



Bridging the gap between research and public policy  
to improve the lives of children and families

## Strategic Plan for 2004-2009

Sanford Institute of Public Policy ~ Box 90264, Durham, NC 27708  
[www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu](http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu)

## **Executive Summary**

The mission of the Center for Child and Family Policy is to provide pragmatic solutions to important problems and issues facing children and families in contemporary society. It will accomplish this mission by becoming the nation's leading university-based model of how to address international, national, state, and local policies and practices that affect children and families through innovative, relevant, and integrated research, service, and teaching.

Principles guiding the Center's activities will be the following:

1. The Center's activities will be pragmatically driven.
2. The Center's research will be interdisciplinary.
3. The Center's portfolio will span a continuum of basic to applied research projects addressing social problems.
4. The Center will build on partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies to achieve its mission.
5. The Center will find stable means of supporting its infrastructure.

The Center will implement its plan by adopting the following strategies:

1. The Center will focus on solving problems in three domains of child and family policy: adolescent problem behaviors and youth violence, education reform, and early childhood adversity.
2. The Center's services will be centralized and professionalized for efficiency.
3. The Center will increase the involvement of tenure-stream faculty members in Center decision-making and administration.
4. The Center will nurture the career development of Research Scientists and junior faculty members.
5. The Center will find stable means of supporting its infrastructure.
6. The Center will play university-wide roles in the research, teaching, and service missions of Duke University, across all academic departments and schools.

## Background

The Center for Child and Family Policy was established at Duke University on July 1, 1999, following several years of planning by faculty members representing numerous disciplines and the full campus.<sup>1</sup> The Center was approved as a university-wide Center for an initial five-year period by the Office of the Vice-Provost, and it received start-up funds from Trinity College of Arts and Sciences. Kenneth A. Dodge was named its first Director, reporting simultaneously to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy. Barbara Pollock became its Assistant Director. A voluntary Board of Advisors that is appointed by the Dean currently consists of seven faculty members and administrators who provide guidance to the Director and report to the Dean.

The Center's mission was initially framed broadly to bring academic scholarship to bear on problems facing children and families in contemporary society, through its activities of research, teaching, service, and policy development. In reality, though, its initial tasks were to define its mission more specifically, to build a critical mass of support within the university, to establish partnerships with community and government agencies, and to obtain external funding for its activities. Four years later, the Center has grown three comprehensive programs of policy-relevant activity, in areas of adolescent problem behaviors, education reform, and early childhood adversity. Its initial space allocation of 900 square feet has grown to over 40 offices occupying approximately 8,000 square feet in three different locations on and off campus. Center affiliates include 81 faculty members from all relevant departments and schools within the university, with 24 of these persons participating in one or more of the Center's external grants. In 2002-2003, the Center supported over 70 full-time staff members, including 18 Ph.D.-level Research Scientists, through annual external funding that exceeded six million dollars.<sup>2</sup>

Important accomplishments of the Center have included:

---

<sup>1</sup> A more detailed history is provided in the Center's first Mission Statement.

<sup>2</sup> Summaries of the Center's activities are provided in each of its Annual Reports.

- The creation and evaluation of preventive intervention programs for children at risk for violence and school failure (specifically, Fast Track, GREAT Schools and Families, STARS Plus, and TEAM)
- The scientific discovery of processes in children's behavioral development that are crucial to understand for policy development
- The establishment of the North Carolina Educational Research Data Center in collaboration with the NC Department of Public Instruction and the University of North Carolina
- The administration of national conferences and briefings on topics in education, youth violence, and child abuse
- The creation of the Durham Family Initiative, in collaboration with local and state partners, with the goal of reducing child abuse rates in Durham and North Carolina over the next decade
- The initiation of a cross-university interdisciplinary Doctoral Certificate Program in Education Policy Research
- The establishment of a Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center, with funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and goals of translating basic science into innovative policies and practices to prevent drug use among adolescents

**The Center has become nationally known for its expertise in translating basic science into intervention practice and policy.**

### **Strategic Planning Process**

The Center has clearly succeeded in its first tasks of forging a mission, building internal faculty support, and obtaining external funding. The next five-year period represents a new challenge of refining the Center's identity and maturing the Center into a stable force that

contributes both to Duke University's mission and to society. The tasks of starting a Center are very different from those of bringing an enduring identity and ongoing funding for its infrastructure.

With that challenge in mind, the Center undertook a strategic planning process that culminated in this report. The process included:

- Meetings with the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Center's internal Advisory Board
- review of the missions and scope of 22 similar centers at other universities, including site visits to Columbia University and Yale University
- consultation with a planning expert
- group and individual meetings with Center faculty members, Research Scientists, and administrative staff members
- written input by Center staff and faculty members

### **Mission and Center Identity**

*The mission of the Center for Child and Family Policy is to provide pragmatic solutions to important problems and issues facing children and families in contemporary society. It will accomplish this mission by becoming the nation's leading university-based model of how to address international, national, state, and local policies and practices that affect children and families through innovative, relevant, and integrated research, service, and teaching.*

Although universities have traditionally endorsed a mission of having an impact on society, their involvement has often been from the lofty perspective of the ivory tower. This distance has meant that research discoveries are sometimes esoteric and that even relevant discoveries have failed to have impact on a society that has not yet adopted a routine practice of looking to universities for answers to problems in social policy and practice. The Center's goal is to become a new model of how universities can exert an impact on society, one that will be

readily apparent to policy makers. This goal is embraced by the overall Strategic Plan for Duke University.

In order to be successful in this mission, five components will be essential.

**1. *The Center's activities will be pragmatically driven.***

Much of university research is driven by the perspective of a sub-discipline (e.g., behavioral economics, cognitive psychology) or is directed toward proving a theory (e.g., social learning theory, game theory). Although extremely valuable, the impact of this research is at best indirect, because a translation is necessary and intervening steps must be undertaken before society can benefit. Instead, the activities of the Center will be instigated by important societal problems affecting children and families today and in the foreseeable future. The translation will be direct and the impact obvious. Examples of important, relevant problems that will drive Center activities include:

- How can the alarmingly high community rate of child abuse in urban America be reduced substantially?
- How can current accountability reforms in education be shaped to have optimal impact on children's learning outcomes?
- How can the high cost of adolescent problem behaviors (including violence, drug abuse, and drop out) be reduced through prevention?

By being problem-driven, the impact of the Center's research will be more direct, and its relevance will be readily apparent to policy makers.

**2. *The Center's research will be interdisciplinary.***

A characteristic of social problems is that they are complex, involving multiple facets, thus requiring multiple disciplinary perspectives to solve. As an example, preventing adolescent antisocial behavior requires an understanding of developmental psychopathology, but the solution must be contextualized in the sociology of adolescent peer groups, the biological psychiatry of conduct disorder, environmental analysis of neighborhoods, the economics of

violence, legal analysis of the juvenile justice system, and the political science of policy solutions. Even the history and anthropology of juvenile justice systems could be relevant. Thus, the Center's research *necessarily* involves collaboration among multiple disciplines represented across the University.

Fostering interdisciplinary scholarship is also a primary emphasis of Duke University's Strategic Plan, a sensible decision given Duke's medium size and warm collegial atmosphere. Thus, the Center can play a central role in achieving this university goal.

In order to achieve this goal, the Center must attract the interest of faculty members from all across campus. Faculty members are very busy and have many demands, including serving their own departments. By emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of the problems being addressed, the Center complements rather than competes with the single-disciplinary research goals of departments. It is imperative that the Center works cooperatively with departments so that a synergy can be reached.

**3. The Center's portfolio will span a continuum of basic to applied research projects addressing social problems.** Solutions to social problems require scientific knowledge accumulated from basic research, and basic research will have its strongest impact if it is embedded in a continuum of research that also includes applied inquiry. The Center will support individual programs of basic and applied research around important social problems, and it will bring those programs together through Center-wide functions. Where gaps in the continuum exist, the Center will collaborate with departments to recruit scholars who would find the complementary programs in the Center to be attractive. The Center will also provide resources, training, and opportunities to faculty members to prepare them to engage in trans-disciplinary research.

**4. The Center will build on partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies to achieve its mission.** In order to solve relevant social problems, scholars must have access to populations for research inquiry, an understanding from policy makers and frontline practitioners

of the context surrounding the problem, endorsement to try out creative intervention and policy solutions in real-world contexts, and credibility to exert influence on the implementation of policies. All of these activities require ongoing partnerships with public and private agencies and organizations. These partnerships require policy expertise within the Center, time to develop, and resources to nourish.

**5. The Center will integrate its functions of research, service, teaching, and policy engagement.** In order to achieve the synergy that is its goal, the Center will actively integrate its four functions. Center-wide retreats, lectures, conferences, working groups, newsletters, and briefs will bring together policy experts with researchers, service providers with laboratory researchers, and practitioners with students.

Although its primary function is the generation of knowledge (a research goal), the Center will integrate teaching into all of its activities. The Center's creation of the Doctoral Certificate Program in Education Policy Research is an example of a national-model doctoral teaching program that could grow only from a context of interdisciplinary scholarship. Similar programs will be fostered. The Center will also support the teaching of undergraduate students in the conduct of interdisciplinary scholarship, which is a goal that is consistent with university priorities and emerging Arts and Sciences requirements for undergraduates. Hierarchical research teams will match senior professors with undergraduates in independent study and honor theses, graduate professional students in practica and internships, doctoral students in research training, and postdoctoral fellows in mentored research career development. By working together in research teams, Center faculty members across departments will be poised to create joint courses for team-teaching. Center Research Scientists will include course instruction in their career activities.

Service to the community is an important component of the Center. Because many of the Center's research studies consist of implementation and evaluation of services, this contribution will be a natural by-product of those studies. Furthermore, Center members will

contribute to communities by serving on policy boards and committees at the local, state, and federal levels and through their own voluntary activities. Students will serve communities in service-learning contexts. Although these activities are crucial to the Center's mission of solving problems, the Center is not a service organization. Service activities will be fostered to the degree that they contribute to the Center's functions of research, teaching, and policy engagement.

### **Strategies**

To date, the Center has grown in an explicitly "bottom-up" fashion; that is, research topics, service contributions, and policy activities have been decided by individual members or funders and encouraged by the Center with little discrimination. This strategy was necessary in order to encourage rapid growth and to achieve a critical mass of participants. The current size of the Center is now considered optimal. Over the next five years, the emphases will be to focus on solving a limited set of social problems, to maximize the efficiency of the Center's activities, and to improve the quality of the Center's contributions. These emphases require more of a "top-down" approach to the Center's administration. Six strategies will be adopted over the next five years to achieve the Center's mission.

***1. The Center will focus on solving problems in three domains of child and family policy: adolescent problem behaviors and youth violence, education reform, and early childhood adversity.*** The research activities of the first five years of the Center have reflected rather than driven the interests of its faculty members. Nonetheless, active programs of research, service, and policy engagement in three broad areas have coalesced to characterize the Center's portfolio. These areas will receive explicit further support from the Center, so that the Center can become the leading entity in the world for research in these areas. Stronger strategic

planning will mean that each of these areas will have its own director, cohesive group of scholars, budget, and sequential course of activities to reach its goals.

It is expected that in the next five years, in addition to these three areas, other substantive problems will emerge as high priorities for the Center. Other areas will be selected based on the combination of national urgency and the expertise of Center faculty members to have an impact through research, service, and policy engagement.

**2. The Center's services will be centralized and professionalized for efficiency.** The Center's services to faculty members and Research Scientists include: 1) project development and administration (including management of budgets, space, and personnel), 2) support for data acquisition, management, and analysis/dissemination (including finding populations and databases for inquiry, nurturing relationships with relevant agencies, helping investigators gain approval from the university's Institutional Review Board [IRB], training data collectors, solving security issues, cleaning and storing data, bringing cutting-edge expertise to the analysis of data, and preparing data sets for dissemination to other researchers), 3) liaison with policy makers and practitioners (including establishing relationships; setting up briefings; supporting communications; and help in writing for broader audiences that include colleagues in other disciplines, policy makers, and the public; and 4) support for teaching (including matching undergraduate students with research projects and mentors, coordinating course instruction, and developing new programs). To date, many of these services occur within independent projects and do not benefit from the expertise of other projects or the efficiency that could be gained from centralization. For example, if a project requires a half-time data analyst for six months, these services could be "purchased" more efficiently from a data resource division within the Center than from the outside marketplace.

Centralization will enable the Center to provide service providers with stable employment and support in their professional development, in order to develop the highest quality services to researchers. Centralization will require naming directors of each of the four service divisions

(administration, data management, policy, and teaching) and developing budgets for each division.

**3. The Center will increase the involvement of tenure-stream faculty members in Center decision-making and administration.** The tenure-stream faculty of Duke have been actively involved in research projects sponsored by the Center and have provided valuable guidance and support. In fact, the positive participation of these faculty members is testament to the Center's success and the need that the Center fills. As the Center moves toward playing a more enduring role in the university, the Center's leadership must be represented by a broader group of faculty members.

Three strategies will be implemented to increase faculty leadership of the Center. First, the Center will fill part-time positions of Associate Directors with tenure-stream faculty members who will be compensated for their time through summer salary support and/or course teaching relief. Second, external grants will be sought to support faculty members for participation in Center activities. Third, the Center will collaborate with departments in the recruitment of new faculty members to Duke who will play central roles in the Center's leadership. The Center's resources should be attractive to new faculty members, so that departments may find such a collaboration valuable.

**4. The Center will nurture the career development of Research Scientists and junior faculty members.**

A crucial factor in the Center's success has been the participation of Ph.D.-level Research Scientists. Several scholars were initially supported by Center funds, and as grants have been funded they have moved to external support. Research Scientists fill a range of roles, from project coordinators to principal investigators. Because these scholars are contracted by Duke for term appointments based on external funding, they have few opportunities for career development and little job security.

The Center has also had a mutually beneficial relationship with junior tenure-track faculty members, who have received seed-grant funds and salary support to develop their own research projects. These faculty members have made important contributions and represent a real strength of the Center.

The Center will support the career development and job security of these Research Scientists and junior tenure-track faculty members through several strategies. First, Scientists and junior faculty members will be mentored and supported by senior faculty members as they move to more senior roles in projects. Mentors within the Center's senior faculty ranks will be identified and matched with junior faculty member, who will be supported to write research career development award training grants. Given the success of two Research Scientists in securing such grants and a pending application by a junior faculty member, this vehicle should provide a mechanism for career development.

Second, the Center will collaborate with academic departments and university administrators to support selected Research Scientists for appointments in the Research Professor track within the university, as appropriate. Other Centers within the university have benefited from this track, which has not yet been afforded to the Center for Child and Family Policy. This track provides more stable employment and a more central role in the university.

Third, the Center will establish a reserve fund, to provide interim salary support for Research Scientists during gaps in funding, based on past performance and expectation that future funding is forthcoming. This fund could also provide temporary salary support for junior faculty members.

***5. The Center will find stable means of supporting its infrastructure.***

The centralization of Center services will require stable direct financial support for these services. To date, donors, foundations, and government agencies have been more willing to provide support for specific projects than for infrastructure. Such funding is insufficient to support the centralized services that are so vital to the Center's mission. A high priority for the

Center will be to find general support from a combination of internal and external sources, through the following strategies.

First, private donors must be convinced that general support for the Center will be leveraged across specific projects to yield broad outcomes that have far-reaching impact. This support can be provided in annual support or endowment. The Center sets a goal of raising an endowment of ten million dollars by July 1, 2009.

Second, the Center will seek external funds for centralized support, in the form of research centers. The Center has recently been awarded its first Research Center grant by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and is poised to compete for a second research center.

Third, the Center will utilize its university funding to support centralized services for its faculty members and Research Scientists.

***6. The Center will play university-wide roles in the research, teaching, and service missions of Duke University, across all academic departments and schools.***

The Center's mission is consistent with the overall Strategic Plan for Duke University, and the Center could play a key role in the university's success. The Center will serve the entire university rather than only a single department or institute, and it will act as a university-wide Center in addition to being a sub-unit within a single institute. In order to achieve this goal, the Center must represent a broad group of faculty of all ranks from across all schools and departments.

Thus, the Center will attend to the priorities of the university as a whole and to the needs of individual departments. Its Director and staff members will act as good citizens within the university, participating as appropriate.

**Evaluation of Success**

The Center's success will be evaluated by both quantifiable benchmarks and subjective judgments of its impact. The following tangible goals will be reached by 2009:

1. The Center's externally-funded research portfolio will include at least two research center grants, 12 research grants, 4 policy-engagement grants, and two training grants, totaling 8 million dollars annually.

2. At least 20 tenure-stream faculty members will be investigators on external grants.

3. At least 20 undergraduate students will participate in the Center's research activities annually, through independent study or similar means.

4. At least 10 new policies, acts of legislation, or standard practices at the state or federal levels will be significantly influenced by members and research studies of the Center.

In addition, less tangible outcomes will be measured by the judgments of the following important stakeholders: university administrators, Center faculty members, students, community members, and policy makers. These judgments will be collected formally in interviews that will be conducted during 2009.

These judgments will be used to evaluate the degree to which the Center has met the goals outlined in the Duke University Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan (November 13, 2000) that "We become known as *the* place to go for expert advice in... Child and Family Policy."