests outreach measures that might be taken.

Olmsted, P. P. (1991). Parent involvement in elementary education: Findings and suggestions from the Follow Through program. *Elementary School Journal*, 91(3), 221-231.

This article describes the "follow-through" educational model as one that is dedicated to involving parents in the education process. It reviews 20 years' worth of qualitative and quantitative research on the Follow Through program, and suggests how to implement similar parent involvement programs in elementary schools.

Olsen, D. G. (1988). A developmental approach to family support: A conceptual framework. *Focal Point*, 2(3), 3-6.

This edition of the *Focal Point* newsletter offers perspectives on the provision of family support services for families with disabled members. The Olsen article specifically details a conceptual framework for family support programs with examples of applying the process at the individual level, the community level, and the system or policy level. This is a good source for outreach.

Palm, G. *The challenge of working with fathers*. Unpublished manuscript, Center for Child and Family Studies, St. Cloud State University.

This paper examines the changing conceptions of the father's role as a parent. It discusses the models and levels of paternal involvement as well as how and why they differ from maternal participation. This paper also provides suggestions to program developers for recruiting the father into parent education programs. For more information contact:

Center for Child and Family Studies
St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, MN 56301

Roberts, R. N., Barclay McLaughlin, G., & Mulvey, L. (1991). Family support in the home: Lessons from pioneer programs. *Children Today, 20*(1), 14-17.

Three family support programs serving low-income and minority children and families provide critical guidance for the creation and implementation of outreach and recruitment strategies.

Sandell, E. J. (1991). Attracting participants and money: A 10-step marketing plan for family resource programs. *Family Resource Coalition Report, 10*(2), 18-19.

This 10-step plan provides critical tips for successfully marketing a family resource program. A number of methods are useful in planning program outreach and recruitment strategies including developing a focused program image, defining and marketing to various communities, and providing examples of outreach strategies. This dynamic overview walks a reader step-by-step through the key strategies for marketing. For more information contact:

Family Resource Coalition
200 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 1250
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 341-0900

Swap, S. M. (1990). *Parent involvement and success for all children: What we know now*. Boston, MA: Institute for Responsive Education.

This report focuses on the importance of creating and maintaining parent involvement programs. Swap discusses the three major philosophies underlying these programs, touching on barriers to effective parent-school relationships. Suggested are methods of initiating and maintaining parent involvement that emphasize communication and a strong community-school connection. For more information contact:

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About the Harvard Family Research Project

The Harvard Family Research Project was established in 1983 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education by Dr. Heather B. Weiss, who continues as its director. The Project conducts and disseminates research about programs and policies to strengthen and support families with young children.

The Project's mission is to examine and assist in the development of policies and programs to empower families and communities as contexts of human development.

Specializing in applied policy research, the Project's outlook encompasses the view that to educate the whole child, parents, schools, and other community agencies must redefine their roles to include partnerships to support child development from infancy through adolescence. It maintains that to sustain gains, support initiatives must be continuous over a child's life.

The Project is nationally recognized for providing much of the data demonstrating the value of preventive, comprehensive, collaborative, and family-focused services. It has a diverse research agenda, supported by public and private funders, that is designed to inform and shape national policy debates, advance evaluation practice, and encourage progressive program development.

The audience for the Project's work ranges from national and state policy makers to researchers and local practitioners, many of whom have benefitted from the Project's ability to provide new perspectives and suggest creative solutions.