

Family Strengthening at the Tipping Point: Emerging Transformation in the Human Services Field

Policy Brief No. 18

Human services organizations at both the national and community levels are integrating place-based, family-strengthening approaches into their policies, programs, and practices.

Overview

A major transformation in the human services community is underway. At both the national and community levels, human services organizations are integrating place-based, family-strengthening approaches into their policies, programs, and practices. This report describes these advances using the results of a 2006 study by the Family Strengthening Policy Center (the Center) at the National Human Services Assembly. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) supported the study as part of its Making Connections (Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development) initiative.

Background

Through online surveys and telephone interviews, the Center queried human services organizations about changes since 2003 in their programs, policies, and practices that reflect neighborhood- or place-based, family-centered approaches to strengthening low-income families with children.

Overview of Results

At all levels and in many spheres of the human services field, the concept of place-based family strengthening has taken root. What once was a small community of pioneers and visionaries is now a more broad-based community of practitioners.

The Center's study documents these transformations in the human services field. Data from interviews and online surveys reveal that both national and community organizations are integrating family strengthening approaches into their work, with many changes occurring as recently as 2003. Significantly, the evolution is also occurring among organizations that have never received AECF grants. The changes reported by non-grantees are robust and numerous.

In a variety of ways, national and community organizations are modifying existing or starting new policies, programs, and practices that reflect place-based family-strengthening approaches. The extent of these changes suggests human services

organizations are mainstreaming family strengthening into their daily work. Further, the examples captured by this study demonstrate that the family-strengthening approach is adaptable to a wide array of settings, services, populations, and purposes.

Methods

The Center aimed to collect quantitative and anecdotal evidence that since 2003 the human services field has integrated neighborhood- or place-based family strengthening approaches into its policies, programs, and practices. As a supplement to the focus on post-2003 efforts in closed-ended questions, open-ended questions enabled study participants to describe family-strengthening efforts prior to 2003. To collect the data, the Center developed and conducted:

- An online survey and an interview guide for national organizations.
- An online survey for community organizations (see Appendix B).

These instruments used a definition of family strengthening derived from AECF communications.

Family strengthening: A deliberate and sustained effort to ensure that parents have the necessary opportunities, relationships, networks and supports to raise their children successfully, which includes involving parents as decision-makers in how their communities meet family needs,¹.

A core principle in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections initiative is that children do better when their families are strong, and families do better when they live in communities that help them

to succeed. This model is primarily place-based, reflecting an assumption that services and supports should be grounded in the unique circumstances of a community, such as its geography, populations, economy, culture, history, etc.²

National organizations in the Center's Family Strengthening Peer Network and members of the National Human Services Assembly received invitations to participate in the study. The Center developed the community-level invitation sample from the subscriber list of *Family Strengthening News*, its electronic newsletter, and through referrals from national organizations. Telephone and e-mail reminders encouraged participation. Appendix A lists study participants' organizations; the appendix does not list nonrespondents. Although drawn from a convenience sample, the study participants as a group embody a representative cross-section of the human services field.

Structured survey and telephone instruments used both open- and closed-ended questions. Center staff tallied responses to closed-ended questions and reviewed open-ended questions to identify themes. (See Appendix B for additional information about methods.)

Survey and Interview Results: National Human Services Organizations

About the Respondents

Thirty-nine national organizations in the human services field participated in the online survey and are listed in Appendix A.^a The participants span the

^a One respondent was a regional council of a national organization; the national organization forwarded the invitation to participate in the project because regional councils maintain

field: youth development, community building, family services, education and training, emergency services, faith-based, secular, and more. As such, respondents have much in common with other national organizations in the human services field.

Twenty-nine (74 percent) of respondents' organizations have state and/or local affiliates. Other national organizations have no affiliates or members but are crucial resource centers that provide training, toolkits, research, and other supports to practitioners. Regardless of their particular affiliate structure, many national organizations are active in the federal policy arena. Less than half (44 percent) of the participating organizations have received a grant from AECF specifically for family strengthening, such as through the foundation's Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development (NT/FD) and Making Connections initiative.

Tailoring the Family-Strengthening Model for Use

Several national-level respondents spoke directly about the family-strengthening model and the Center's definition. These and other comments reveal ways organizations have adapted the model for a specific population, setting, or service.

- For Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, family strengthening means empowering families as partners in mentoring. This is a shift from working with parents as permission-givers.

programmatic resources and files. The region's survey and interview responses are included among the national-level data, although the responses do not necessarily apply to other regions.

- For Corporate Voices for Working Families, the setting for strengthening low-income families is the worksite. Together with its 53 partner companies, Corporate Voices identifies and promotes workforce policies and programs that provide support for vulnerable working families.
- For Goodwill Industries International, the family-strengthening strategy focuses on family economics. As autonomous affiliates, local Goodwills are embedding family-strengthening principles in their workforce development projects.
- For Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) in the US Department of Agriculture and National 4-H Council, the emphasis is discovering and leveraging the intersections between family strengthening and youth development. The 4-H network is increasingly committed to reaching underserved urban and suburban families as well as those in located in rural settings.
- For National League of Cities, the setting for strengthening families is at the municipal level. In this setting, family strengthening policies and programs are integrated into economic development and other city-wide initiatives.
- For National Network for Youth, "family" is defined in the context of the child, some of whom are disconnected from parents and siblings. For runaways, homeless youth, and youth escaping harmful situations at home, other relatives and caring adults matter.
- For Points of Light Foundation, the family-strengthening strategy is "neighboring." Neighboring leverages the informal support

networks present in every low-income community and engages low-income residents in building their neighborhoods from the inside out with other partners.

- For Search Institute, family strengthening emphasizes *40 Developmental Assets*TM, which are positive experiences and personal qualities that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Among all respondents, a common thread is making low-income families with children a priority. For some organizations, this commitment to low-income families spans several decades. Other participants report a new or renewed commitment in their organization. The different ways in which organizations are employing family strengthening demonstrates that the model adapts to a wide variety of settings, services, populations, and purposes.

Snapshot of National Results

With and without AECF grants, national human services organizations are transforming their work with neighborhood- or place-based family

strengthening approaches. To document different types of commitment to family strengthening, the Center interviewed 32 national^b human services organizations. Data presented in this and subsequent subsections are from these interviews. The interview group included 19 organizations (59 percent) that have never received AECF grants for family strengthening. Also, organizations along the spectrum of experience participated, including early pioneers in the family-strengthening movement and others that are relative newcomers.

Figure 1, which presents the aggregate results of the interviews, reveals a field engaged in broad-based transformation. A strong majority of national organizations are actively engaged in family strengthening, as evidenced by changes in online and written communications, mission statements, public policy initiatives, education and supports for community groups, and worksite policies and practices. With uptake rates exceeding 60 percent for five of the six changes in Figure 1, interview data suggest national organizations are rethinking many aspects of their operations. Many of the changes do not appear piecemeal, but rather carefully undertaken so as to increase the effectiveness of support for low-income families with children.

^b Of the 39 national organizations that responded to the online survey, seven organizations did not participate in interviews.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of National Organizations Reporting Uptake of a Family-Strengthening Approach

Type of Change Since 2003 (n=32)	% Yes	% No	% No, Already Had
Incorporated language about neighborhood-based family strengthening on your Web site or in other written communications?	78	9	13
Amended or considered amending their mission statement or other agency language to incorporate a commitment to family strengthening?	47	28	25
Advocated for public policies consistent with family-strengthening principles?	84	16	Not applicable
Invested its own resources or obtained funding (beyond AEFCF) for initiatives deliberately designed to strengthen low-income families?	81	19	Not applicable
Adopted or considered adopting internal human resource policies and practices with the goal of strengthening the families of all employees?*	64	13	23
Provided educational opportunities or tools on family strengthening to community-level groups?	94	6	Not applicable

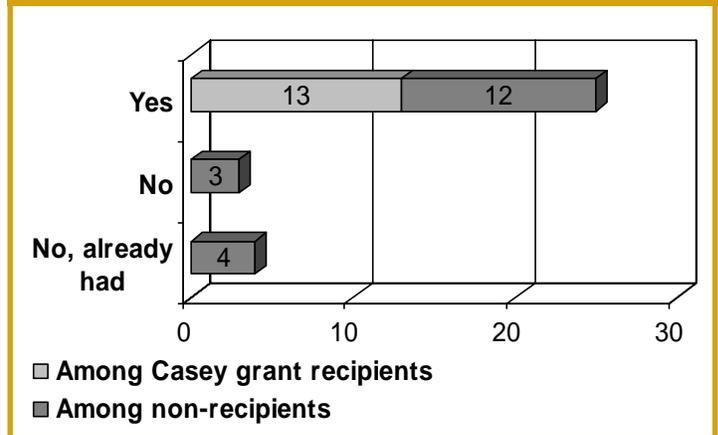
*n=31 for this question only

Family Strengthening Language in Online and Written Communications

The family strengthening approach is being mainstreamed into human services communications, according to 25 national-level respondents (78 percent) (see Figure 1). Specifically, about equal numbers of those with (n=13) and without AECF grants (n=12) have incorporated language on their Web site and in other written communications about family strengthening since 2003 (see Figure 2). Four non-grantees reported their communications in 2003 and earlier reflected family strengthening. Public and internal communications of national organizations exhibit a commitment to strengthening low-income families.

- Communications from the American Humane Association deliberately articulate the emerging priority of strengthening low-income families with children.
- Communications from Boy Scouts of America (BSA) urge the autonomous local councils to ensure boys in single-parent homes have a local father role model. Other BSA materials stress the need to tailor methods of delivering Scouting programs to local circumstances.
- Communications from Girl Scouts of the USA are becoming more inclusive by incorporating terms such as “caretaker” and “guardian” in communications mentioning parents.
- Communications from The Search Institute emphasize engaging parents in building their children’s developmental assets.
- Communications from YMCA of the USA provide local YMCAs with message points that demonstrate YMCA commitment to strengthening

FIGURE 2. Number of National Organizations Using Family-Strengthening Languages in Web Site and Other Written Communications since 2003 (n=32)



families in underserved communities. For example, “building strong kids, strong families, and strong communities” is a key phrase used by YMCAs both nationally and locally.

Shifts in communications messages reflect a stronger commitment to vulnerable and low-income families with children, especially among organizations that traditionally served populations of all incomes. The National Council on Aging, National 4-H Council, and the National Parent Teacher Association all reported redirecting communications to support efforts to better serve low-income families.

Family Strengthening in Mission Statements and Other Agency Language

Mission statements and other corporate or agency language can signal high-level commitment to family strengthening. With eight grantees and seven non-grantees, 47 percent of national organizations have

amended or considered amending their mission statement(s) or other agency language to reflect family strengthening principles since 2003. Together, about half of study participants have made such a high-level change (see Figure 3). For another eight national organizations, family strengthening is inherent in their mission statement or other agency language.

For some organizations, “family strengthening” is directly addressed in agency language. A clear case is United Neighborhood Centers of America, which has incorporated language about family strengthening throughout its materials. The group also altered its accreditation process to take into account members’ efforts to strengthen low-income families.

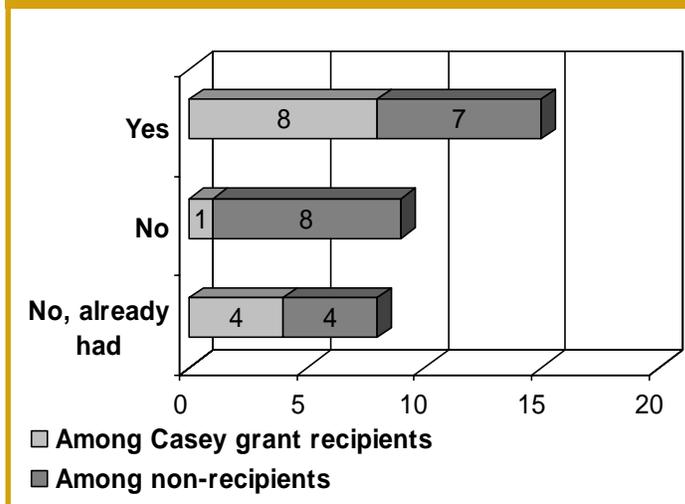
For other study participants, the link to family strengthening is evident. One example is the mission statement of the Association of Jewish Family & Children’s Agencies:

“On behalf of member [Jewish family & children’s] agencies and their clients, the Association advocates for services and policies that both promote healthy Jewish families, individuals and children and strengthen their connections to the Jewish and general communities.”

The 2002-2006 strategic plan of NeighborWorks® America likewise reflects a commitment to place-based family strengthening even though common family-strengthening terms are not used:

“Increase the capacity of NeighborWorks® organizations to help underserved communities and populations meet their revitalization goals and improve the quality of housing and

FIGURE 3. Number of National Organizations Amending, or Considering Amending, Mission Statements or Other Agency Language with a Commitment to Family Strengthening since 2003 (n=32)



economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income people.”

Twelve non-grantees (28 percent of national respondents) have not made or considered changes to their mission statements or other agency language. A common explanation for the absence of such changes was that the mission statement has been the same for decades. It also appears that the formal mission statement of an organization may be silent about strengthening families, but family strengthening approaches are clearly visible in how the organization fulfills its mission. For example, the mission of The Salvation Army is “to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.” Yet services and programs at corps centers, such as the Turning Point Center in Washington, DC, reflect place-based family-strengthening initiatives.

“The Turning Point Center for women and children seeks to break the cycle of chronic homelessness and joblessness for single mothers and their children. Families may stay up to two years in safe, furnished apartments while gaining the skills to become self sufficient. The mothers are involved from the beginning in decision-making about their futures and must be enrolled in school or be employed while in the program. Services including case management, crisis intervention, individual and family counseling, advocacy, and independent living skills classes prepare them for the road ahead.”

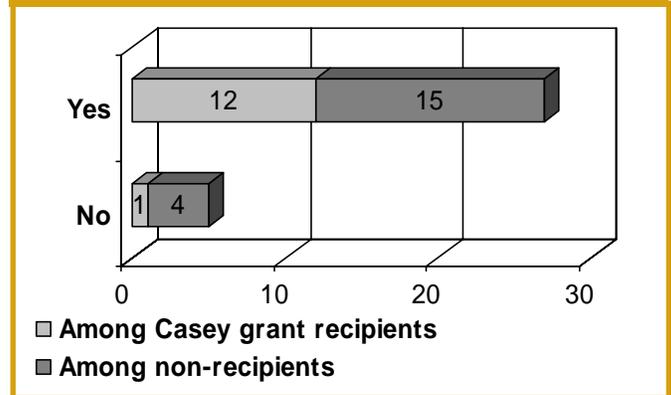
Public Policy Agendas and Family Strengthening

Twenty-seven national human services organizations (84 percent) are actively promoting public policy changes needed to strengthen low-income families with children. Figure 4 shows that both AECF grantees (n=12) and non-grantees (n=15) have policy agendas that are consistent with the family-strengthening model.

The following are some examples of how national organizations are working to improve public policy in ways that will strengthen low-income families with children. These examples offer a glimpse at the wide range of policy issues addressed by study participants.

- The Alliance for Children and Families has an active public policy office that advances family-strengthening issues and builds members’ capacities for advocacy. National Family Week is a central vehicle for grassroots advocacy.
- America’s Promise – The Alliance for Youth helped launch FirstFocus and shape its family-strengthening mission. Housed at America’s

FIGURE 4. Number of National Organizations Advocating for Public Policies Consistent with Family-Strengthening Principles since 2003 (n=32)



Promise, the goal of FirstFocus (an independent organization) is to make children and their families a legislative priority. FirstFocus convenes leaders from all sectors and parties to be the first unified, bipartisan advocate for young people.

- Child Welfare League of America advocates for policies to assist working families and provide greater support for the foster care system. The organization maintains a broad perspective on prevention and support for families and so is actively involved in child care, housing, and parent education.
- HIPPY USA (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) is increasing federal policy information on its Web site. Topics include how the HIPPY program fits with No Child Left Behind and other federal programs that strengthen families, especially those in lower income levels. Additionally, the HIPPY USA advocacy agenda and alerts will focus on

the No Child Left Behind reauthorization and appropriations for these federal programs in 2007.

- The National League of Cities' (NLC) *City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth* outlines the essential tasks necessary for sustained progress and provides a framework for local action. NLC is now actively promoting this platform with municipal leaders.
- United Neighborhood Centers of America joined with the Alliance for Children and Families to increase the impact of its advocacy.

Other organizations, including the Boy Scouts of America, do not lobby or advocate (see Figure 1), but may occasionally endorse another organization's policy statements and work as partners in providing support to families. Some also participate in policy coalitions. Notably, Communities in Schools is beginning to take a more active role in public policy, with a specific intent to help shape the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act.

National organizations are pursuing a highly diverse set of policy priorities. Only five organizations have low-wage employment in common among their policy priorities. A few other organizations are working to secure policy support for parent information and resources centers. Otherwise, policy priorities vary considerably, ostensibly because each organization focuses on issues that best correspond to its area of practice.

Non-Casey Funding for Family Strengthening

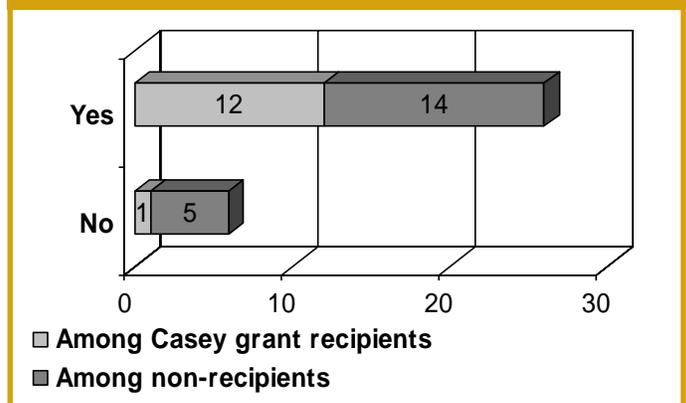
Family strengthening is not just an afterthought, but an intentional strategy being pursued by national human services organizations. Figure 5 indicates

that 81 percent of national respondents (12 AECF grantees and 14 non-grantees) are securing non-AECF funding or are investing their own resources in initiatives that are deliberately designed to strengthen low-income families with children.

National organizations have been successful in seeking or securing funding for family strengthening. Types of support included:

- *Corporate Foundations:* Kimberly-Clark Foundation, New York Life Foundation, among others.
- *Public:* Local and state funding. At the federal level, Medicaid, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Defense, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, among others.

FIGURE 5. Number of National Organizations Investing their Own Resources or Obtaining Funding (beyond the Casey Foundation) for Initiatives to Deliberately Strengthen Low-Income Families since 2003 (n=32)



- *Foundations:* David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Open Society Institute, among others.
- *In-kind:* Many organizations reported investing staff time and expertise. Others also used their own funding.
- *Partners:* Direct funding and in-kind support from partners.

Along with external funding, internal resources are enabling many national organizations to deliberately integrate a family-strengthening model into programs and services. The following are some of the many examples provided in interviews and the online survey:

- Offering guidance on engaging and involving families to site coordinators of after-school programs –The After-School Corporation
- Assisting member agencies in their efforts to help low-income families obtain their EITC – Alliance for Children and Families.
- Mentoring children of incarcerated parents –Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.
- Fostering the development of parenting-rich communities –Child Welfare League of America.
- Providing local affiliates with technical assistance and training on the family-strengthening approach –Communities in Schools.
- Designing its Families First program to help young people participate more effectively in their own families –Family, Career and Community Leaders of America.

- Expanding financial literacy programs and skills/ability training among affiliates –Goodwill Industries International.
- Developing action briefs –National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education.
- Enhancing residential services for multifamily housing (after-school programming, child care, computer labs, etc.) –NeighborWorks® America
- Advocating for low-income families –United Jewish Communities.
- Media events to showcase family-strengthening programs at the community level –United Neighborhood Centers of America.
- Replicating family-strengthening programs components –Volunteers of America.

Family-Friendly Worksite Policies and Practices for All Employees

In the human services field, 27 national organizations (87 percent^c) are changing worksites so as to strengthen families of *all* employees, including hourly workers. Figure 6 shows that grantees and non-grantees alike have internal human resource policies and practices that are family-friendly. Included in these counts are organizations that had family-friendly policies and practices prior to 2003 as well as those that made positive changes in 2003 or beyond.

^c This question used 31 interviews, whereas, the analysis has 32 responses for the other national-level questions

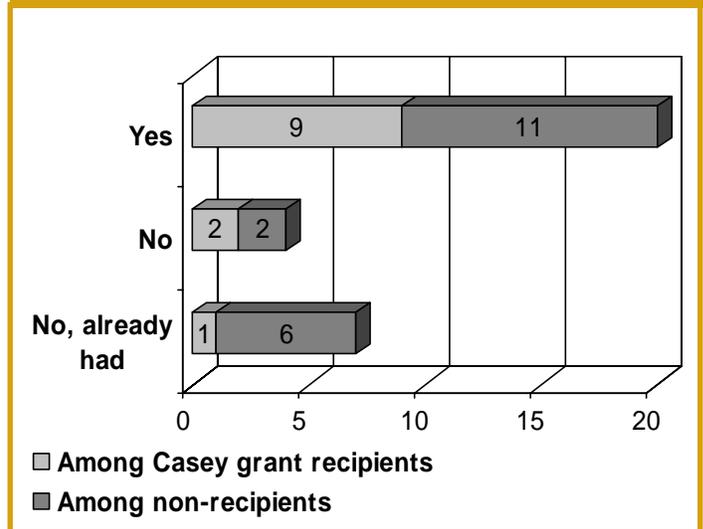
Even small national organizations are creating more supportive worksite policies and practices. The following are some of the most common formal changes among study participants:

- Flexible work schedules and telecommuting.
- Family and disability leave.
- Employee resource lines and employee assistance programs.
- Flexible savings accounts for child care and medical expenses.
- Enhanced benefits, especially health insurance.
- Information on EITC and child care tax credits.
- Part-time employment for workers that prefer not to work full time.

On an informal basis, national organizations are offering flexible scheduling and initiating other changes to support employees and their family responsibilities.

The YWCA network represents a strong example of such commitment to employees and their families. Among YWCA USA, its regional councils, and local YWCAs, a comprehensive set of work-life policies and benefits is provided. What makes YWCA's approach so compelling? First, the network is intentionally strengthening its visibility as a living example of women's economic empowerment and racial justice. Second, YWCAs recognize that the success of their organizations is directly related to employees' well-being. The result is a culture that encourages YWCAs to facilitate employees' access to benefits such as flexible scheduling; employee

FIGURE 6. Number of National Organizations Adopting, or Considering Adopting, Human Resource Policies and Practices to Benefit All Employees' Families since 2003 (n=31)



assistance programs; a full range of paid leave (medical, vacation, and other types that allow them to stay home with a sick family member, attend a school event, or take their child to the doctor for a wellness visit); and discounted child care (especially at YWCAs with child care centers).

Beyond retirement benefits and health insurance, each YWCA must report the estimated living wage in its community, the median wage of employees, and the value of paid benefits as a percentage of employee earnings. Sensitivity to wages recognizes the stress placed on families when wages fall short of meeting basic needs. YWCAs also nurture a worksite culture that enables employees to come forward and receive assistance with any issue that affects their work.

How Nationals Are Promoting Family Strengthening with Community Groups

Nearly all participating national organizations (94 percent) are actively encouraging and supporting the uptake of the family-strengthening model at the community level. Such national initiatives are one reason why many community groups are integrating family strengthening approaches in their policies, programs, and practices. All AECF grantees (n=13) and most non-grantees (n=17) are providing educational opportunities or tools on family strengthening to community organizations (see Figure 7).

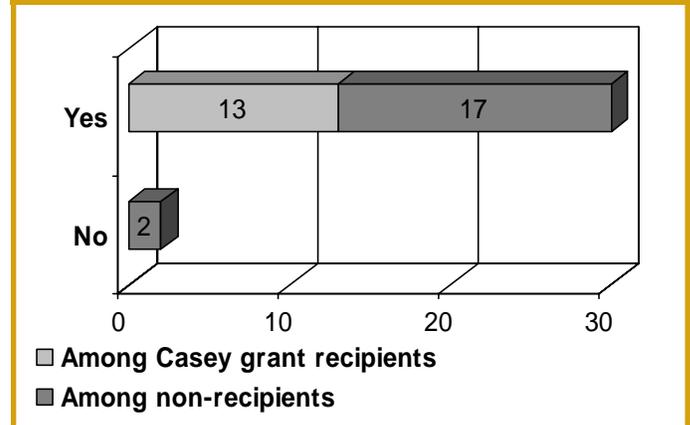
The grantees' efforts correspond with their reported AECF grant objectives, which tended to address one or more of the following:

- Increasing knowledge or awareness of the family-strengthening approach.
- Building the capacity of affiliates or community organizations to integrate family-strengthening practices.
- Encouraging the adoption of family-strengthening approaches or best practices.
- Recognizing exemplary family-strengthening programs or practices.

(A few AECF grantees reported other objectives, such as research, partnerships, and connecting practitioners in the field).

Whereas grantees often have formal initiatives to help shape community practices, non-grantees tend to embed family-strengthening elements in existing programs rather than have stand-alone programs to promote family strengthening. Both national-level grantees and non-grantees encourage the adoption

FIGURE 7. Number of National Organizations Providing Educational Opportunities or Tools on Family Strengthening to their Community-Level Affiliates since 2003 (n=32)



of family-strengthening approaches at the community level through:

- Training and curricula, especially at conferences and through teleconferences.
- Educating practitioners via newsletters and other publications.
- Creating online resource pages and toolkits.
- Disseminating information about family strengthening.
- Providing technical assistance to community-level groups.
- Making awards or otherwise recognizing top-notch programs (Casey grantees only).

At least one national organization, Volunteers of America, strives to frame family strengthening as a paradigm shift that redefines nearly every aspect of how they serve low-income Americans. This

philosophical reorientation means practitioners must rethink and refine existing program and service delivery rather than adding stand-alone programs. In their words, “Family strengthening is not a program, it is a philosophy.”

The Center asked national-level respondents to estimate the adoption of family-strengthening approaches among community-based affiliates. While estimates varied, all AECF grantees that have community-level affiliates reported affiliates making changes, such as:

- Initiating or expanding EITC efforts.
- Starting or seeking funding for new programs that are consistent with place-based family strengthening.
- Altering existing programs in ways that are consistent with place-based family strengthening.
- Participating in or forming family-strengthening coalitions.

Some study participants said their organizations do not collect these data, but they had anecdotal information about change at the community level. For example, the National 4-H Council reports involvement in the family strengthening movement has stimulated the increasing efforts in 4-H to promote the well-being of vulnerable and low-income families.

Other New National-Level Commitments to Family Strengthening

The Center asked national-level respondents about other changes since 2003 that represent a new level of commitment or a new approach to strengthening low-income families with children. One way to capture the richness of these changes is by categorizing them into the three core areas that are essential to strengthening families. With assistance from national organizations in the Family Strengthening Peer Network and AECF materials, the Center has identified these three areas as family economic success, family support systems, and thriving and nurturing communities (*Figure 8*).³

FIGURE 8. Essential Areas for Strengthening Low-Income Families with Children

Family Economic Success	Helping families improve self sufficiency through expanded opportunities to work, earn a living wage that provides for the basic needs of the family, and build assets that grow with the family over time, such as homeownership and retirement accounts.
Family Support Systems	Building appropriate and adequate systems of support for healthy family development that encompass health care, child care, education, and other essential components of strong families.
Thriving and Nurturing Communities	Building a nurturing and supportive environment in which healthy families can pursue long-term goals is critical to sustainable family development. Essential components for family success include access to affordable housing, strong neighborhood institutions, safe streets, supportive social networks, and an environment that promotes community and strengthens bonds between families.

FIGURE 9. Examples of National Organizations’ New Initiatives or Expanded Commitment to Strengthening Low-Income Families since 2003

Dimensions of New Initiatives or Expanded Commitment		
Family Economic Success	Family Support Systems	Thriving and Nurturing Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer loan programs to help parents become or stay employed (ex. purchase or repair cars). • Study effects of corporate downsizing on families. • Engage employers of low-wage workers. • Increase families receiving EITC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote child care choice. • Review “differential response” to reports of abuse and neglect. • Promote family group decision making in journal articles. • Conduct site visits to strengthen referrals. • Build partnerships of public family-service systems to weave a developmental assets approach into their work. • Develop alternatives to foster care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer affiliates family-strengthening grants. • Modify programs to facilitate volunteering by low-income families. • Assist families in shelters with obtaining more permanent, sustainable housing. • Support affiliates’ efforts to expand the functions of their resource centers to meet the needs of families served. • Encourage affiliates or members to tailor existing or develop new programming to fit with local circumstances. • Eliminate barriers to participation in local youth programs.

National human services organizations are working alongside community organizations to help low-income families move toward self-sufficiency. Figure 9 highlights the core areas in which national organizations are engaged and provides specific examples of their diverse initiatives. (The entries in each column do not correspond with the number of initiatives because the figure excludes responses included elsewhere in this report.)

While some of the new initiatives or commitments fit neatly into a single core area, others are crosscutting. To promote family-strengthening,

national organizations are undertaking a variety of activities:

- Increasing visibility of family-strengthening awards.
- Promoting a family-strengthening policy agenda. Engaging AmeriCorps*VISTA participants in building capacity of volunteer centers.
- Supporting new populations, including migrant and immigrant families, youth in public housing, grandparents raising grandchildren, residents of maternity group homes, among others.

- Creating new family-strengthening networks.
- Expanding existing family-strengthening programs or services.
- Building and mobilizing new cross-sector coalitions.
- Reframing public communications concerning low-income families and children so as to avoid stigmatizing them.

Providing leadership in the field. *Within* national organizations or their networks of state and local organizations, new cross-cutting activities include:

- Increasing awareness of family-strengthening issues throughout the organization.
- Using family-strengthening language in internal communications.
- Publishing a white paper on family strengthening for use by boards and committees.
- Restructuring staff to better serve low-income families.
- Activating membership around low-income families.

FIGURE 10. Geographic Diversity of Community-Level Survey Respondents



Survey Results: Community Human Services Organizations

About the Community-Level Respondents

The online survey of community human services organizations generated 224 responses from across the United States. Of these, the data analysis incorporated 187 responses (83 percent).^d (See Appendix A, which lists the community organizations participating in the survey.) Figure 10 depicts the geographical breadth of the study, which reached community organizations across the United States.

^d Primary reasons for excluding responses were minimally completed responses, divergence with eligibility criteria, and “duplicate” responses in which a single organization was represented twice or more in the survey.

The community respondents are in a wide variety of settings, ranging from isolated, rural areas to dense urban neighborhoods.

Regardless of location or mission, the community respondents clearly are on the front line of serving low-income families with children. Comprising a diverse cross-section of the human services field, respondents included the following.

- Single-service agencies, such as tax preparation or parenting groups.
- Multi-service agencies, such as Catholic Charities affiliates and community action agencies.
- Agencies that serve a specific demographic, such as at-risk youth or families in a low-income neighborhood.
- Community intermediaries, including volunteer centers and local United Ways, that provide essential supports to organizations providing direct services.

At the community level, many more non-grantees (81 percent, n=187) participated than grantees. Only 18 percent of participants (n=34) have received an AECF grant specifically for family strengthening. Fourteen percent (n=27) received their AECF grant in 2003 or after.^e

^e Some community respondents may have indirectly received an AECF grant, such as if a national organization used its AECF grant to make subgrants to affiliates.

Overview of Community Results

A family-strengthening approach has been central to the work of many community human services organizations for years. For example:

- “All of our programs ... are directed to strengthening families with the understanding that children, adults, the elderly and the neighborhood exist in interdependent relationships. We provide an early childhood program that assists parents in meeting current issues affecting their families, while utilizing their skills and assets to affect and improve our program and their parenting. We also use the 'family-to-family' model to help parents who have child abuse or neglect issues to address the causes of these problems.” –South Side Settlement in Columbus, OH
- “Family & Children's Service adopted our family strengths approach long before 2003 (see Minnesota Family Strength Project Research Report, 1997) but we have continued to adapt and improve our practice ever since. This includes infusing family strengths principles into all of our programs (e.g., mental health, family life education), creating a section of our website devoted to family strengths resources, and increasing the resources dedicated specifically to family-centered community organizing and community building. Our family organizing program, the Family Project, just received an Annie E. Casey Foundation Family Strengthening Program Award from United Neighborhood Centers of America.” –Family & Children's Service in Minneapolis, MN
- “Our work is very focused on family strengthening, but we don't call it that formally.

We are working to bring organizations together to change practice and policy to improve outcomes for children and families.” –Kids in Common in San Jose, CA

To integrate family-strengthening principles in their work, community organizations have modified existing programs, planned or implemented new programs, created new coalitions or redirected existing ones, and started or expanded efforts to help low-income families obtain their EITCs. As presented in Figure 11, receipt of an AECF grant appears to influence uptake of family-strengthening approaches at the community level. Uptake rates among survey participants that ever received an AECF grant (“AECF grantees”) are higher than non-

grantees in all four types of modifications (see left column in Figure 11).

Yet, **community organizations without the benefit of AECF grants are making great strides in adopting family strengthening** (see Figure 11). Seventy-two percent of non-grantees changed an existing program in ways that are consistent with family-strengthening principles. New family-strengthening programs and coalitions promoting family strengthening are other ways a majority of non-grantees are working to meet the needs of low-income families with children. Even the lowest uptake rate of 43 percent signals wide-scale changes with many community non-grantees that are initiating or expanding EITC services.

FIGURE 11. Percentage of Community-Based AECF Grantees and Other Community Organizations Reporting Uptake of a Family-Strengthening Approach

Type of Change Since 2003	% AECF Grantees (n=33)	% Other Community Organizations (n=151)
Altered an existing program in ways that are consistent with neighborhood-based family-strengthening principles.	94	72
Implemented or sought funding for a new program that represents a neighborhood-based family-strengthening model.	82	66
Formed a new family-strengthening coalition or incorporated family-strengthening among the purposes of an existing coalition.	67	60
Initiated or expanded efforts to help low-income working families obtain their EITCs.	55	43*

Among grantees and non-grantees, the adoption of family strengthening goes beyond experimentation to be a deliberate effort. Figure 12 shows that since 2003, more than half of non-grantees made three or four changes to their policies, programs, and practices that reflect family strengthening. Together, Figures 11 and 12 depict how community-level human services organizations are mainstreaming family strengthening into their work. Because so many organizations have adopted a family-strengthening approach without AECF funding, the next sections in this report focus on non-grantees.

Integrating Family-Strengthening into Existing Programs

To integrate a place-based, family-strengthening approach into their work, community organizations are altering their existing policies, programs, and practices. Figure 13 illustrates how 72 percent of community non-grantees community organizations are making this type of change. In recent years, for instance, many respondents have begun to deliberately engage families as decision-makers. Reflecting a dynamic service environment, respondents are also taking steps to strengthen the growing number of low-income Hispanic families in their communities. Other organizations are changing how they do business by training staff and revamping service delivery to attend to families as a whole, not just their individual members.

FIGURE 12. Number of Family-Strengthening Changes since 2003, by Percentage of Non-Grantee Community Respondents (n=161)

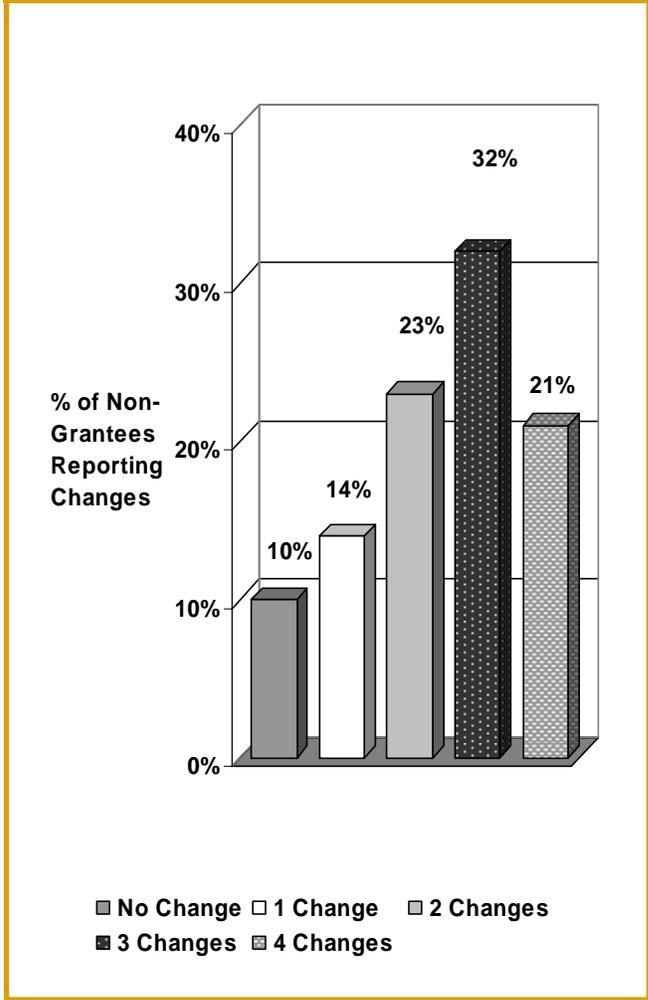


FIGURE 13. Types of Changes Reflecting Family-Strengthening Approaches by Community Organizations

Type of Change	Examples
Involving Parents and Youth as Decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Instead of assuming families are too busy or don't care enough to be involved, we reach out to the families for leadership.” –Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council in Tampa, FL “We have expanded the belief that families need to be involved in finding the solutions to their issues. Families are involved in planning and executing the plans. This belief permeates each program policy and philosophy where the funding allows.” –Upper Cumberland Community Services Agency in Cookeville, TN
Shifting focus from individuals to families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “...more program focus on the families as opposed to just the kids.” –Goddard Riverside Community Center in New York, NY “We also match each student with a mentor. Bimonthly students and their families along with mentors attend a family fun night. We assist in identifying areas of need and linking families up with resources to meet their needs as best as possible.” –First State School, Christiana Care Health System in Wilmington, DE
Programs or services for Hispanic families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Although we have had multiple funding challenges in our state, we have dramatically increased our services to families whose primary language is Spanish through the hiring and training of five Spanish-speaking family support specialists.” –Healthy Families Oakland in Pontiac, MI “Deeper understanding of Hispanic/Latino family structure has served to expand family involvement in program.” –Girl Scouts, Connecticut Trails Council, Inc., in North Haven, CT
Training staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “All staff is now trained in a strengthening approach.” –Greater Wyoming Big Brothers Big Sisters in Laramie, WY “We have also provided training in solution focused counseling to all of our service staff, which is based in client empowerment, client driven service planning and services.” – Metropolitan Family Services in Chicago, IL

New Family-Strengthening Programs

At the community level, human services organizations are developing new programs to strengthen low-income families with children.

Two thirds of respondents without AECF grants are implementing or seeking funding for a new program

that reflects a place-based, family-strengthening model.

Three types of new initiatives are apparent in the responses. Service integration and collaborative partnerships are two ways community organizations are experimenting with different approaches. In fact,

FIGURE 14. New Family-Strengthening Initiatives Reported by Community Human Services Organizations

Type of New Initiative	Examples
Service Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Restructuring of four family centers to a community center model integrating direct services and community work. Agency has taken further steps toward integrating services across lines of service.” –Catholic Charities in Brooklyn, NY • “Neighborhood Place is also part of the Family to Family Initiative and Community Partnerships for Protecting Children. We use family team meetings as a way to draw all partners into a complex case. We are seeking to take the Neighborhood Place partnership further through simplified access (a ‘through any door’ model) and integrated systems.” – Louisville Metro Cabinet for Health and Family Services and Cabinet for Community Development in Louisville, KY
Partnerships and Coalitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We are building a coalition of different service providers to provide an array of wrap around services to families.” –Bridge Builders Project in New York, NY • “Effective collaboration with the city, Workforce Solutions Board, United Way, community organizations to provide a strategic, county wide approach of serving, educating, and advocating for low income families with children.” –YWCA Fort Worth & Tarrant County in Fort Worth, TX • “Our organization invested resources and staff release time to help found a statewide association whose purpose is to advance the field of family support and influence policy in a family supportive direction. Our organization has been a convener of a local, sub-county level effort to use community organizing strategies to assist families in taking action to improve their neighborhoods.” –Friends of the Family in Van Nuys, CA
Fatherhood and Healthy Relationship Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have started a male initiative program that we are wanting to expand.... We work in partnership with several local agencies to produce programs and activities for our families that they help select.” –Community Action Agency of Siouxland in Sioux City, IA • “...we acquired the FATHER Project (Fostering Actions to Help Earnings and Responsibility), a program assisting fathers in overcoming the barriers that prevent them from supporting their children economically and emotionally.” –Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota in Saint Paul, MN • “We have joined a federal/state initiative to work with families to provide 'counseling' to unmarried couples to strengthen their relationship so that they can provide the best possible household for their children.” –Mental Health Association in Lake County, IN

60 percent of non-grantee respondents indicated their organizations formed a new family-strengthening coalition or incorporated family strengthening among the purposes of an existing

coalition. As summarized in Figure 14, a third type of area of growth is in fatherhood and healthy relationship programs, perhaps due to new public and private funding in recent years.

Adding or Expanding EITC Services

Beyond fatherhood and healthy relationship programs, the survey also suggests a growing number of community organizations that are helping low-income working families obtain their EITCs, which improve family economics. Almost half (43 percent) of non-grantee respondents indicated they had begun or expanded EITC efforts since 2003.

The following two cases illustrate how community organizations are not only adding an EITC element to their programs or services, but also trying new approaches.

- “The Volunteer Center of Southern Nevada has participated in the local community coalition to increase access to the Earned Income Tax Credit, increasing effective income of workers with low wages. The most significant change has been in the volunteer recruitment for the local Earned Income Tax Credit coalition, seeking to engage beneficiaries in the tax preparation process in order to give them skills that could improve their employment status.” – Volunteer Center of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas, NV
- “We integrated EITC and the IDA [individual development accounts] programs in both our target neighborhood and in the neighborhoods we serve along the border with Mexico in 2003. We collaborated with the Arizona Community Foundation, Arizona Assets for Independence and the Annie E. Casey Foundation to initiate these programs. We integrated assessment of empowerment and self-reliance into our CQI [continuous quality improvement] process. We altered our goals to include family asset analysis and the development of economic assets with skill development as an outcome of our

services.” –Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona in Tucson, AZ

Reflections of Family-Strengthening Principles

The family-strengthening approach is transforming human services at the community level. Instead of developing stand-alone programs, community organizations are integrating the approach into various aspects of their work. To understand the fronts in which this transformation is occurring, the Center categorized responses to two open-ended survey questions according to principles of place-based family strengthening.^f The analysis included both grantees and non-grantees.

More than 80 percent of community respondents apply four family-strengthening principles in their policies, programs, and practices, as shown in Figure 15. An asset-building approach, in which programs and services build on family and neighborhood strengths, is in use by nearly all study participants (93 percent). Most of these organizations have initiatives that strengthen families' capacity to function effectively and be self-sufficient (89 percent) and that intentionally address the family as a whole (84 percent). Four-fifths of study participants also are flexible in how they respond to family and/or community circumstances (82 percent). The prevalence of these four principles suggests they are relevant to a wide swath of the human services field.

^f The online survey asked community-level respondents to briefly describe their organizations' efforts to strengthen low-income families with children through neighborhood-based, family-strengthening programs or services. The instrument also asked for descriptions of any other changes in their organizations since 2003 that reflect a different level of commitment or approach to strengthening low-income families with children. Responses were counted if they appeared consistent with the principles.

Notably, more than half of community respondents also make use of four other principles – developing partnerships across service systems, helping prevent crises by meeting needs early, making services accessible, and tailoring services to help the individual in the context of family and community. The least common principle is family and community involvement in the design and delivery of supports and services (41 percent). One explanation for why these principles appear to be less common is that they may not apply to some parts of the human services field. For example, a core function of domestic violence shelters is to serve families after a crisis, not necessarily to prevent the crisis. Some of the difference may be arbitrary because the survey did not directly inquire if and how organizations’ work reflected specific principles. Nonetheless, the presence of differences suggests that family strengthening principles are, above all, adaptive to diverse local needs.

Other Observations

Additional themes emerged from the analysis of study data and are summarized as follows.

Familiarity with a Family-Strengthening Approach

Senior managers in national organizations have a working knowledge of family strengthening. When contacted by the Center, they were ready to discuss changes and approaches. Some national participants identified important differences in the setting or application of the family strengthening model as conceptualized by the Center. Strong community-level participation also suggested familiarity with family-strengthening terms.

FIGURE 15. Percentage of Community-Level Survey Responses Suggesting Integration of Family-Strengthening Principles in their Efforts

Principles of Place-based Family Strengthening	% Community Respondents (n=187)
Builds on family and neighborhood strengths.	93
Strengthens the capacity of families to function effectively and progress towards self-sufficiency.	89
Intentionally addresses the needs of the family as a whole or collective unit.	84
Responds flexibly to family and community circumstances.	82
Creates or strengthens partnerships across service systems.	75
Helps to prevent crises by meeting needs early.	73
Makes services accessible in the neighborhoods where people live and work.	72
Tailors services to help the individual in the context of family and community.	60
Involves families and communities in the design and delivery of family supports and services.	41

Other Observations

Additional themes emerged from the analysis of study data and are summarized as follows:

Familiarity with a Family-Strengthening Approach

Senior managers in national organizations have a working knowledge of family strengthening. When contacted by the Center, they were ready to discuss changes and approaches. Some national participants identified important differences in the setting or application of the family strengthening model as conceptualized by the Center. Strong community-level participation also suggested familiarity with family-strengthening terms.

Similarities in Grantee and Non-Grantee Efforts

At both the national and community levels, human services organizations are adopting policies, programs, and practices that reflect a family strengthening approach. This is occurring among organizations that have not received a grant from AECF for this purpose. Even among AECF grantees, many are using their own resources or securing additional external funding for family-strengthening initiatives.

High Level of Commitment to Family Strengthening

At the national level, commitment to family strengthening appears to be high. Both grantees and non-grantees are investing their own resources in family-strengthening initiatives, changing mission statements and public communications, and educating and providing tools to community organizations.

Funding Challenges at the Community Level

AECF support has clearly made a difference in the uptake of family-strengthening approaches.

One recent grantee, Volunteers of America Delaware Valley in Camden, NJ, commented:

“Funding provided by [AECF] Family Strengthening initiative allows organizations to offer greater support and assistance to low income families. Such funding allowed us to expand our program options, provide recreational activities for homeless families, and financially assist families with emergency food and toiletry items.”

Although the community-level survey only asked about grants from AECF, the range of family-strengthening activities signals many community organizations are tapping other sources of support.

Yet, stable and sufficient funding for family strengthening was a common concern at the community level. Funding struggles were a common theme in many comments.

- “Although it is our mission to create healthier communities and stronger families, we are finding it more and more difficult to find stable long-term resources to support these efforts. It is increasingly difficult to address and overcome the impact of long-term poverty when jobs that pay a living wage are lacking and our community is becoming more and more divided between the haves and have-nots.” –Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital, Inc., in Binghamton, NY
- “It is very difficult for grassroots parent organizations to get funding. Parent organizations that have been in existence for years are finding funding is going to large

organizations that have professional on staff.” – Parents Helping Parents in Toledo, OH

- “[I]t seems like there are all these great ideas out there. How do we turn these into sustainable, replicable programs? Do many of them truly replicate across the nation, and if not, why not? Maybe we have something to learn from the for-profit business franchise movement?” – First Steps of Greenville County, SC
- “...we are only constrained by fiscal challenges - but are constantly looking for additional funding opportunities to keep these programs viable and to allow us to innovate/initiate new programs that are tailored to fit the needs to the families that we serve.” –Catholic Community Service– Juneau in Juneau, AK
- “Have been unable to find funding for some programs, so we are taking on the cost through operations.” –Frost Valley YMCA in Claryville, NY

A transformation in the human services community appears to be underway. Changes in the field are occurring at both the national and community level.

Limitations

Readers are advised that study data and results are exploratory. In particular, the quantitative results provide an incomplete picture of the field due to several factors for which the Center could not adjust. Because baseline data do not exist on the human services community’s policies, programs, and practices as they pertain to place-based family strengthening, the Center queried participants about changes since 2003. Due to resource constraints, the study did not employ a randomized sample. Rather, the Center used readily available contact lists and asked national respondents to provide referrals to community affiliates that had adopted a

family-strengthening approach. The study’s results, therefore, may not correspond with the actual changes in the human services community.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and selection bias is likely, as respondents that had knowledge of and experience with a family-strengthening approach may have been more likely to participate than invitees with less knowledge or experience. Nonetheless, 10 percent of the community survey participants included organizations that did not make any of the changes about which the Center queried (*see Figure 11*). It is also possible that the interviewees’ individual responses may not fully capture their organizations’ perspective or actual experience.

Finally, the adoption of family-strengthening approaches in the human services community reflects multiple influences, including AECF leadership and the contributions of other leaders at both the grassroots and the grasstops.

Significance of Study

This study is one of the first efforts to document the integration of neighborhood- or place-based family strengthening approaches in the human services field. It demonstrates that the human services field and its organizations are changing in ways that reflect place-based family strengthening. Further, the study offers a snapshot of the nature of the transformations. Specifically, family strengthening is influencing how study participants are delivering programs and services. The extent of changes relating to family strengthening indicates both national and community human services organizations are mainstreaming family strengthening instead of creating stand-alone programs. As such, family strengthening appears to be shifting paradigms in the field.

Grant support from AECF is partially fueling the transformations, and much is being done by human services organizations with support from other organizations and funders. For example, the study indicates at least 90 percent of community respondents without AECF grants have made at least one type of change that reflects a family-strengthening approach.

Prior Research in this Area. In 2004, the Points of Light Foundation commissioned the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis to survey a random sample of its constituents, including national and community-based nonprofits and volunteer centers. The study asked respondents about actions and plans to engage low-income communities in their work and about familiarity with the concept of neighboring.⁹ Thus, it examined the integration of a core concept of place-based family strengthening – that of engaging low-income families in the process of transforming neighborhoods and strengthening families. The study found about half of the respondents used specific strategies to engage low-income residents and their communities.⁴

Implications. The current study builds on this initial data. In doing so, the Center engaged a broad segment of the human services field and collected information about a diverse set of family strengthening policies, programs, and practices.

Together, the two studies document that community human service organizations are integrating place-

based family strengthening into their policies, programs, and practices. Both studies are evidence that the family-strengthening approach is adaptable for a wide array of settings, services, populations, and purposes.

Conclusions

Has family strengthening reached a tipping point? Study data indicate momentum is building at all levels and in all corners of the human services field. In their communications, programs and services, public policy initiatives, and internal worksite policies, national and community human services organizations are changing how they do business in order to better strengthen low-income families with children. The emerging picture is that of a paradigm shift, in which family strengthening is at the heart of policy, programs, and practices instead of being isolated “add-on” programs. The challenge ahead for the field is replicating programs and mobilizing stable and secure funding sources to sustain the transformation, especially at the community level.

⁹ “Neighboring: the connections among residents that support positive individual and community behavior based on mutual respect, responsibility, and ownership.” As defined by the Points of Light Foundation in *Neighboring: Get into Action!* (2004). http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/neighboring/welcome/pdf/action_kit.pdf accessed 7/6/06

Appendix A. List of Organizations Represented by the Individual Respondents

With gratitude, the Family Strengthening Policy Center acknowledges the participation of the following organizations in the measurement project.^h

National Organizations

Alliance for Children and Families
American Humane Association
America's Promise--The Alliance for Youth
Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
Boy Scouts of America
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Camp Fire USA
Catholic Charities USA
Child Welfare League of America
Communities In Schools
Corporate Voices for Working Families
Family, Career, Community Leaders of America
Forum for Youth Investment
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Incorporated
Goodwill Industries International
HIPPI USA--Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
KaBOOM!
National 4-H Council
National Council on Aging
National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
National Network for Youth
National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
NeighborWorks America

^h These lists include organizations whose responses may not have been used in the analysis because of a substantially incomplete response, not meeting the eligibility criteria, etc.

Points of Light Foundation
Save the Children
Search Institute
The After-School Corporation (TASC)
The Salvation Army
United Jewish Communities
United Neighborhood Centers of America
United Way of America
USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)
Volunteers of America
YMCA of the USA
Youth Service America
YWCA New England Regional Council

Community and Other Non-National Organizations

ABCD
Agenda for Children
Alternatives For Girls
American YouthWorks
Any Baby Can of San Antonio, Inc.
Austin Families, Inc. dba FamilyConnections
Baltimore County Public Schools
Belmont High School, Los Angeles Unified School District
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Berks County, PA
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Missouri
Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Capital Region, Inc.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ventura County
Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove
Boys & Girls Clubs of Huntington Valley
Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities
Bridge Builders Project
Bridges to a New Day
Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services
California CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Association
Camp Fire USA Central Puget Sound Council
Camp Fire USA Green Country Council

Camp Fire USA Heartland Council
 Camp Fire USA Minnesota Council
 Camp Fire USA-Midlands
 Casey Family Services
 Catholic Charities (Archdiocese of Santa Fe)
 Catholic Charities (Diocese of Green Bay)
 Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans
 Catholic Charities Brooklyn & Queens
 Catholic Charities Caregivers
 Catholic Charities Health and Human Services, Diocese of Cleveland
 Catholic Charities Housing Resource Center
 Catholic Charities Indianapolis
 Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands, Inc.
 Catholic Charities of Yakima
 Catholic Charities Westside Head Start
 Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice, Inc.
 Catholic Charities, Inc. (Archdiocese of Hartford)
 Catholic Charities, Inc. (Diocese of Wichita)
 Catholic Community Service - Juneau, Alaska
 Catholic Community Services
 Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona
 Catholic Social Services, Miami Valley
 Center for Community and Neighborhoods
 Center for Family Representation
 CentroNia
 Children's Aid Society
 Choices, Inc.
 City of Scottsdale
 Colonial Beach Committee for Children
 Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
 Community Action Agency of Siouxland
 Community Action Marin - Head Start
 Community Missions of Niagara Frontier, Inc.
 Community Service Programs of West Alabama
 Correctional Health
 County of Sonoma Mental Health, Youth and Family Services (YFS)
 Decatur-DeKalb YMCA
 Denver Indian Family Resource Center
 Easter Seals - Greater Washington Baltimore Region (GWBR)

El Cajon Collaborative, Little House Family Resource Center (FRC)
 EMQ Children and Family Services (a.k.a. Eastfield Ming Quong)
 Enable, Inc.
 Every Woman's Place Inc.
 Family & Children's Service
 Family Christian Association of America
 Family Friends/Temple University
 Family Friends/United Arc
 Family Justice
 Family Leadership Connection
 Family Resource Center
 Family Resources, Inc.
 Family Service Association (Dayton, OH)
 Family Service Association of Bucks County
 Family Service Rochester
 Family Success Center of Etowah County, Inc.
 Family to Family Network
 Family Works, Inc.
 First State School, Christiana Care Health System
 First Steps of Greenville County
 FIRSTLINK
 Foster Grandparent Program
 Friends of the Family
 Frost Valley YMCA
 FSW Connecticut, Inc.
 Girl Scout Council of Kenosha County
 Girl Scouts - Foothills Council, Inc.
 Girl Scouts - Rock River Valley Council
 Girl Scouts - Sangre de Cristo Council
 Girl Scouts Inland Empire Council
 Girl Scouts of Buckeye Trails Council
 Girl Scouts of Chicago
 Girl Scouts of Green Hills Council, Inc
 Girl Scouts of Hoosier Capital Council
 Girl Scouts of Konocti Council
 Girl Scouts of Metro Detroit
 Girl Scouts of Southwest Georgia
 Girl Scouts of Spar and Spindle Council
 Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council
 Girl Scouts of the Black Hills Council

Girl Scouts of the Rio Grande
Girl Scouts of Utah
Girl Scouts Susitna Council
Girl Scouts, Connecticut Trails Council, Inc.
Goddard Riverside Community Center
Good Beginnings Alliance
Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern
New Jersey
Goodwill Industries of Hawaii, Inc.
Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota
Greater Wyoming Big Brothers Big Sisters
Healthy Families Oakland
Horizons, A Family Service Alliance
Houston Fed. of Families for Children's Mental Health
Houston ISD
Iowa State University Extension
Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services (JBFCs)
Jewish Family and Children's Service
Jewish Family and Children's Services
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
Kennedy Child Study Center
Kids in Common
Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee
(CAC), Office on Aging
Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan
Learning Is For Everyone, Inc.
Louisville Metro
Maui Family Support Services
Mendoza College of Business
Mental Health Association in Lake County
Metropolitan Family Services
Michigan State University
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
Minority Development & Empowerment
Mount Sinai Medical Center
Neighborhood House
New Directions Youth & Family Services, Inc.
North Dakota State University Extension Service
North Iowa Community Action
OMG Center for Collaborative Learning
Operation Threshold
Orangewood Children's Foundation

Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC) Community
Programs
Oregon State University Extension 4-H
Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital, Inc.
Parenting Connections: The RAFT (Relative, Adoptive and
Foster Family Team)
Parents Helping Parents
Parents Reaching Out to Help
People's Regional Opportunity Program (PROP)
Philadelphia Department of Human Services
Pio Decimo Center
Positive Parenting
Practical Parenting Partnerships
Promise House
Providence Newberg Medical Center
Ramsey County Human Services
Rhythm Gym, a Project of Community Partners
Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Warren County
San Francisco Family Support Network
Savio House
School District of the City of Erie/Family Center
South Dakota FCCLA
South Side Settlement
Stanly County Family YMCA
The Home for Little Wanderers
Towson University
United Way of Berks County
United Way of Central Maryland
United Way of Greater Toledo
United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania
University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare
University of Missouri Extension
University of Nebraska
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension
University of Wisconsin - Extension
Upper Cumberland Community Services Agency
Utah 4-H
Volunteer Center of Riverside County
Volunteer Center of Southern Nevada
Volunteer Center of the Redwoods
Volunteer Center of the Virginia Peninsula
Volunteer Macon

Volunteer Services of Manatee County, FL
Volunteer Wayne/RSVP
Volunteer! Baton Rouge
Volunteers of America - Delaware Valley
Volunteers of America - Greater Sacramento and Northern Nevada
Volunteers of America of Indiana
Volunteers of America of Kentucky, Inc.
Volunteers of America, Dakotas
Wasco County Commission on Children & Families
Waupaca County, University of Wisconsin-Extension
Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
White Settlement, ISD Family Resource Center
Wichita YMCA
Yale University Zigler Center
YMCA and YWCA of Greater Bangor (Bangor Y)
YMCA of Burlington County
Young Adult Community Development, Inc.
Youthville
YWCA Central Massachusetts
YWCA El Paso Del Norte Region
YWCA Family Resource Center
YWCA Fort Worth & Tarrant County
YWCA New Britain
YWCA of Greater Rhode Island
YWCA of Tampa Bay
YWCA of the City of New York
YWCA Tulsa

Appendix B. Methodology

With funding from the Casey Foundation, the Family Strengthening Policy Center (the Center) conducted this study. These additional notes supplement the Methods section in this brief.

Sample. The Center asked each national organization to provide three to five referrals to community affiliates that have adopted a place-based, family-centered approach to strengthening low-income families with children. Several national organizations provided more than 10 referrals, and a few national organizations did not provide referrals because they do not have affiliates.

Invitation Process. The Center used e-mail to invite both national and community organizations to participate. If an e-mail was returned undeliverable, staff sought to identify an alternate contact at the organization, who was then contacted. In addition to e-mail reminders, national organizations received telephone calls asking them to participate. The invitations instructed recipients that the online survey should be completed by the person most knowledgeable about family-strengthening activities in the organization.

Online Survey. The Center translated the written survey instruments into an interactive online format using SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) to create and managed the online survey. When the surveys closed, data were downloaded into Excel spreadsheets for cleaning and analysis.

Analysis. Because of the nonrandomized sample, the Center did not conduct multivariate statistical analyses.

Initial Online Survey Questions for National Human Services Organizations

1. Please provide your contact information.

First Name:
Last Name:
Position/Title:
Organization:
Street Address:
City, State Zip:
E-mail Address:
Telephone:

2. Do you have affiliated organizations or member organizations?
 No
 Yes

3. Please provide information about your affiliated/member organizations.

Number of community-based affiliates/members:

Number of state-based affiliates/members:

4. Has your organization ever received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) specifically for family strengthening, such as through their Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development (NT/FD) and Making Connections initiative?
 No
 Yes

5. Please provide the years in which you received one or more AECF grants for family strengthening (ex. 2001-Present).

6. Please briefly summarize up to 3 objectives of your most recent family strengthening grant.

Objective 1:

Objective 2:

Objective 3:

7. To advance family strengthening in the human services community, the National Human

Services Assembly's Family Strengthening Policy Center (FSPC) performs several functions. For each function listed, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement [strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or unfamiliar with this FSPC function] about whether that function has assisted your organization's or your affiliates' family-strengthening work.

FSPC has helped my organization and/or my organization's affiliates to integrate neighborhood, family-strengthening approaches into our policies, programs, and/or practices...

(a) ... by explaining and illustrating the neighborhood-based, family-strengthening model (ex. through policy briefs, Web site).

(b) ... through one-on-one interaction with FSPC staff.

(c) ... by identifying promising practices (ex. through policy briefs, EITC Toolkit for Nonprofits, peer network meetings).

(d) ... by providing timely, useful information about family strengthening (ex. FSPC electronic newsletter).

(e) ... by connecting organizations in the family-strengthening field (ex. through the Family Strengthening Peer Network).

(f) ... by maintaining a Web site that serves as a clearinghouse of family-strengthening information and tools.

8. If FSPC has provided another service that has helped your organization integrate neighborhood-based, family-strengthening approaches into policies, programs, and/or practices, please describe it here.

9. Please provide contact information for five of your community-based affiliates that have adopted a neighborhood-based, family-centered approach to strengthening low-income families with children (or select one of the alternative responses at the bottom of this page). FSPC will use this information to conduct 10-minute interviews.

Community-based affiliate #1:

Community-based affiliate #2:

Community-based affiliate #3:

Community-based affiliate #4:

Community-based affiliate #5:

Alternative Responses:

- I am unable to provide referrals right now, so please contact me in a few days to obtain the contacts.
- Please contact the recipients of my organization's family-strengthening awards. Award information is available at the following URL(s):

10. We plan to conduct a 30-45 minute follow-up interview with you by telephone. Please indicate which dates and times would be most convenient for you.

Telephone Interview Questions for National Human Services Organizations

1. Since 2003, has your organization incorporated language about neighborhood-based family strengthening on your Web site or in other written communications? (Examples would be helpful.)
- No
 - Yes. One example is:

2. Since 2003, has your organization advocated for public policies consistent with family-strengthening principles?
 - No
 - Yes. One example is:
3. Since 2003, has your organization amended or considered amending your mission statement or other agency language to incorporate a commitment to family strengthening?
 - No
 - Yes. One example is:
4. Since 2003, has your organization invested its own resources or obtained external funding (beyond the Casey Foundation) for initiatives deliberately designed to strengthen low-income families?
 - No
 - Yes. One example is:
5. Since 2003, has your organization adopted or considered adopting internal human resource policies and practices with the goal of strengthening the families of all employees?
 - No
 - Yes. One example is:
6. What other changes in your organization, if any, have happened since 2003 that represent a different level of commitment or a new approach to strengthening low-income families with children?
 - No
 - Yes. One example is:
7. *(If applicable)* Since 2003, has your organization provided educational opportunities or tools on family strengthening to community-level affiliates?
 - No
 - Yes. One example is:
8. *(If applicable)* Please estimate the percentage of your community-based affiliates that have:
 - a. Initiated or expanded efforts to help low-income working families obtain their EITC?
 - b. Implemented or sought funding for a new program that represents a neighborhood-based, family-strengthening model?
 - c. Altered an existing program in ways that are consistent with neighborhood-based, family-strengthening principles?
 - d. Formed a new family-strengthening coalition or incorporated family-strengthening as a purpose of an existing coalition?
9. Is there anything in particular that the Family Strengthening Policy Center (FSPC) has done that made a difference in your organization's family-strengthening work?
10. How might FSPC more effectively advance neighborhood-based, family-strengthening approaches in the human services community?

Initial Online Survey Questions for Community Human Services Organizations

1. Please provide your contact information.
 - First Name:
 - Last Name:
 - Position/Title:
 - Organization:
 - Street Address:
 - City, State Zip:
 - E-mail Address:
 - Telephone:
2. Please give a brief overview (2-3 sentences) of your efforts to strengthen low-income families with children through neighborhood-based, family-strengthening programs or services.

3. Has your organization ever received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) specifically for family strengthening, such as through their Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development (NT/FD) and Making Connections initiative?
 No
 Yes
4. Please indicate the years during which your organization used one or more AECF grants for family-strengthening activities (check all that apply).
 Prior to 2003
 2003 or after
5. Since 2003, has your organization initiated or expanded efforts to help low-income working families obtain their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)?
 No
 Yes
6. Since 2003, has your organization implemented or sought funding for a new program that represents a neighborhood-based, family-strengthening model?
 No
 Yes
7. Since 2003, has your organization altered an existing program in ways that are consistent with neighborhood-based, family-strengthening principles?
 No
 Yes
8. Since 2003, has your organization formed a new family-strengthening coalition or incorporated family-strengthening among the purposes of an existing coalition?
 No
 Yes
9. Please give a brief overview of any other changes in your organization since 2003 that reflect a different level of commitment or approach to strengthening low-income families with children (2-3 sentences).
10. Are you familiar with the Family Strengthening Policy Center at the National Human Services Assembly?
 No
 Yes
 Unsure
11. Is there anything in particular that the Family Strengthening Policy Center has done that made a difference in your organization's family-strengthening work?
12. Do you have any final comments or feedback for us? If any of the preceding survey questions suggested other issues for you, please feel welcome to address them here.

Endnotes

¹ National Human Services Assembly (2004). Introduction to Family Strengthening. Washington, DC: Family Strengthening Policy Center, National Human Services Assembly. <http://www.nassembly.org/fspc/practice/documents/Brief1.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Littlepage, L., and Malhotra, K. (2004). Results of a Survey of Points of Light Foundation's Constituents: Engagement of Low-Income Communities and Awareness of the Concept of Neighboring. Indianapolis, IN: Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. http://www.urbancenter.iupui.edu/PubResources/pdf/107_04-C35.pdf, accessed 5/30/06

This series of policy briefs produced by the Family Strengthening Policy Center seeks to describe a new way of thinking about how to strengthen families raising children in low-income communities and how this approach can and should influence policy. The premise of "family strengthening" in this context, and as championed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is that children do well when cared for by supportive families, which, in turn, do better when they live in vital and supportive communities. The series describes ways in which enhancing connections within families and between families and the institutions that affect them result in better outcomes for children *and* their families.

The Family Strengthening Policy Center is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and is an initiative of the National Human Services Assembly, an association of leading national nonprofit health, human service, human and community development agencies. The center benefits from the guidance and involvement of the Family Strengthening Peer Network, which provides opportunities for its members to share knowledge on family strengthening strategies, learn what other organizations are doing, and find synergies and potential areas of collaboration.

This brief reflects the findings and views of the Family Strengthening Policy Center, which is solely responsible for its content. For more information or to access other family strengthening policy briefs, visit www.nassembly.org/fspc.

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