Building Villages To Raise Our Children:
From Programs To Service Systems

THE HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Building Villages To Raise Our Children: From Programs to Service Systems

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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.

FROM PROGRAMS TO SERVICE SYSTEMS is an overview to the Building Villages series. This volume discusses the need for comprehensive programs and the corresponding need for change in the family services framework. It sets forth the organizing principle of family support as the movement grows from a program to a community-based service system. The overview lists developmental principles for programs, strategies for implementing change, and introduces the stages concept of service progression that is discussed in each of the other guides.
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. Angela Shartrand was our troubleshooter for computer problems, and patiently undertook the task of copyediting. Tamara Beauboeuf assisted in the minute details that go into completing a manuscript.

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Introduction

The African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” captures much of what researchers and practitioners have learned over the past 20 years about family support and child development. Healthy child development requires strong, nurturing families that in turn are nurtured and supported by individuals and institutions within the community. Because of the growing stress on families and the erosion of village-like informal supports, many states and communities have developed programs and resource centers for families with young children. These programs offer social support and a core set of services: parenting and child development information, emotional support, peer support through contact with other parents and families, and access or referral to services such as child care, counseling, or entitlement programs.

When asked to reflect on the African proverb and a nurturing village, people typically describe helping relationships, caring, connection, and mutual assistance and responsibility. Family support providers and program participants also cite these features as essential to strengthening and supporting families. The village proverb also captures the key challenge facing family support programs and their providers. The proverb says it takes a village, not a program, to raise a child. The challenge then is to establish family support programs that catalyze or take part in broader locally determined efforts to develop a comprehensive system of family support services.

In moving beyond the discrete set of parenting services we associate with programs to a broader system of services — interconnected activities that offer families comprehensive, continuous, and accessible services — the system must build on and strengthen informal and voluntary organizational support for families. It must also weave together formal services provided by health, education, and social service agencies into a coordinated and effective service system that supports, respects, and empowers families. In exploring these issues, it has become clear that the most useful question is not simply: What can government do for families, or even, What can families do for themselves? Family support program experience and evaluation research suggest we ask instead: What can government and other public and private institutions do to help families help themselves and one another?

Policy makers recognize that family support and education is an essential part of child and family services. A decade ago only a handful of states and federal research and demonstration grants pioneered programs to provide information,
What can government and other public and private institutions do to help families help themselves and one another?

advice, and peer group support to parents. Today, policies as distinct as school readiness, family preservation, maternal and child health, and welfare reform incorporate a family support component. The idea of family support is also at the heart of new initiatives to integrate education, health, and social services and to reform the ways in which public institutions serve children and families.

Across their historical and practical evolution from program to system of interconnected services, family support initiatives have maintained some core principles:

[Important] guiding principles include respect for the family and its strengths; reinforcement of both the family’s and the community’s role in child development and socialization; and partnership relationships, both between parent and provider and between community providers and the state.1

As we shall see, the power and effectiveness of these programs lie partially in their assumptions about families and how to help them, and in their principles and organization of service delivery.

The United States is now embarking on a new round of social investment and reform, much of which involves efforts to strengthen and preserve families. Schools, health, and human service organizations are struggling to work more effectively with families and with one another. Their efforts are matched by communities seeking to strengthen the fund of social support at the neighborhood level and to connect formal and informal neighborhood-based services.2

Policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and community activists all agree that we should move away from “bounded” or free-standing programs and toward community-based systems of service. New state legislation in Colorado, Florida, New Mexico, and West Virginia has tied together wide arrays of services into comprehensive family resource centers. Communities as diverse as Del Paso Heights in Sacramento, California; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Miami Beach, Florida are developing mechanisms — through schools, public housing, and local associations — to deliver formal services on the neighborhood level. By integrating directly into the community these formal services, which participants often describe as impersonal and intimidating, families may receive them in a familiar and friendly environment.

Family support and education programs are at a critical transition point. They have moved from being little-known, marginal, and fragile programs to being in the policy and service mainstream. While today’s programs are necessary, they
are not sufficient in their current practice to meet the myriad needs of children and families. Their capacity to support families will depend on their ability to develop a system of interconnected services, rather than an isolated program of family services.

Our years of research and evaluation on family support programs have brought us in contact with visionary and entrepreneurial professionals from health, education, social work, and many other backgrounds. These people have taught us much about setting up, nurturing, and adapting a family support program and on how to work with others to bring family services together. It is time to consolidate research and practitioner knowledge to move the family support and education field forward from a program-centered to a "village" or systems framework. Simultaneously, the programmatic emphasis on the individual must deepen and broaden to focus on working with whole families. As programs expand and broaden, the challenge will be to integrate them into existing agencies that serve children and families, while preserving their core of special features.

In this climate of growing interest, we at the Harvard Family Research Project wanted to share what we have learned from family support practitioners and others now implementing family support and education initiatives. Because bringing different sectors of the community together to support families is a central goal of education, health, and human services personnel, our point of departure in this series is: How do you set up or enhance a family support program and build a village-like system of child and family services? How do you make the transition from a series of discrete programs to a systemwide framework? The task is two-fold: build your program and build a system of services.

The Building Villages to Raise Our Children series presents the experiences and lessons of those struggling to build not only programs but family-supportive villages for the 21st century. Building Villages attempts to organize the evolution from program to community-wide service system by introducing a four-stage developmental framework. Using this framework, this series examines in separate guides five key areas that must be addressed in building new family support initiatives and in keeping existing ones vital and effective. They are: collaboration, funding and resources, evaluation, community outreach, and staffing. Each of these guides reflects the thinking and day-to-day program activities of seasoned practitioners. The series is tied together by the idea of village building — that the supports for healthy child development involve all community members, require collaboration among human service institutions, and derive strength from the personal networks and relationships that link individual to individual and family to family.
Our point of departure in this series is: How do you set up or enhance a family support program and build a village-like system of child and family services?

We have organized this overview around a series of questions that explores the early history of family support and education programs. Parallel to this history, we examine the evolution of program evaluation and present what has been learned about the characteristics of effective family support programs. Next, we offer a rationale for the four stages of our developmental framework — family support services, family-focused services, comprehensive family services, and community-wide family services — laying out the idea of program growth by stages. We explore the features of each stage and, in so doing, show how a single program might evolve and become a member of a system of services rich in informal helping and an ethic of mutual support.

HOW DID THE FAMILY SUPPORT MOVEMENT EVOLVE?3

What we recognize today as the core of family support services — parenting and child development information, emotional support, mutual peer support through contact with other parents and families, and access or referral to other services such as child care, counseling, or entitlement programs — grows out of the experience of researchers and practitioners. The following short history outlines the evolution of family support from its programmatic beginnings to a system of connected family support services.

The Longstanding American Concern with Parenting

Since colonial times, childrearing has been a matter of concern in America. For much of the 18th century, the concerns focused on the moral and religious upbringing of children. In the first quarter of the 19th century, "maternal associations" sprang up in New England, in which mothers "regularly met in study groups" to share strategies for the religious and moral improvement of their children.4 With the arrival of the industrial revolution, which resulted in the social and economic fragmentation of family life in cities, childrearing — and in particular "mothering" — became the center of what was perceived as a larger crisis in family life. At best, slum parents were considered the hapless victims of a disordered social environment; at worst, they were responsible for leaving their children "moral orphans."5 This line of analysis has persisted to this day.6

Efforts to support families took various forms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.7 It was hoped that children would be the beneficiaries of the moral
guidance delivered during "friendly visits" to families made by social workers, thus creating a more ethical and cohesive social order. Later, the settlement house movement developed a panoply of family services in the neighborhoods, thus foreshadowing the community-action strategies of the 1960s and family resource centers of the 1990s. The first two decades of the 20th century also saw the development of a number of organizations emphasizing parent education. Even though social work by the 1920s was fast becoming professionalized, specialized, and institutionalized, the period leading up to World War II saw a gradual decline in the number of community-based family support and education programs for low-income families.

Focal Tension: Change Parents or Change the Social Conditions that Inhibit Parenting?

The depression of the 1930s raised many questions about the root causes of poverty and inequality, but it was not until the civil rights movement of the 1950s that the central tenet of social reform — that families needed reforming as much as or more than society — was seriously questioned. Many even argued for direct income supplements to needy families as an alternative to social services. The questioning of core assumptions led to a new emphasis on the rights of poor families, above and beyond their needs and obligations. This new emphasis was translated in the 1960s into new human service principles, notably recipients' participation in agenda-setting and provision of services, as well as program designers' growing reluctance to impose middle-class childrearing values on the families served.

The War on Poverty Brings a New Emphasis on the Family's Role in Child Development

While social science researchers were beginning to focus on the correlation between the denial of families' civil rights and poverty, they also examined the life style and culture of poor families. They posited an identifiable set of circumstances to which families could adapt in the short term but that ultimately served to perpetuate poverty from one generation to the next. These two very different frameworks — one focusing on the social system, the other on the families' characteristics — were combined in the 1960s to yield the specific programs of the War on Poverty.
Head Start proved to be an effective vehicle for combining the strategic principles of the War on Poverty into a coherent program. It embodied the renewed, deeply rooted American faith in education as a path out of poverty. It provided parents with training opportunities and human service employment and was a vehicle for mobilizing them to become agents of community change.

Even though the founders of Head Start were arguing by the late 1960s that “the only way to help poor children was to educate their parents as well,” parent education was not yet a significant element of the program. However, there was a parallel track of community-focused early childhood programs that traced their conceptual origins back to a small group of developmental and educational psychologists. This group began experimenting in the early 1960s with home-visiting programs designed to “teach” low-income mothers how to be better “teachers” of their young children and, in some cases, to provide direct stimulation to infants and toddlers.

The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) responded to these basic and applied research findings on the importance (and apparent inadequacies) of early parenting in low-income families by launching the Head Start experimental Parent Child Center (PCC) program in the late 1960s. Initially envisioned as a nationwide network of multipurpose family centers providing parent education, health, and social services to low-income parents with children birth to age three, the program established 33 PCC centers in the first few years — some of which still exist today. But shifting political forces and bureaucratic reorganization overtook the program, preventing its expansion. Nevertheless, the PCCs signaled the return of parent education as an element of public social reform efforts, this time in the service of preventing children’s educational disadvantage.

Expanded Family Support and Education Research and Demonstration Programs

Federal and, eventually, foundation sponsorship led to a decade of historically unprecedented field experimentation in early parenting intervention. This research identified common characteristics of effective family and community programs. With this information, policy makers were better equipped to build more successful programs.

The public sector demonstration programs of the 1970s were multisite efforts that combined the principles of the OEO’s community-action programs with emerg-
ing state-of-the-art psychological theory. Notable public sector demonstrations included the Parent Child Development Centers (PCDCs), linked to the Parent Child Centers; the later Child and Family Resource Programs (CFRPs), linked to Head Start; and the home-based Head Start variation called Home Start (which, unlike the other demonstrations noted above, did not begin serving families until target children reached age three). Private sector demonstrations were usually single-site efforts and, while community-based, tended to involve sophisticated health and mental health care resources based in universities. Notable among these projects were the Yale Child Welfare Research Project and the Brookline Early Education Project (BEEP).

The demonstrations initiated in this era provided the conceptual and practical foundations for today’s early parenting and family support interventions for low-income families. Exhibiting both similarities and diversity, they were the first generation of early childhood programs to begin working out the practical implications of ecologically oriented child development theory. During the course of the 1970s, these demonstrations became more explicit in describing themselves as “child and family” programs whose goal was to strengthen families. They came to describe what they provided to families as social support.

Of equal importance, a new social-action equation emerged, one that had been vaguely visible in the outlines of the settlement house movement of the late 19th century and more clearly visible in the community-action programs of the 1960s. This equation suggested that child and family well-being could be enhanced if families could be joined together to share childrearing resources, support each other’s childrearing efforts, and perhaps make communities more child focused. Support programs could be developed to reproduce the beneficial aspects of the traditional client-provider relationship, perhaps the first step in a broader family empowerment process that major social institutions would eventually encompass.

Community-based Family Support Programs

Weissbourd locates the beginning of what is now known as the family support movement at the time that this general shift to decentralized, community-focused problem solving was gaining momentum. During the first half of the 1970s, a number of individuals and groups across the country initiated local programs with many of the characteristics that are now associated with the family support
and education genre. Among these were the Avancé program, which started in Houston, Texas in 1983 and later moved to San Antonio, and Family Focus in Evanston, Illinois.

The development of these programs was stimulated by attention to problems in family life, but they were initiated to serve the perceived support needs of families in their communities. While these programs often originated as isolated, grass roots services, some family support initiatives, such as Missouri’s Parents as Teachers and Minnesota’s Early Childhood Family Education program, began to move toward institutionalization through state sponsorship. Since the mid-1970s, some 2,000 locally developed family support programs have been established. During this time we have also seen an explosion of state initiatives, notably in Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and Pennsylvania.

Findings from a 1989 Harvard Family Research Project survey confirm the diversity of the family support and education genre. A wide variety of community concerns continues to stimulate local program development, and, in their quest for survival, many programs have responded to the interests of funders. The survey revealed that there are identifiable groups of programs serving low- to moderate-income families, economically more advantaged families, and those serving all families. The latter are premised on the view that all families, not just disadvantaged ones, need parenting support. Programs serving low- to moderate-income families are more likely to be primary prevention programs, targeting families based on certain risk factors. They tend to rely more on public funding, have larger budgets, and provide more services to families than those for more advantaged families.

Central to these community-based family support and education programs, then and now, are activities designed to provide support to families during pregnancy, infancy, and/or early childhood. The goal of family support and education remains to promote family conditions and parent competencies and behaviors that will contribute to maternal and infant health. The following core family support and education services grow out of understanding how formative factors influence the lives of young children. Such services:

- Provide stimulating early childhood experiences and child development screening.
- Offer parenting information, practical assistance, emotional support, feedback, and guidance in a goal-oriented framework.
Program effectiveness often rests on the availability and quality of other services within the community for families and on the capacity of the families to connect with these services.

- Provide sustained support to young families, interacting with them regularly over a period of months or years.
- Focus both on enhancing parenting skills and attending to the intra- and extra-familial forces impinging on parenting by providing referrals to health, education, and other agencies.
- Provide a secure, accepting climate in which young parents can share and explore childrearing goals, beliefs, and concerns.  

How these services are delivered is often as important as what is delivered. Family support and education programs are attempting to operationalize new relationships between the service professional and the participant. A useful way to view this new parent-program relationship is in terms of a continuum varying both by source of support and by the relationship between supporter and supported. At one end of the continuum is the unilateral relationship in which the parent is seen as an empty vessel, passively waiting to be filled with professional expertise. In the middle are more bilateral relationships in which the parent is viewed as the partner of the professional. Programs at this point on the continuum typically concede that both parents and professionals are “experts” with respect to the child, albeit in different but presumably complementary ways. Toward the other end are more multilateral arrangements in which information and support are both formal and informal and come from professionals, peers, and nonprogram sources. In this last case the parent is both recipient and provider of support through such means as peer group support and informal helping arrangements.

Inherent in the movement toward multilateral relationships is a nondeficit service philosophy that works with and reinforces family strengths rather than simply trying to remediate weaknesses. Because research has shown that a very effective way to ensure the success of the young child is to ensure the success of the family, family support includes three necessary components: training in parenting skills, peer support networks, and links to social services. Thus community-based programs reflect a growing ecological approach to program design.

**Toward a More Ecological Approach in Program Design**

One of the most striking things about the evolution of family support programs is its emphasis on a more ecological approach. This approach assumes that while the family is the primary institution that determines a child’s development, other institutions impinge on it and affect the family’s capacity to nurture and rear its
A nondeficit service philosophy works with and reinforces family strengths rather than simply trying to remediate weaknesses.

children. The movement toward more ecological intervention strategies is reflected in the shift from the focus on individuals, usually the child, to an emphasis on the relationship and interaction between parent and child and, increasingly, on the relationship between the family and formal and informal sources of support for it within the community.

This new direction toward ecological programming was influenced by an important mid 1970s review of early childhood program evaluations from the 1960s that were mentioned earlier. Bronfenbrenner argued that family-focused programs were more effective and had the potential for more enduring effects than exclusively child-focused ones. Two family-focused early childhood Head Start experimental programs, the Parent Child Development Centers (PCDC) and the Child and Family Resource Programs (CFRP), as well as a series of local experimental programs, provided a mix of child development-focused interventions and multifaceted family support (ranging from health and social services to meals, transportation, and adult basic education). Evaluation of these programs found that the PCDCs had significant positive effects on clients' emotional responsiveness; their ability to be affectionate, give praise, and show appropriate control of their children; and how they encouraged child verbalization. The evaluation of the CFRP found it had significant positive effects. Specifically, mothers felt more in control of events and were more able to cope. Parents also used community resources and participated in job training.

In addition to the positive effects of the PCDCs and the CFRPs, other factors contributed to forging a link between families and formal and informal community supports. For example, support providers recognized the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by many mothers of young children and could see the impact and success of mutual help groups. Researchers found parents often get information and help through their informal social networks. Ecologically oriented researchers investigated the ways in which child and family development is influenced by forces outside the family.

The concepts underlying various intervention strategies also have evolved over the past 30 years. The first programs, which focused on the child, set out to improve the child's cognitive functioning (i.e., raise I.Q. into the normal range by the time of school entry) by providing developmental experiences which, in some ways, substituted for the deficient parent. Another approach focused on the parents and trained them to take an active role with their children. The goal was to alter parenting behaviors to promote the child's health and cognitive functioning.
Research has shown that a very effective way to ensure the success of the young child is to ensure the success of the family.

These two approaches were not exclusive in practice. In most child-focused programs, it was assumed that some form of parent involvement was necessary to reinforce the educational intervention for the child. Many of the parent-focused programs provided activities for the child either in the home or in a center. The prevalent view today is that these foci are mutually reinforcing; perhaps the most effective programs are those that consciously address both the child and the parent.

As the target of intervention has shifted toward a holistic outlook — seeing the family as a whole entity, rather than choosing between parent or child — the range of expected outcomes has broadened. Research has shown that poverty and economic loss diminish parents' capacity for supportive, involved parenting. Economic hardship adversely affects children's socioemotional functioning through its impact on the parents' behavior toward the child. Therefore, the ecological approach emphasizes the quality of the parent-child relationship and the ability of parents to be warm and nurturing. These two factors have strong effects on the social and emotional well-being of a child and probably affect cognitive functioning and physical health as well. Thus the narrow cognitive focus of early programs gradually expanded to include the entire range of developmental outcomes for the child and to enhance life outcomes for the parents.

Research from the 1970s and 1980s documenting the shift in focus from child- to family-based services reveals a growing consensus on the essential elements of a successful family support and education program. Evidence shows that interventions starting earlier in a child's life are more effective; family support should begin with prenatal care rather than when the child is about to enter school. Moreover, programs that are involved with (and evolve with) a family over a period of many years have stronger, longer-lasting effects.

More recent research, however, has shown that program effectiveness often rests on the availability and quality of other health and social services and on families' capacity to connect with these services. Delivering a program that focuses simultaneously on child, parent, and family and is designed to meet multiple developmental goals is a complex task. It clearly requires partnership, collaboration, and creativity; and, judging from the growing body of literature on the topic, the challenge is generating new service and evaluation research paradigms.

Research confirms the value of these more ecological, community-based approaches. One policy consequence has been the development of more comprehensive programs. Drawing on the legacy of 20 years of research, Ramey and
Ramey have argued that family and community programs with the strongest effects have certain characteristics in common, characteristics that are more likely to produce greater and more enduring benefits:

- Interventions begin earlier and last longer.
- Programs are more intensive in terms of hours per day and days per week.
- Programs provide comprehensive services and use multiple methods to enhance development; they avoid narrowly focused programs.
- Interventions provide children with daily learning experiences directly instead of relying on indirect routes such as parent education or health services alone.
- Programs are designed to match children's learning styles and risk conditions; they recognize that children reap different types of rewards from programs.
- Providers look to solidify family progress since the initial effects of interventions will diminish unless supportive changes are made and maintained in children's families, communities, and school environments.31

This last point is especially important because, as helpful as the interaction between families and programs has proved, research and programmatic experience show that "bounded" services are not sufficient to meet the many needs of today's families.35 Historically, we have seen the service limitations of discrete programs. Therefore a new framework for services is required in which schools, social service agencies, and community associations collaborate in ways that genuinely enable families to become more self-sufficient and productive.36

WHAT IS THE RATIONALE FOR A NEW SERVICE SYSTEM? A FRAMEWORK THAT GOES BEYOND COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS TO SYSTEMS OF SERVICES

Over the past 10 years the Harvard Family Research Project has conducted research on the development, implementation, and effectiveness of family support and education programs. We have seen initiatives in family support start as basic programs, providing education and support to parents with young children and helping them learn to teach and nurture their children. We have watched programs evolve from separate services in a community to catalysts and
Adding new programs to the current patchwork is insufficient. Instead, it is necessary to fundamentally examine and redesign child and family services to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's families.

partners in community-wide efforts to promote healthy child development. In the 1970s family support programs offered guidance, encouragement, and information about parenting skills and early childhood development. Today many have added educational, vocational, health, and social services to benefit parent, child, and the entire family. In breaking new ground — and breaking boundaries — these programs have laid the foundation for community collaborations offering coherent and comprehensive support services to families in need.

Policy makers, child advocates, social reformers, and family support practitioners play an important role in advancing the field of family support. Our research suggests the increased breadth and depth of family support and education services is due to their perception that the lives of children are worsening. Neither family support programs alone nor the fragmented system of child and family services is equipped to deal with many of the adverse conditions in family and community life.37

A preponderance of social circumstances makes parenting more difficult and diminishes the lives of young children. A growing number of children live in poverty, in single-parent families, and in unsafe homes and neighborhoods. These children are raised by parents who are highly stressed and lack the information and help needed to provide a nurturing home environment. Many of these children do not receive health care, nor do they have access to quality child care and preschool experiences. Some are hungry and homeless, neglected and abused, and exposed prenatally to harmful substances. By the time they come to school they are deficient in the social, emotional, and language development skills needed for a successful school experience.38

The perceived decline in family functioning is also accompanied by a perceived decline in traditional community bonds, bonds that in the past have provided childrearing support.39 With the distance between home and workplace, and the significance of occupation as the nexus of social relationships, neighborhood ties are weakened. Parents are increasingly isolated and bereft of "social capital," the norms that set community expectations about parenting responsibilities and children's behavior.

Even family support programs are feeling pressure from the demands of helping families with so many needs. These needs include access to services such as health and child care, shelter and food, employment and training, mental health services, and substance abuse treatment. Experience suggests that on their own,
The concept of family support is broadening to encompass a range of new and existing community services for families, as well as efforts to strengthen informal supports and communal bonds.

Programs can neither provide all the services families need nor help all the families who need their services. Increasingly, programs respond by adding new services through collaborative arrangements among agencies. In the process, programs continually face barriers created by categorical funding streams, different eligibility criteria, and duplicative reporting requirements—all of which make providing comprehensive, family-focused services a Herculean struggle. They also face burdens created by fragmentation, specialization, and bureaucratization within and across the many health, education, and social services with which they must work.

Service providers and policy makers tracking children- and family-related problems in their states and communities recognize the failure of our current service arrangements. They know that adding new programs to the current patchwork is insufficient. Instead, it is necessary to fundamentally examine and redesign child and family services to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's families. Accordingly, the concept of family support is broadening to encompass a range of new and existing community services and activities to strengthen informal supports and communal bonds.

Frequently assisted by state-initiated planning efforts, many communities are putting together groups of citizens, public agency representatives, politicians, business leaders, and parents to redesign their child and family services. Acknowledging that state and federal regulations and funding streams can inhibit the development of family-focused services, many states are reexamining their rules and procedures to remove road blocks and, when necessary, are petitioning the federal government for changes.

We are in the early stages of reinvention but have much to draw on from the past 25 years of family support efforts. The legacy includes core principles that were developed by programs but are equally applicable to shaping a community-based system of services.

In the next section we lay out these principles as the basis of a new service system. Because they are critical to ensuring the success of family intervention, we apply them to our discussion of the implementation issues in this series: collaboration, funding and resources, evaluation, community outreach, and staffing. Furthermore, we show how they operate in our four-stage framework designed to help program and community planners think through and initiate the transition from program to service system. The framework, outlined in the following pages, provides only a partial rendering of how a village of services might
family support and education can help a family and, in turn, a family can help itself—and the community.

ultimately look. This is because each community develops within a unique context: It must engage its own members, decide upon service needs and specifications, and customize its governance and accountability mechanisms.

WHAT ARE THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY SUPPORT AND EDUCATION?

As family support and education becomes a service offered increasingly by the public sector—schools, social service agencies, housing development—it effectiveness will depend on maintaining humane and respectful approaches toward families. Because one of the primary objectives of family support and education programs is to support parents as their children’s first teachers, we operate under two assumptions. First, all parents want to be good parents; they merely need the opportunity and support to strengthen their parenting skills and do the best they can for their children. Second, parents need an environment that helps them to overcome self-doubt, build self-esteem, and operate as productive members of society and as effective advocates for their children.

Research and experience suggest that the following principles are essential to establishing community-based family support and education programs and to creating an environment in which children and families can learn and grow:

*Family support providers begin with and enrich a family’s capacity to create a healthy environment for children.* A secure and accepting environment encourages parents to explore and enhance their childrearing practices. Rather than focusing on deficits, family support providers identify and build on strengths and help parents expand their own sources of informal and formal support.

*Program designers build in the idea of service reciprocity.* Mutual obligation is a defining characteristic of a supportive village or community. Designing services that enhance the family’s capacity to help itself and others becomes a catalyst for building a community of support. Family support and education can help a family and, in turn, a family can help itself—and the community. The operative assumption is that everyone has something to contribute; the goal is to elicit that something from the participants.

*Those who directly work with program participants focus on families, involving all generations and recognizing family strengths and differences.* The most important goal is to support families. Support providers recognize that in their diverse backgrounds, families have their own ways of caring for and nurturing
their children. These programs involve all the key people in a child’s life and convey childrearing messages in a context of respect for cultural values and preferences.

Providers know their community and build on its strengths. Much local expertise and entrepreneurial talent can be found in the community. Understanding the environment in which a family support service operates enables community leaders and children’s advocates to take advantage of local resources and provide services that meet community needs. Family support programs must be sensitive to local conditions, even when their services have a federal or state sponsor.

Program planners design services that respond and adapt to changing community needs. They create effective feedback mechanisms to evaluate progress in achieving concrete program goals. Provider and participant opinions can help service agencies understand what works, what does not work, and why. Qualitative and quantitative data provide the basis for going forward or shifting directions. Informed decision making is key to developing a system of family services. Information combined with flexibility enables family support agencies and organizations to evolve in response to changing community needs.

Programs emphasize prevention. Services that treat causes instead of symptoms tend to sustain behavioral gains. They are also likely to be cost-effective over the long term. The point is to focus on promoting development and on timely intervention. Ideally, services are available to families at the earliest stage of child development, and practitioners are there to offer continuing support. This way families receive assistance before they reach a crisis stage.

Practitioners understand that participation is voluntary. It is important to respect the family’s role and prerogatives in carrying out its childrearing responsibilities. Successful family support programs emphasize that their staff is there to support parents. Staff workers give parents considerable latitude in determining the amount and nature of program involvement and individualize services according to family goals, strengths, and needs. Services are developed in a close, cooperative partnership with parents; providers seek out and integrate the interests of the participants.

Program leaders encourage participation in planning, problem solving, and assessment from parents, staff, and community members. These activities distribute ownership of family support and empower those who become involved. They establish the foundation for ongoing advocacy of children and family issues.
We believe that collaborative and integrated systems of services will be the *terra firma* of family support. But to do so, family support services must cross traditional disciplinary and organizational boundaries.

*Program managers build for comprehensiveness and continuity of services by collaborating and networking.* Because human development is multifaceted, any one program's service offerings benefit from the professional expertise and complementary services of other community agencies. Children also benefit from enrichment programs that go on for an extended period of time. Although a program may begin with a well-defined set of services, it needs to plan for how it will evolve, remembering that it will develop alongside other programs with which it can share resources.

**WHAT IS A VILLAGE OF SERVICES?**

Family support and education program experience and evaluation research suggest that programs embodying the above principles are needed very much—but they are still not always enough to enhance families as contexts for child development. Our approach to service and system development proceeds from an ecological framework: factors outside the family affect the family's capacity to rear its children. Therefore, strategies to enhance parenting and strengthen families must include the community as a whole. No one agency or program can provide all the services required by families, nor can integrated services succeed without community ownership. We believe that collaborative and integrated systems of services will be the *terra firma* of family support. But to do so, family support services must cross traditional disciplinary and organizational boundaries.

Our research has convinced us of the wisdom in the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," and the validity and necessity of the village-building approach to child and family services. The village concept affirms the importance of community as the locus of child and family policy and the necessity of an integrated approach to child development. This paradigm runs counter to the fragmented and bureaucratic culture of children's services. It challenges a service system that is impersonal, specialized, focused on the individual, treatment centered, and turf bound, whether that boundary exists between the home and school or separates school, clinic, and social service agency.

A village-building effort requires the participation of the community: its agency providers, local institutions, and neighborhood groups. Task forces and interagency committees may already exist or can be set up to develop a system of support and services grounded in community concerns for its children. As a metaphor of what policies should strive for, the village embraces the following features:
The village is a community of shared values. Community members, including parents, school people, businesses, police, civic groups, and human service providers share a common belief that children should have the opportunity to develop to their full potential. They share the responsibility of providing children with the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and primary health care; a network of supportive relationships; and a community that is healthy and safe. Adults work together to establish and enforce the norms of children’s behavior; they set a standard for parents to follow in shaping their children’s habits.

The village upholds the family’s primary responsibility for childrearing and supports its continuous involvement in children’s education and development. Parents, and sometimes grandparents or other extended family members, are the most important individuals in children’s lives. They need the confidence and support to take responsible acts on behalf of children. This support begins before the birth of a child and continues through the early childhood years. For gains during the early developmental years to be sustained, family involvement is sustained into the school years as well. The community, through its local taxes, business-school partnerships, volunteers, and other resources, works to build positive relations between home and school. Parent involvement takes on a new meaning; it goes beyond what school officials have traditionally endorsed to include all the contributions that parents make to the education of their children and familial priorities.

The village provides an interconnected web of services. Because a child’s physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development are linked, services are comprehensive. And because child development depends on healthy family functioning, services are two-generational, benefiting parent (and sometimes grandparent) and child. No one institution offers everything that families need; linkages to and from other human service organizations are established. Recognizing that any gaps or weak links in services can be detrimental to a child’s learning and development, agencies work together to maintain comprehensive services for children. The approach tailors services to meet a child’s needs, keeping the family context in mind.

The village engages families in voluntary, reciprocal, and informal networks of support. Families participate in an informal sector of friendship and extended family networks that are sources of mutual information exchange, peer support, assistance, and caring. They also voluntarily join neighborhood associations, religious communities, and civic groups whose collective activities promote the well-
being of children. These community groups serve as brokers between individual families and formal institutions: they seek to humanize rule-governed processes, identify and advocate the implementation of community priorities, and secure the resources that enable the community to accomplish its goals.

The village respects and preserves cultural diversity. Children's self-esteem is nurtured when their cultural heritage is valued by the community. The community is sensitive and supportive of families from different backgrounds. It values the childrearing knowledge and practices of diverse groups. Family-serving organizations respect the childrearing practices of different groups, work on family strengths, and provide the encouragement to raise children who will take pride in their heritage and also become part of the mainstream.  

Our research reveals that a vital connection exists between family support programs and efforts at village building. Family support may begin as an “add on” program, a new service that is combined with an educational, child care, or social service program; but eventually it connects to the services and resources of a community and becomes a village-building partner. The table below summarizes what practitioners experience regardless of whether they start with an “add on” program or approach their task as a community-wide initiative.
Table 1. What is the Relationship Between Program Building and Village Building?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF YOU BUILD A PROGRAM</th>
<th>YOU CAN EXPECT TO EVENTUALLY NEED YOUR VILLAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You add a family support and education program component to your school or agency.</td>
<td>Research at the Harvard Family Research Project suggests that almost without exception, family support and education programs eventually will be strengthened through communication, coordination, or collaboration with the rest of their community, thus increasing a village's capacity to provide easy access to services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF YOU BUILD YOUR VILLAGE</th>
<th>YOU CAN EXPECT THAT A PROGRAM NEED WILL SURFACE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your efforts are mostly focused on community development, finding new ways to collaborate more effectively with existing family service agencies or organizations.</td>
<td>Most village-building efforts (increasing the communication, coordination, or collaboration among community-based agencies and groups) result in the discovery of a need for a family support and education program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF YOU BUILD YOUR PROGRAM WITH THE VILLAGE AS A PRIORITY</th>
<th>YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE SLOW BUT STEADY ACCEPTANCE OF VILLAGE BUILDING PLUS SERVICE EXPANSION, WHICH WILL HAVE LONG RANGE BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You decide to build your program with village building in mind.</td>
<td>This is still a new approach, but those who are committed to it believe their efforts have paid off. Community-based institutions that have taken this route show that the members of the village become more and more capable of developing responsive family-focused services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW DO WE TURN THEORY INTO PRACTICE?
THE CONCEPT OF PROGRAM STAGES

Throughout this series we refer to stages of family support program and system development. The stages are a conceptual framework used to describe the range of program possibilities, from simple, single-service programs to complex, and as yet theoretical, coordinated, community-wide systems of support for children and families. The stages concept grows out of the Harvard Family Research Project's research on state and local initiatives in family support. We have found that programs differ in complexity of services, partnerships, and structure. The stages concept highlights points in the evolutionary continuum leading to a family support village in the truest sense — where the entire community subscribes to a common set of service ideals.

Below we define and illustrate each stage. We also look at several operational components (services, population served, governance, funding, collaboration, evaluation, outreach, staff training, and accountability) and compare them at each stage of development.

STAGE 1: A FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

A Stage 1 program is usually a self-contained program offering a single set of services for a well defined population. Figure 1 illustrates the degree of involvement the program has with other agencies, which consists of providing information about and referrals to other services families may need. Linkages to service agencies outside the program are voluntary and informal.

A Stage 1 program might be a parenting program based at a YWCA or school. It is typically funded by a foundation for a limited period of time. The program recognizes the wide range of family needs and links families to community services on a referral basis.
STAGE 2: FAMILY-FOCUSED SERVICES

A Stage 2 program offers a broader array of services to the entire family and develops formal interagency agreements to procure these services. Typically, programs at this stage define their mission to meet multiple needs of children and their families. Figure 2 shows how the family support program is linked with the categorical programs of other agencies. There is an effort to create a match between family support services and a program already offered by another agency.

A Stage 2 program might be a child care program that offers parenting skills sessions as well. A social service agency assists in recruiting participants from its welfare-to-work program, and the health department teaches a segment of the parenting curriculum dealing with nutrition and health care. A local business consortium covers operating expenses, and a church group provides recreational activities for children while their parents are in the sessions.
STAGE 3: COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY SERVICES

A central feature of Stage 3 programs is a high degree of collaboration with different service providers in order to provide comprehensive family services and improve the service delivery system as a whole. A state agency, foundation, or other entity offers incentives — usually funds — for collaboration, or a state may mandate it. Programs share accountability for participant outcomes with the other service providers with whom they work and often pool resources. Figure 3 illustrates a closer link among community groups and agencies as they begin to tailor their services to children and family needs. Agencies interpret program regulations with a flexibility that allows services to be created or delivered in a more convenient and comprehensive manner.

A Stage 3 program might be a family resource center based at a public school offering parenting classes, adult education and vocational training, daycare, respite care, primary health care, and mental health services. The program grows
out of a state initiative to establish school-linked services. To ensure that children and families use all services for which they are eligible, the program works with various community groups and service agencies, which also contribute staffing and services.

Figure 3:
Comprehensive Family Services

Figure 4 illustrates the interconnection among services. Service agencies do not lose their identities but are represented in a local organizing entity that oversees

STAGE 4: COMMUNITY-WIDE, FAMILY-FOCUSED SERVICES

Various communities throughout the country are attempting to move their family service systems to the Stage 4 level. An essential component of Stage 4 is community planning and governance. Services and programs function in much the same comprehensive and integrated manner that Stage 3 programs do, but in Stage 4 there is pooled authority for setting policy and designing service systems.

Figure 4 illustrates the interconnection among services. Service agencies do not lose their identities but are represented in a local organizing entity that oversees
the well-being of all children and families in a community. Whereas community members in the previous stages may have decision-making roles, a communal voice is now built into the governing mechanism.

A Stage 4 initiative might be a city that attempts to create a community planning board to oversee all child and family services with government, service providers, businesses, and community members. The board creates a system linking the different city agencies so that they share information about families using multiple services. They design a system to offer a range of continuous services to meet the life cycle needs of children and their families.

Figure 4:
Community-Wide, Family-Focused Services
There is no one pathway for programs to follow — the development process is unique to each program. Some programs begin as family-focused programs providing a comprehensive range of services. Others start with a single service to teen parents or young children. Some expand their service offerings and quickly forge partnerships with other community organizations. Others spend time solidifying their own program before expanding.

Although there is no recipe for where a program should start, it is our conviction that regardless of the program's stage at conception, it should keep Stage 4 in mind and think about its contribution to building a village. It is wise to think in terms of moving along the stages continuum because no one program really works alone. While an agency will need to focus on its own program's concerns and how to address them, we encourage a program to think of itself not in isolation, but as a part of a community's system of services. The goals of a program should encompass the broader vision of the later stages from the beginning. This is the "village building" approach, the features of which are summarized in Table 2 (see pages 28-29).

We hope to help a program understand through the stage framework where it is and where it might be headed. We stress that the relationship between a program and its so-called stage is dynamic. Programs and systems do not necessarily develop in a linear fashion. Depending on a specific community's needs, resources, and degree of readiness to take on large issues, a family-focused service strategy may start at any one of the four stages. It can begin at Stage 4, designed as a fully integrated and comprehensive service system; that same system may have a Stage 1 activity, introduced as new needs become apparent. Within one program some elements, such as outreach efforts, may be quite sophisticated while others, such as governance, are still at an early stage. Table 2 shows where programs can join hands to work together, share resources, and reciprocate services — to the benefit of programs and families, service system and community.
HOW DO PROGRAMS AND SERVICE SYSTEMS DEVELOP?

Our research has shown that family support programs can start at different stages and follow different pathways over time. Other researchers have noted similar phenomena. However, research also points to somewhat predictable phases of development, as illustrated in Figure 5. These phases involve a cycle of interrelated processes: identifying a service need or opportunity, initiating a planning group, designing the service delivery, seeking funding, and establishing, stabilizing, and evaluating operations. In the diagram the arrows represent the iterative phases that a program goes through; the outer circle emphasizes the village context.

Change toward holistic family services, that is, progressing through the four stages outlined in the previous section, might be launched at any phase of the service system development cycle. The questioning, reflection, and resource identification that accompany each phase make meaningful change possible. The inspiration or urgency to better serve children and families might develop in the course of a brainstorming session with parents or local service providers; when different programs realize that pooling their services is more efficient; or from the results of a local program evaluation indicating that short-term or single-service interventions are inadequate to serve children’s well-being.

Researchers and practitioners both recognize that highly stressed families need more than a single service or set of discontinuous services. Those working with families are challenged to develop a system of interconnected support and services in a manner that is respectful of families and empowers them. Using Figure 5 we take a closer look at the six phases of program and service development and how they can help a program become part of a community-wide system of family support and education.

Programs with village building as a goal usually take the following steps:

*Respond to a need, opportunity, or mandate.* Family support and education can expand when a clear need in the community exists. Service agencies recognize this need by way of reports and needs assessments showing the interrelatedness of children’s issues. They also rely on feedback from their staffs, who find that families have multiple needs that no single program can address alone. Alternatively, new funds or the opportunity to become in-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Components</th>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services: What kind of services does your program offer?</td>
<td>Offer a single service</td>
<td>Still offer limited service but refer to a broader network of providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population: Who does your program serve?</td>
<td>Serve a defined population; services focus on parent-child relationship</td>
<td>Serve a defined population but begin to add services for other family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance: How is our program managed?</td>
<td>Management structure is only for the program; may have informal communication with other service providers but does not share any program management tasks</td>
<td>Create formal planning committee to coordinate service provision with other providers; members include managers of range of service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding: How do you support your activities?</td>
<td>Use single source funding</td>
<td>Gain access to more than one funding source; usually use some matching funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration: How does your program work with other agencies?</td>
<td>Maintain informal referrals with other service providers</td>
<td>Formalized referral process and sponsorship of joint events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation: How do you measure your effectiveness?</td>
<td>Assess the effectiveness of the specific services your agency or program delivers</td>
<td>Track efforts of your program as well as those of other services your participants receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach: How do you recruit participants and graduate empowered family members?</td>
<td>Develop self-contained procedures and activities</td>
<td>In addition to own activities, rely on interagency outreach and referrals from other programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff training: What kind of skills do you want your staff to have and what kind of training opportunities do you provide?</td>
<td>Training in one discipline or specialization</td>
<td>Training in multiple disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability: What are you accountable for?</td>
<td>For the delivery of the specific services of your program</td>
<td>For joint efforts, share with other providers; individual providers remain accountable for a specific set of services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Village Building within the Stages Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrate activities of different providers to offer comprehensive support to children and families</td>
<td>Offer single point of entry case management and multiple services to all families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a broader set of services for a limited group of people</td>
<td>Serve all families in a community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form advisory board to integrate provision between programs and service systems</td>
<td>Convene community planning and governing board that is given authority to coordinate service and oversee service system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate multiple sources, some of which provide stable support; combine funding from state, federal, and local agencies as well as foundations and private funders</td>
<td>Tap into institutionalized funding streams like entitlements, tax-based funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create partnerships with other agencies that result in the integration of services and the creation of a comprehensive network of linked services</td>
<td>Participate in a community-wide planning process to design and coordinate an integrated service system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate effects of coordinated services as well as delivery of discrete services</td>
<td>Evaluation of institutionalized system outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate with community agencies for joint outreach; formalize partnership procedures and systems</td>
<td>Community programs and agencies link the full range of their services and integrate outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-job training as well as training on joint issues of concern</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary training in all fields of human services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For coordinated system, shared by all providers; individual providers remain accountable for the specific set of services</td>
<td>For coordinated system, extended to the community at large as well as to all service providers; individual providers remain accountable for their specific set of services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
involved in community-planning initiatives for children can provide the impe-
tus for local partnerships to better integrate services. Often an agency, county,
or city pursues a grant that mandates stronger linkages with services pro-
vided in the community.

*Initiate a group planning process.* Whatever stage of development a program
starts at, it is a good idea to bring together agencies, community groups, and
parents to develop a service plan for children and families. This service plan
may range from enhancing communication among agencies serving the same
families in a Stage 1 program to creating a one-stop shop of services in a Stage
3 collaboration. It is important to involve key people who can contribute to
the operations of a program, but also to include dreamers and creative think-
ers. The shared decision-making process builds community ownership and
sets the stage for future growth.

*Design service components, service delivery, and management structure.*
A service component is defined as one or more activities a program offers in
response to problem solving or a needs assessment. How and where these
components are offered constitutes the delivery system, which may be home-
based, center-based, school-based, referral-based, a one-stop shop of services,
or a combination of these. Parents and program participants play a key role in
identifying the support and services they need. If family support and educa-
tion is to be relevant and attuned to family concerns then it will at some point
strive to broaden its service components. Through community partnerships it
is possible not only to add services but also to create a delivery system that
channels the services of bureaucracies into the more intimate and friendly
settings of family support programs.

As service components and service delivery become more complex, manage-
ment structure does too. Frequently a Stage 1 program is planned by a single
agency and its service component is primarily offered by staff employed at
the site. Partnerships with community agencies to enhance services involve
communication and coordination in a systematic manner, which are informal
and formal. In a Stage 4 type of initiative, collaborative administration in-
volves the sharing of resources such as money, staff and space facilities,
common intake assessments of family needs, centralized case management
and follow-up, and a method of tracking and evaluating progress as a com-
munity.
Figure 5: Phases of Program and Service System Development

1. Initiation of a group planning process
2. Respond to a need opportunity, or mandate
3. Design service components, service delivery, and management structure
4. Seek funding and resources
5. Establish and stabilize operations
6. Evaluate the effort

Village Building
Develop a funding and resources strategy. The mission and goals of service programs and systems should drive decisions about fundraising. A funding plan benefits from the input of other service providers and community members. Seeking opinions, information, and advice from local organizations is a way of community building. It engenders good will from the outset and brings with it a possibility of securing new funds and in-kind resources to help a program progress through the stages.

Establish and stabilize operations. Implementation involves the orchestration of outreach and recruitment, staffing and training, service provision, and parent involvement activities. Each sphere of operations benefits from community involvement. For example, a Stage 1 program might mail flyers, put up posters, and canvass a neighborhood door-to-door as part of its outreach strategy. However, its efforts are helped when local organizations and businesses also spread the word among their members, customers, or clientele; when social service agencies refer participants; and when teachers mention the program to parents. By asking, “How can participants, local organizations, and service agencies be meaningfully engaged with my family support activities?” a program envisions and offers its services within the context of community.

Evaluate the effort. Evaluation allows a program or service system to assess its effects and explore beneficial changes in management and operations. The information gathered helps monitor participant satisfaction and the quality of services provided within or across agencies. It can illuminate aspects of service implementation, whether services reach those intended to receive them, and the logistics and success of coordinated services. Evaluation is a powerful tool for knowing where a program stands and its options for future action; it reinitiates the process of assessing needs and searching for opportunities to build and improve the village that raises its children.
WHAT IS THE BUILDING VILLAGES SERIES?

As the delivery of family support moves from programs to systems of services, it faces new challenges. We organize this series of guidebooks around these implementation challenges: community outreach, staffing, collaboration, funding and resources, and evaluation. As you consider each of the topics in Building Villages to Raise Our Children and apply them to your own work, it is helpful to look at them in terms of how they affect the internal workings of your program and their implications when dealing with the larger community. We hope that with careful, strategic planning you arrive at a synergy of people and services — and you do build a village to raise children.

The purpose of this series is to help practitioners of family support and education services gain a new perspective. We pay special attention to issues of program quality and survival and to village-building strategies. Each guide examines a topic individually with the aim of making you aware of how these different areas of implementation have their own particular issues and trade-offs. Yet these subjects are interrelated; enduring family support and education programs and innovative development require understanding each program component and creating an artful synthesis.

Finally, whether your program is in the planning process or changing to meet new needs, we encourage you to take the broad view, stepping back and looking at the whole system of services within the community and the services you offer families within your program. See your program as a significant piece of your village, and remember that your goal is to make the village a stronger, more supportive place.
Endnotes


Bibliography


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 with 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


This guide provides a list of educational improvement goals for the nation. Also included is a community action guide with hints on collecting data and strategies for achieving goals.


This report gives specific program examples to show how providers of services for children and families, with support from advocates and policy makers, can take concrete steps to make their existing programs more responsive to families and therefore more effective for children.


This article gives an overview of the major protective factors that research has identified as contributing to the development of resiliency in youth and the implications of these findings for building effective prevention programs.


This publication presents a concrete and detailed guide to community planning with a targeted neighborhood approach. It is backed up with a thorough account of the experience of the Bushwick Project through its planning and implementation stages.


This guide outlines the development of a community-based shared service network. Developers emphasize the need for strong centralized organization and efficient delegation of duties. Discusses organizational techniques, client assessments, data linkages, and analysis within the context of an exemplary community. For more information contact:

Leon County Shared Service Network
1950 West Tennessee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32304
(904) 487-4319
(904) 277-4319 Suncom
(904) 487-1520 FAX

This report puts forth a comprehensive approach to revitalizing low-income neighborhoods around a four-part strategy for establishing neighborhood-based governance, strengthening neighborhood social fabric, creating a more effective system of public human services, and improving the living conditions and opportunities for success of neighborhood members. Profiling three California neighborhoods, the report provides a summary of guiding premises, activities, lessons learned, observations, and conclusions. It also addresses the strengths and challenges of using a neighborhood focus for evaluating a neighborhood-based program of integrated services. For more information contact:

WCPF-Center for Integrated Services
1620 6th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814


This report examines the Center's attempt to create a local governance process to coordinate better services to families. With goals of increased flexibility and comprehensiveness in home- and neighborhood-based services, the paper presents both the technical and political problems faced in trying to encourage increased collaboration of government authorities and agencies. The report stresses the absolute necessity of coordination between state and federal policies and successful local governance. For more information contact:

Center for the Study of Social Policy
1250 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005


This booklet dispels the stereotypes associated with child poverty and demonstrates that they are phenomena that affect all races and ethnicities. The Children's Defense Fund discusses the forces underlying the increase in the number of children living below the poverty line. Recommendations for legislative action at the state and federal government level are given.


In 1989, 10 states participated in the Council of Governors' Policy Advisors' (CGPA) State Policy Academy on Families and Children At Risk. This report examines how these states approached the task of changing current systems of state and nongovernment agencies aimed at helping families. Collaboration between public-private and state-local entities is a focus. The report also examines barriers to and opportunities for change in how family needs are met. For more information contact:

This report focuses on the need to strengthen families, to increase parent involvement in education, and to encourage the business community to participate in these goals. Throughout, the report gives detailed examples of programs that make a difference in educating children and families. The study suggests how to connect families to social services, how to restructure schools, and how to define the roles of state, private, and federal agencies. For more information contact:

Committee for Economic Development
477 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022
(212) 688-2063


This publication identifies the strategies, obstacles, opportunities, and resources of four state initiatives that are restructuring child and family services to empower families. Goals are to help strengthen families in childrearing and increase their capacity to function in a productive manner. Common to each of the initiatives is a concern for prevention, education, early intervention, and local collaborations. This work provides key information for policy makers, administrators, service providers, and advocates seeking to reorganize local- and state-level family and child services. For more information contact:

Harvard Family Research Project
Longfellow Hall, Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 495-9108
(617) 495-8594 FAX


This work reviews research on impoverished families, highlighting poverty as the center of many interactive problems faced by such families. Proposing a "family investment initiative" which centralizes social services and targets the family unit rather than individual cases, it profiles Baltimore and two Utah communities to illustrate the initiative principles in practice. The final chapter outlines the steps necessary for implementation of the initiative. For more information contact:

This paper presents a powerful and practical argument against the deficit model of “needy” communities. It offers an alternative to traditional needs assessment surveys by focusing on the capacity and assets of a community. Community self-investment and regeneration is stressed. This is an excellent background source for community groups as well as policy makers. For more information contact:

Network
ATTN: Department of Publications
Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research
Northwestern University
2040 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60208-4100


This report is a comprehensive guide for communities working to establish profamily, integrated systems of child and family services. Drawing on the experiences of policymakers, practitioners and advocates who participated in the Study Group on Service Integration convened by the U.S. Department of Education, the report provides a step-by-step guide to collaboration and service reorientation, case studies of four successful community initiatives, and a comprehensive list of organizational resources. For more information contact:

U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents
Mail Stop: SSOP
Washington, DC 20402-9328

Refer to the report’s ISBN number: 0-16-041721-X


This publication emphasizes the need for the redefinition of school readiness with a focus on “creating caring communities.” Stressed are the suggested primary goals of the provision of comprehensive support for young children and their families and the improvement of support for young children and families in public schools. For more information contact:

This mammoth report summarizes research done between 1989 and 1991 by the National Commission on Children on the status of children and their families in the United States. Three sections of the report outline national policy goals, items of the agenda of the 1990s, and the importance of investing in America's future. For more information contact:

National Commission on Children
111 Eighteenth Street, NW, Suite 810
Washington, DC 20036


This is a series of implementation guides that offers practical advice to policy makers, program directors, community activists, corporate leaders, and private citizens. The series includes the following titles: *Strengthening and supporting families; Improving health; Protecting vulnerable children and their families; Increasing educational achievement; Improving health: Majority recommendations; Making programs and policies work; and Ensuring income security*.


This handbook outlines simple, inexpensive research methods to use in identifying local clubs, organizations, and associations in any neighborhood. For more information contact:

Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research
ATTN: Department of Publications
Northwestern University
2040 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60208-4100


*Citizen Action Workshops* outlines the important strategies and steps to organizing community-based groups. It discusses the establishment of group credibility and effective and ineffective leadership styles. The importance of group interaction is stressed. For more information contact:

This book examines aspects of child advocacy done by nongovernment, nonprofit agencies. Its chapters cover the history, assumptions, and characteristics of advocacy, as well as strategies, political culture, and advocacy pitfalls. For more information contact:

Kentucky Youth Advocates, Inc.
2024 Woodford Place
Louisville, KY 40205
(502) 895-8167


This article describes the Innovations Awards program at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, a program that recognizes new initiatives in state and local government. The award winners’ “trial and error” strategies are in contrast to the blueprint approach of traditional policy analysis. Tolerance for mistakes and the importance of political support are discussed. For further information on Innovations Awards contact:

Innovations in State and Local Government
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 495-0557


This book discusses how to help at-risk children and their parents achieve self-sufficiency by enrolling parents in welfare-to-work programs while providing daycare and other services for their children. The book examines the 1988 federal Family Support Act, and its program, JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills); it gives detailed profiles of eight programs that use this two-generational model for aiding disadvantaged families. For more information contact:

This handbook is divided into four sections: Part I presents a vision of an early childhood system, Part II describes new state laws and funding and explains what a state needs to do to receive money, Part III explains how states and communities can begin to build a set of systems in which programs can work together, and Part IV presents some practical examples of how local programs can work together. For more information contact:

Child Welfare League of America, Inc.
440 First Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20001-2085


This paper looks at the relatively new relationship between states and families — a policy area historically ignored by the state. Weiss notes that the increasing interest in family and education services means that states must now coordinate and collaborate to avoid duplication of services. By examining those states that have pioneered this new relationship between family and the political arena, Weiss suggests how other states can improve services to children and their families. Identifying needs and resources, building a coalition, securing top-level support, and dealing with opposition are among the issues discussed. 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.