



PARTNERSHIPS FOR FAMILIES:

A Quick Look at Stories and Lessons from Los Angeles Communities



Champions For Our Children



PFF: A QUICK LOOK

This report provides a quick look at a case study conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) to better understand the components and implementation strategies that contribute to the success of Partnerships For Families. Using data collected through interviews and focus groups with more than 200 stakeholders and through analysis of existing materials, the case study explores the experiences of local PFF partners and families. CSSP staff and consultants analyzed these experiences in the context of national research and developments.

THIS SUMMARY REPORT CONTAINS AN OVERVIEW OF:

- I. PFF DESIGN AND IMPACT
- II. PFF ANCHORS: THE KEYS TO SUCCESS
- III. IMPLICATIONS OF PFF

See full case study report at www.first5la.org

I. PFF DESIGN AND IMPACT



Partnerships For Families (PFF) is a unique initiative designed to keep young children safe and their families strong. Funded by First 5 LA to prevent abuse and neglect of vulnerable, young children from birth through age 5, PFF does not reinvent the wheel. Instead, it creates an entirely new vehicle by combining evidence-based programs and practices with the power of community-grown networks of support.

PFF incorporates core values and practices supported by national research, which identifies Strengthening Families Protective Factors that work to support families and reduce child abuse risks. Targeted families include high-risk pregnant women and families with a child determined by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to be at high or very high risk of child abuse or neglect. Local PFF partners respond immediately with concrete support and a range of home-based and center-based services. In-home counselors respectfully join with parents as partners to help them eliminate safety risks, obtain critical information about child development and parenting, and build on their existing strengths and skills. Local networks of peers and community organizations reduce families' isolation and ensure access to ongoing supports. In the process, these networks help build strong communities where all children and families can thrive.

Protective Factors that Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect: What the National Research Shows

Rigorous research identifies five Protective Factors that reduce child abuse and neglect risks:

1. Parental resilience
2. Social connections
3. Knowledge of parenting and child development
4. Concrete support in times of need
5. Children's social and emotional development.¹

DIAGRAM 1. **CIRCLES OF PROTECTION** (below)

Both risks and Protective Factors can occur on multiple levels:

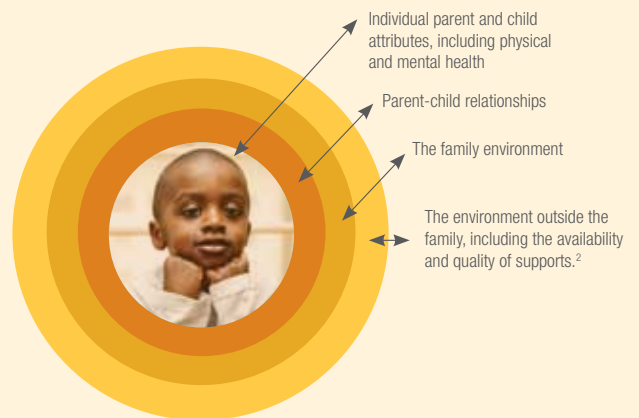




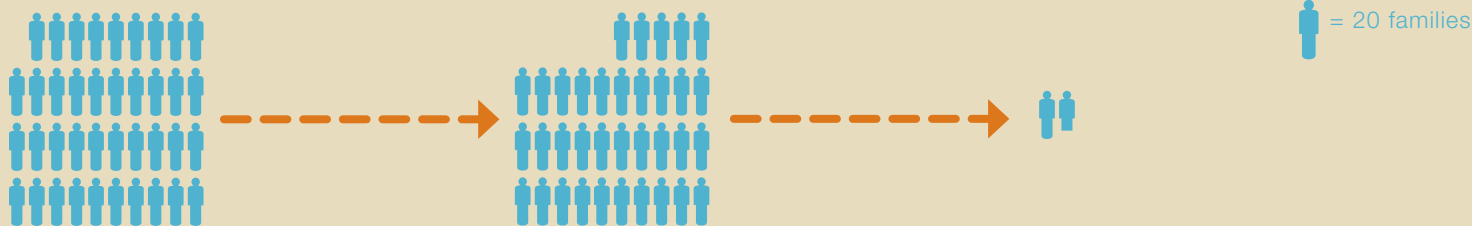
DIAGRAM 2. PREVENTION OF NEW CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTS *(below)*

Data from the SPA 2 Project SAFE Collaborative illustrate the success of PFF partners. The Collaborative successfully engages a large majority of families and pregnant women referred from multiple sources (including DCFS and community sources). Over a four-year reporting period, only 37 PFF families were subsequently referred to the child welfare agency for suspected child abuse or neglect.

A. AN INITIATIVE OF FIRST 5 LA AND A CONSTELLATION OF PARTNERS

In 2005, the First 5 LA Commission committed \$50 million generated by state tobacco taxes to develop and implement PFF over a five-year period. Targeting specific zip codes, First 5 LA distributes PFF funds and institutional support through a lead agency selected in each of the county's eight geographic Service Planning Areas (SPAs). Each lead agency in turn has created a local PFF Collaborative by developing partnerships — both subcontracted and un-funded — with community-based stakeholders.

SPA 2 PFF COLLABORATIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND RE-REFERRAL OF ALL PARTICIPATING FAMILIES June 2006 to May 2010



782 families

Total Number of Families Referred to PFF (Including DCFS Referrals, Pregnant Women, and Community Referrals)

703 families (90%)

Total Number of Referred Families that Chose to Enroll in PFF

37 families (4.7%)

Total Number of PFF-Enrolled Families Re-Referred to DCFS for Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect



PARENT VOICES

One young mother described the impact of PFF on her family: *"I was trying, but I was frustrated, alone...at the end of my rope. I've learned so much. Now I realize I'm not alone. Now I have confidence that I can be a good parent."*

DCFS served as First 5 LA's partner in designing PFF. It continues to be the primary referral source for families as well as a key collaborator in many local partnerships. A DCFS Liaison to PFF explains, *"We all have a common goal and vision, and we need partners. We can learn from each other."*

B. PFF IMPACT: STRONG FAMILIES AND SAFE CHILDREN

Both formal evaluations and families themselves confirm the impact of PFF on children's lives and the importance of the Protective Factors. Data support what many parents reported during the case study: Families are stronger and children are safer as a result of PFF participation.

1. Child safety and well-being. A critical test of PFF success is the safety and well-being of children. Outcome evaluations funded by First 5 LA reveal significant success preventing re-referrals of PFF participants to the county child welfare agency due to suspected child abuse and neglect.

2. Improved family functioning. Many family behaviors, characteristics, conditions, and supports influence the safety and well-being of children. Most families participating in PFF show marked improvement in multiple areas of critical functioning measured by a standardized family assessment instrument.³

C. THE PFF MODEL

To achieve the initiative's goal of preventing child maltreatment, First 5 LA developed an approach that incorporates critical building blocks and partnerships.

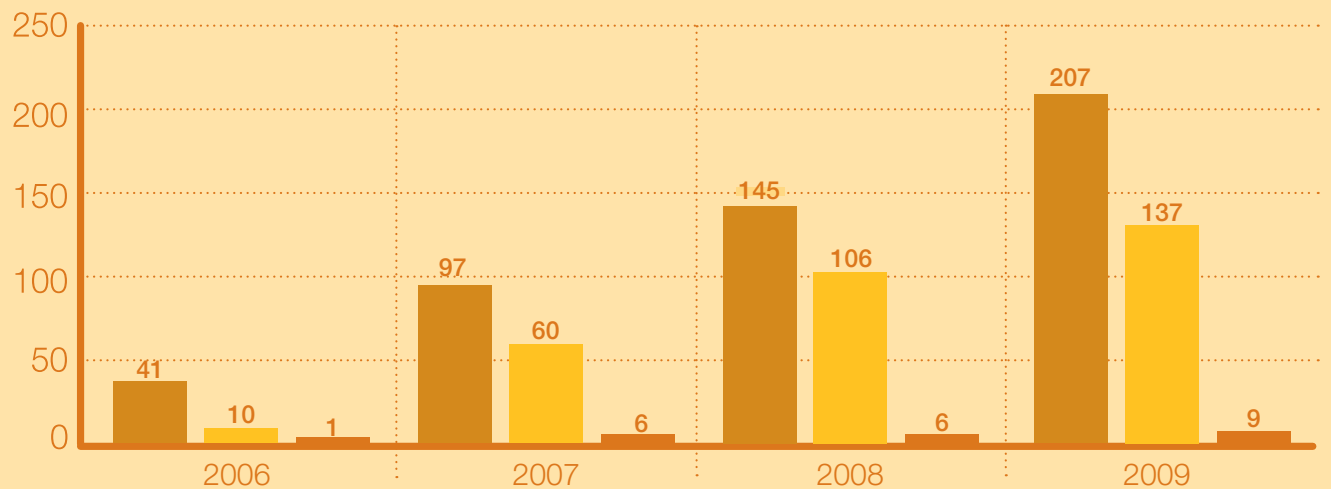


DIAGRAM 3. FAMILY PARTICIPATION AND PREVENTION OF RE-REFERRAL TO DCFS *(below)*

For most parents originally referred to PFF by DCFS, the SPA 1 Antelope Valley Collaborative was successful in preventing new reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Many PFF Collaboratives achieve success comparable to SPA 1's rate. (below)

- = Number of Families Referred by DCFS
- = Number of Families Enrolled in PFF
- = Number of PFF Families with New DCFS Reports

**SPA 1 ANTELOPE VALLEY PFF
FAMILY PARTICIPATION AND RE-REFERRAL TO DCFS 2006 – 2009**

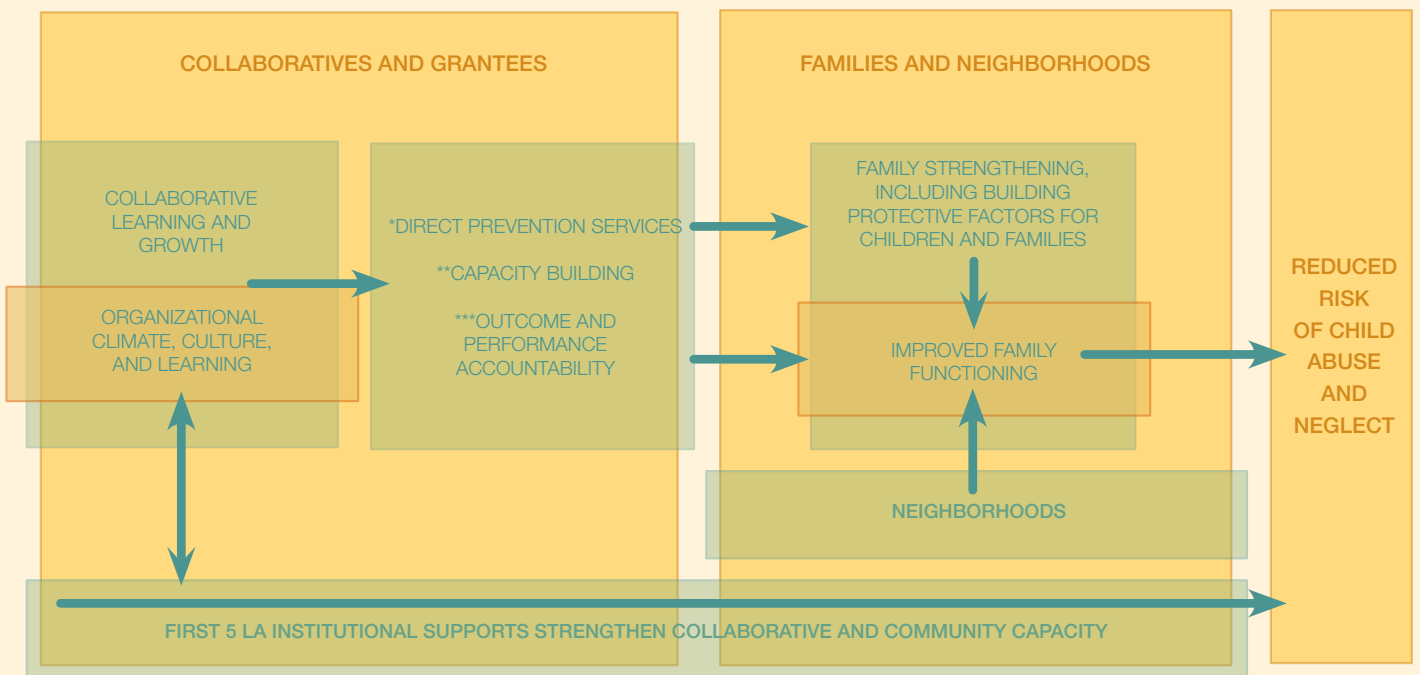




THE PFF MODEL

To protect children requires the joint efforts of many partners. The PFF model builds on the idea that the capacity and accomplishments of partners are augmented when they work together toward a shared goal. The initiative leverages the assets of First 5 LA, local Collaboratives, and families themselves. In the process, children and their families gain access to an expanded array of opportunities, supports, and services, and the communities and neighborhoods of Los Angeles become places where all children and families are more likely to thrive.

DIAGRAM 4. PFF PATHWAY TO REDUCE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (below)





PFF CORE COMPONENTS

FIRST 5 LA REQUIRES EACH LEAD AGENCY AND ITS COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS TO IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING:

<p>*DIRECT PREVENTION SERVICES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Case Management: A minimum of bi-weekly, in-home visits for six to 12 months, family assessment, family team decision-making > Concrete Services: Assistance to meet emergency needs such as food, shelter, financial assistance, medical care, transportation > Specialized Intensive Services: Alcohol, substance abuse and mental health treatment, domestic violence services, child and family therapy > Early Care and Education: Safe, affordable, high quality care > Informal Family Supports: A range of accessible supports to strengthen families and increase social connections > Linkages to Supplemental Community Supports: Resources to help ensure safety and well-being of young children and older siblings
<p>**CAPACITY-BUILDING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Within the Collaborative: Ongoing staff development, information-sharing, cross-training, administrative improvements, collection and use of data > Within the Community: Advocacy, outreach, positive settings for family interaction and learning, family engagement in community problem-solving, building community connections and supportive leadership, policy development
<p>***OUTCOME AND PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Outcome Monitoring: Progress toward targeted family, agency, and community outcomes > Performance Monitoring: Service capacity and delivery, collaboration, family engagement, adherence to research-based principles, capacity building

II. PFF ANCHORS: THE KEYS TO SUCCESS



LESSONS LEARNED WITHIN A DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT

Although many lessons that have emerged with PFF implementation are common across SPAs, each Collaborative's experiences are molded by the social, economic, and service system environment of its communities. Instead of comparing or judging Collaboratives' development, examples from the SPAs illustrate the range and richness of local experiences.

A. COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

1. Mutual learning. At all levels of PFF – for families, workers, Collaborative partners, First 5 LA staff, and consultants – the focus is on learning. And at all levels, relationships make learning possible. Commitment to mutual learning contributes to the respect shared among stakeholders and their continuous progress toward desired outcomes.

2. Continuous learning and improvement. Implementation of PFF is a developmental process, and learning contributes to ongoing progress. Continuous improvement loops that use routine customer feedback, performance data, and outcome measures are essential for maintaining progress and making mid-course corrections. For example, in SPA 6 the ACT Collaborative responded to underrepresentation of fathers and pregnant women among PFF participants by developing outreach activities for both groups.

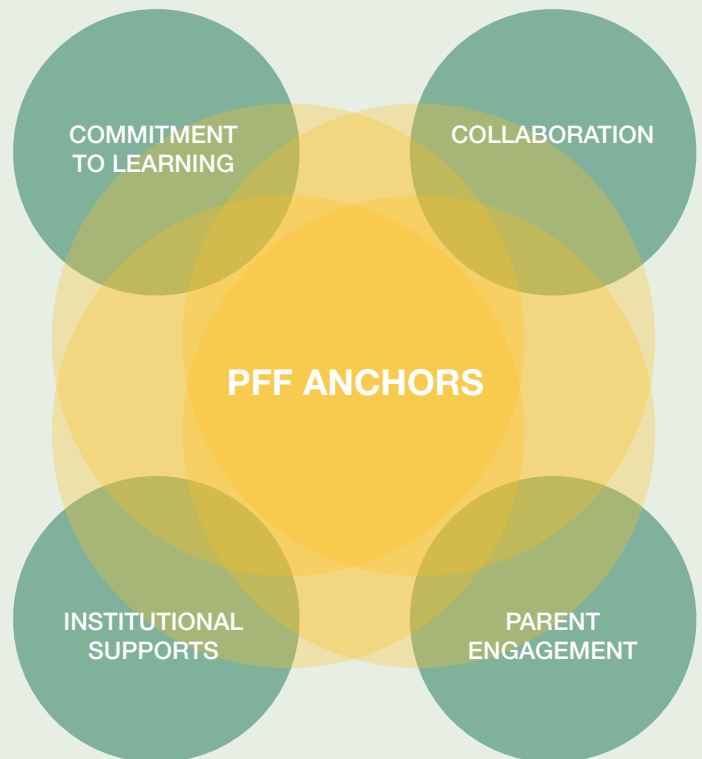


DIAGRAM 5. **PFF ANCHORS** (above)

The success of PFF hinges on four inter-connected anchors that serve as both underlying principles and key strategies.



MUTUAL LEARNING AND INNOVATION: A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES FROM THE SPAS

A PFF parent describes learning with her in-home outreach worker: *“She starts by telling me that parenting is difficult and that I am not the only one that may be having trouble. Then, she demonstrates varying things I can do and allows me to practice. She is not critical of my mistakes.”*

A Collaborative partner states, *“Instead of pre-judging parents for their difficulties, you really begin to understand how lack of education and low self esteem are obstacles to accessing services. I now understand how challenging and intimidating it can be for families to pick up a phone and...ask for help.”*

SPA 5: THE WARM HANDOFF

The PFF lead agency in SPA 5 is a community mental health agency, and all in-home outreach case managers are master’s level, licensed or registered therapists.

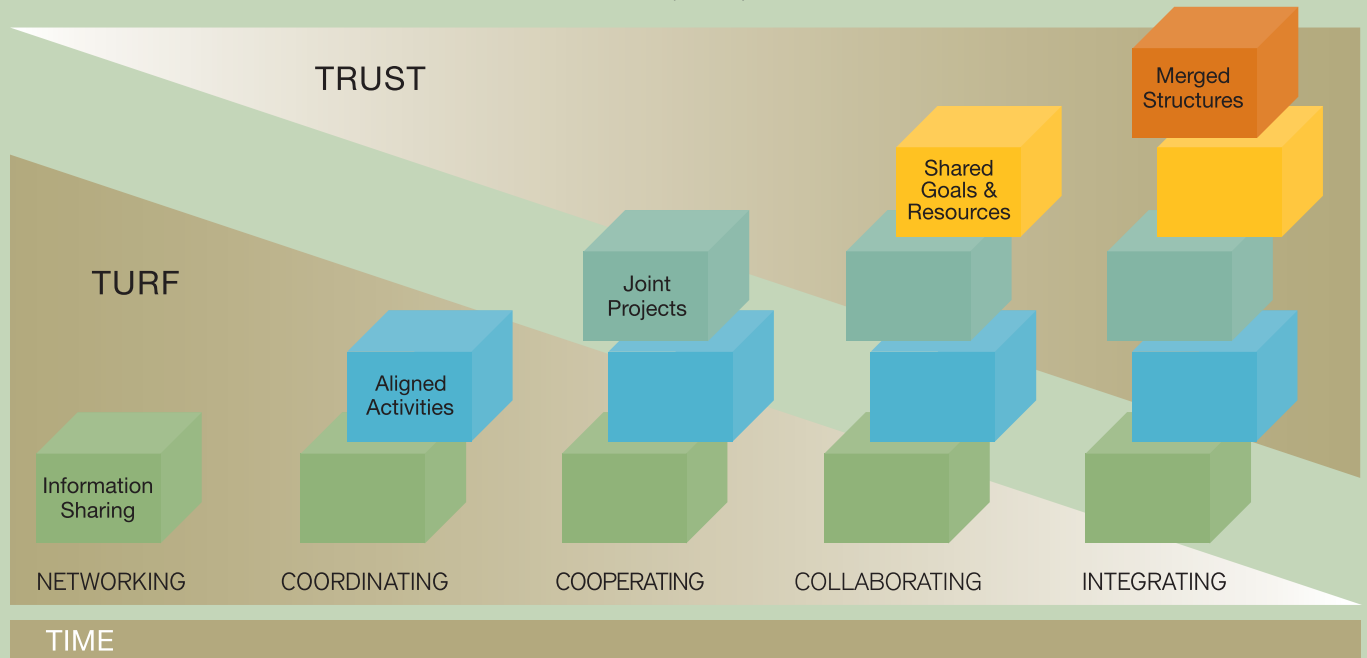
With PFF, these practitioners shifted from traditional, clinic-based services to home visits. Instead of the usual mental health focus on diagnosis and treatment of disorders, they joined with parents as partners to identify and build on family strengths.

Although local social service agencies worked together intermittently in the past, as PFF partners they developed the “warm hand-off” — a seamless referral strategy that expedites families’ access to needed services and supports.

SPA 8: NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENT MINI-GRANTS

The PFF Family Support Collaboration in SPA 8 builds on a history of resident-led community change and a model of relationship-based community organizing. Partners use a comprehensive approach to prevent child maltreatment, which includes helping families achieve financial well-being and developing neighborhood opportunities for success.

Neighborhood Action Councils — self-identified groups of residents that work together to improve their communities — provide a critical voice in SPA 8. The PFF Collaborative created a resident-led, mini-grant program that allows parents and other residents to develop, implement, and evaluate community projects that impact a local issue they identify.

DIAGRAM 6. COLLABORATION CONTINUUM⁵ (below)

3. Fidelity, flexibility, and innovation. PFF balances fidelity to core components of the model with flexibility for Collaboratives to implement those components within the context of their communities. Flexibility to try new approaches, together with the commitment to continuous learning, spurs innovation.

B. COLLABORATION

No single service, program, organization, or system acting alone can prevent child abuse and neglect. Broad collaboration — many stakeholders working together toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability⁴ — distinguishes PFF. According to one PFF local partner, *“It was in our agency’s interest to be a part (of the Collaborative). Plus, the initiative and the way it was being implemented was consistent with our mission and objectives.”*

PFF contributes to a growing body of national research about community collaboration, what it requires, and what it can achieve. National researchers identify a continuum of relationships illustrated in Diagram 6. These relationships can occur in parallel depending on participants’ purposes and intensity of effort. At the same time, community experiences indicate that working together often leads to deeper, more intensive collaboration.

1. Readiness to collaborate. PFF bears out national findings that no single factor determines community readiness to collaborate. Instead, a critical set of characteristics, capacities, and catalysts converge to reach a tipping point that seeds and strengthens collaboration. Critical readiness factors for PFF Collaboration include:

- > Clear, compelling, and shared outcomes;
- > Local context, history, and experience working together;
- > The catalyzing impact and support of skilled leadership; and
- > Institutional supports that are available from the beginning.

2. Reaching out to a broad range of partners. Like similar groups nationwide, PFF Collaboratives find that broad participation contributes to an expansive sense of community ownership and to increased contributions to desired outcomes. Reaching out to a wide range of stakeholders helps Collaboratives ensure that a full range of expertise and local perspectives is represented at the decision-making table and that families have access to a comprehensive array of both formal and informal supports.

EXPANDING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION. PFF Collaboratives' partners are concentrated among agencies that provide services to children and families. However, Collaboratives are expanding participation by developing staff positions that focus on community outreach and capacity building, creating work groups and other options for participation, tapping into existing community networks, and developing new networking opportunities for parents, residents, and other community stakeholders.

SPA 7's Project Corazon PFF reports 20 organizational partners and two parents. Partners include DCFS, the county mental health and public health departments, nonprofit service providers, a community college, a beauty school, the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation, a law firm, and small business.

ENGAGING PARENTS IN COLLABORATIVES. In spite of partners' profound respect for families and their success engaging parents in PFF services and service-related decisions, parent participation in community-building activities and in the Collaboratives themselves is a challenge. As they work to support their families, care for their children, and participate in PFF services, many parents report that these daily demands both take priority and leave limited time for Collaborative activities.

Because parents themselves know what the barriers to participation are and what can overcome those challenges, Collaboratives are working to provide ongoing opportunities for parent feedback and voice. In response, local partnerships are developing options for parents to participate at the level of their choosing and in ways that are meaningful to them.

In addition to an active parent advisory council, the SPA 3 Collaborative (CARIÑO PFF) uses quarterly customer satisfaction surveys to collect family feedback. The Collaborative cultivates a group of trained parent leaders who work alongside staff and partners in various roles. These leaders include a PFF alumna employed as a Family Advocate to continually solicit parents' views and suggestions.

3. Walking the talk: PFF Collaboratives strive to work together in ways that mirror their approach with families — focusing and building on partners' strengths, treating each other with respect, and promoting mutual learning.

A YOUNG COUPLE CHANGES COURSE

DCFS referred a young Latino couple to the SPA 6 ACT Collaborative for domestic violence counseling and parenting support. Despite being caring and committed parents of three children, the couple needed help to deal with the anger and frustration they felt toward one another and to handle their financial problems and child-rearing responsibilities. Both parents took full advantage of the classes, counseling, and community activities that PFF offered, and they made impressive and rapid improvements.

Granted a stipend as a parent leader, the young father engaged other males in a newly created Fatherhood Project. Together, the couple volunteers at many PFF events, and they mentor and coach other young parents, especially monolingual Spanish-speaking participants.

SHARING RESOURCES, RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY.

Some Collaboratives share staff and supervision, outstation staff in satellite offices within partner organizations, or allocate management functions among partners. In addition to or instead of sharing funds, Collaborative partners offer each other meeting and office space, cross-agency training, and more. PFF Collaboratives sponsor workshops and family events for the entire community.

Many agencies in SPA 6 are small and under-resourced. However, the larger agencies are committed to spreading funds and sharing in-kind resources. SHIELDS for Families, Inc., the lead agency, paid for space to house in-home counselors within its partner agency, the Institute for Maximum Human Potential. The Collaborative partners also are working to boost financial opportunity for individual residents and the economic vitality of the entire community. The partners bought the building that houses many lead agency programs, and they plan to purchase and develop the adjacent shopping center as a job training and employment site.

C. PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Although the families referred to PFF have children at high risk of abuse or neglect, their participation is entirely voluntary. PFF Collaboratives strive to join with parents and other family members as partners to keep their children safe and their families strong.

PFF COLLABORATIVES USE THE FOLLOWING PARENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES:

- > joining with parents and multi-generational family members as learning partners,
- > focusing on the strengths within families,
- > providing access to a comprehensive array of services and supports, and
- > employing culturally respectful and inclusive practices.

1. Engaging parents and multi-generational family members as learning partners. Most parents participating in PFF are eager to learn new, more effective ways to care for their children, although they may not know where or how to start. Parents consistently report that their relationships with frontline workers are key to their progress.

PARTICIPATION OF FATHERS, OTHER MALE FAMILY MEMBERS, AND MOTHERS' PARTNERS. Especially crucial to child well-being, engagement of fathers and other men requires a multi-pronged, targeted approach that fits participants' unique needs and perspectives.

PARTICIPATION OF MULTI-GENERATIONAL KIN. Many PFF families live in multi-generational households, and kin are often the primary people to whom parents turn when they need help. PFF engages members of the extended family to ensure that kin have a positive impact on children's lives and that they support parents' efforts.

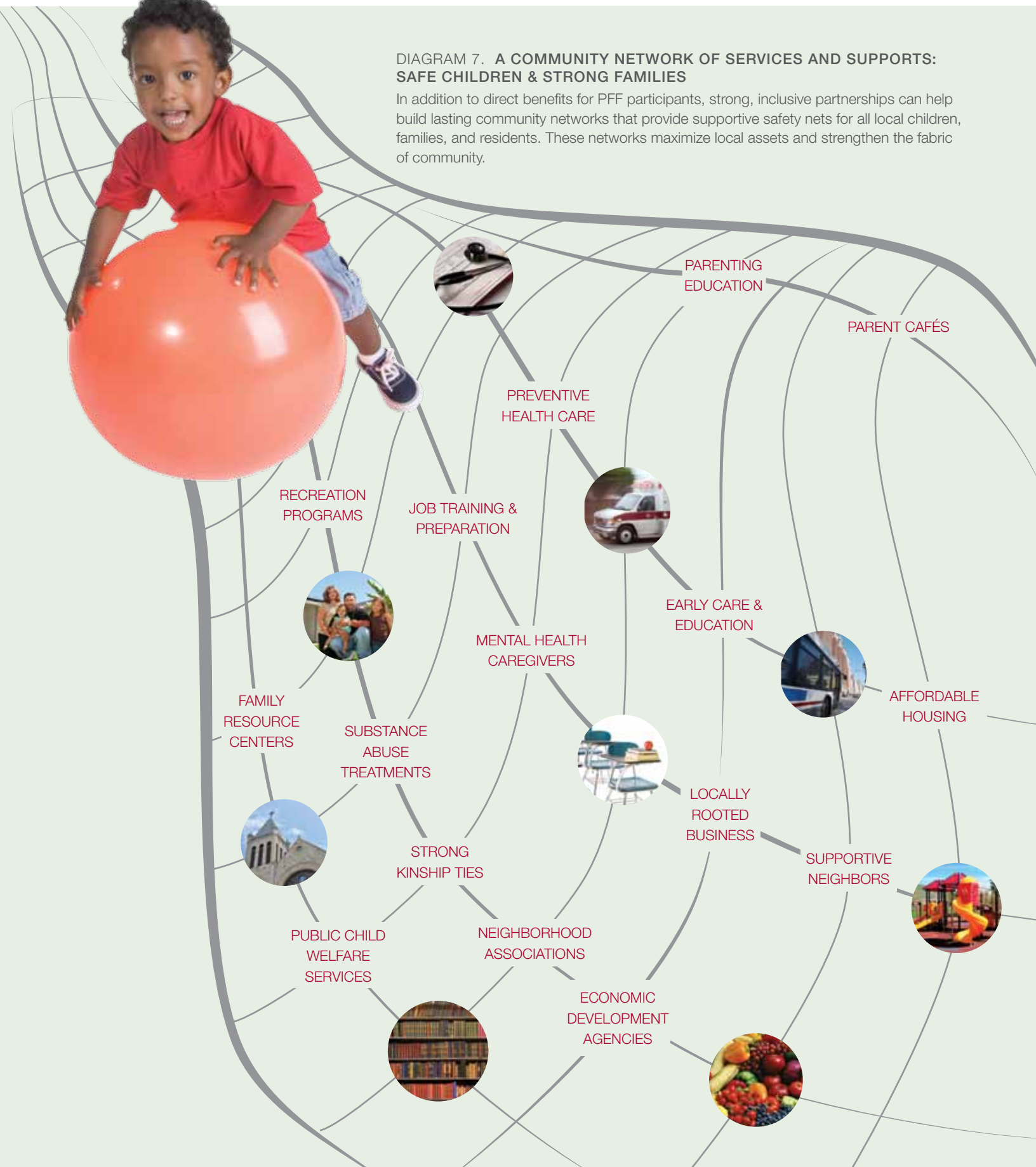
In SPA 4, PFF family events, parent training, and workshops acknowledge Latino and Asian customs by involving multiple generations and extended family members. To help parents and adolescents resolve conflicts that have a negative impact on the entire family, the Collaborative created a Youth and Family Advocate position, specialized parenting classes, and a support group for youth.

2. Focusing on strengths. Like all families, those facing serious challenges have strengths and courage, though they may not recognize their assets. Research about Protective Factors shows that resiliency helps to keep children safe. PFF staff and participants report that a resilient and positive attitude is central to achieving the goals that parents set for themselves and their families. Focusing on family strengths helps parents increase their confidence, sense of worth, and accomplishments.

MAKING A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH OPERATIONAL. To facilitate the focus on family assets, First 5 LA provided intensive training, and many Collaboratives developed new protocols and procedures. Together with enhanced clinical supervision, these supports helped change the way staff interact with families. Instead of focusing on problems or deficits, frontline staff emphasize a positive approach that begins with families' assets and continues with services and supports that reinforce family strengths.

**DIAGRAM 7. A COMMUNITY NETWORK OF SERVICES AND SUPPORTS:
SAFE CHILDREN & STRONG FAMILIES**

In addition to direct benefits for PFF participants, strong, inclusive partnerships can help build lasting community networks that provide supportive safety nets for all local children, families, and residents. These networks maximize local assets and strengthen the fabric of community.



3. Access to a comprehensive array of services and supports.

Families are most likely to participate and benefit from voluntary services and supports when they have flexibility to choose options that fit their needs and circumstances. Although parents express appreciation for the combination of PFF core services, they point to four types of assistance that are especially crucial.

CUSTOMIZED AND RESPECTFUL IN-HOME SERVICES.

The following comments by a parent reflect experiences often described by PFF participants: *“I realized that there are people out there who care for others in need and do not pass judgment on families that are struggling. I was approached with respect, kindness, and understanding from my in-home worker.”*

CONCRETE SERVICES THAT MEET FAMILIES’ MOST URGENT NEEDS.

Only when their families’ basic needs are met can most parents attend to other issues and goals. Concrete

assistance — such as food, emergency housing or help with rent, essential household items, job transportation, or medical care — helps both to engage families in PFF and to rapidly boost child safety and family well-being.

SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL CRISES.

Among the most dramatic findings across all SPAs are the impact of financial stress on family stability and child well-being and the compelling need for economic assistance. PFF Collaboratives have developed creative strategies to help families deal with immediate financial crises and to help parents achieve long-term economic security for their families.

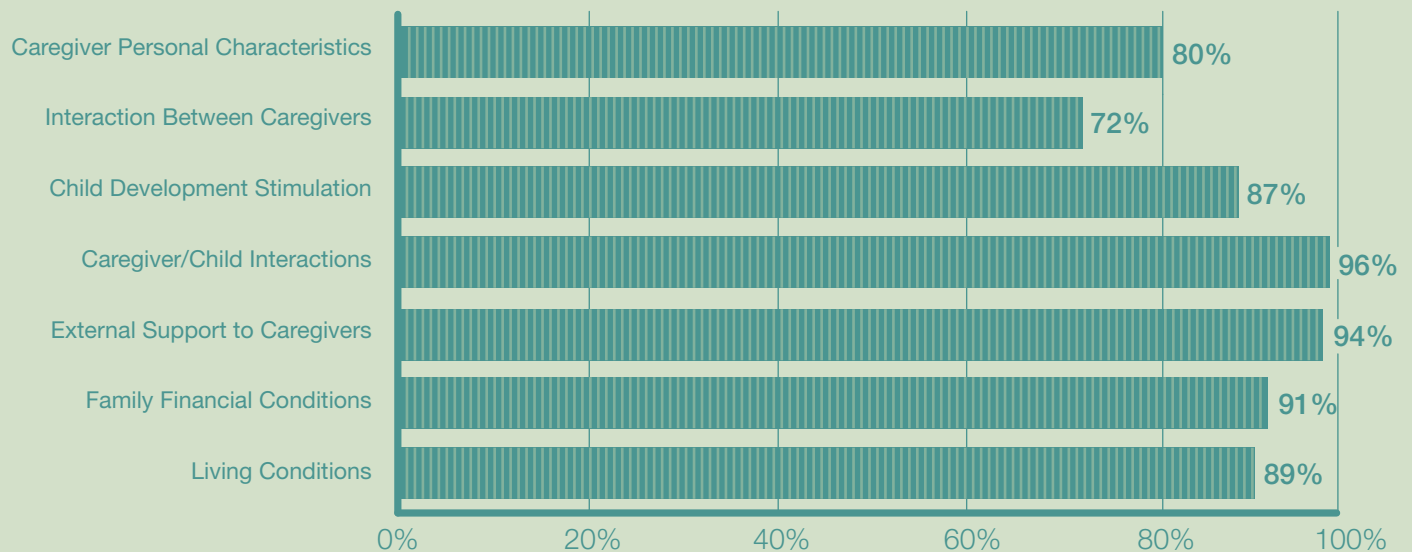
Most PFF Collaboratives use “flex funds” — small sums for workers to purchase goods or services that help parents meet their families’ immediate needs. For example, the funds help pay rent and avoid eviction or purchase bus passes to attend job training.

DIAGRAM 8. **IMPACT ON MULTIPLE ASPECTS OF FAMILY FUNCTIONING** (below)

Data from the SPA 6 Achieving Change Together (ACT) Collaborative illustrate improvements in assessed family functioning that occur as a result of PFF participation.

SPA 6 FAMILY FUNCTIONING FACTORS

PERCENTAGE OF PFF FAMILIES IMPROVED FROM INITIAL TO EXIT ASSESSMENT 2008-2009



MULTIPLYING THE IMPACT OF PFF: A MULTI-GENERATIONAL FAMILY

PFF helped four generations in one household (all represented by pseudonyms) deal with a series of crises and create a better life. DCFS referred Mary after her boyfriend brutally sexually assaulted her with her young son Peter as a witness. Peter's grandmother Tina calls the PFF in-home therapist their "Angel."

The PFF worker helped Mary — who has lived with disabilities since birth — obtain mental health treatment to manage her anger and mood swings, enroll in a money management class, practice parenting skills, apply for medical assistance, and obtain job training. Mary is now employed full-time in a hospital kitchen.

Young Peter received a complete assessment followed by speech therapy to address a language delay. He is enrolled in a quality preschool program and doing well.

After Grandmother Tina suffered a heart attack precipitated in part by the family's stress, PFF provided a referral to mental health treatment and helped her obtain free medication. When the great-grandmother fell and broke her hip, again the PFF "Angel" was there, providing information to help the family deal with the elder's recuperation, Alzheimer's disease, and diabetes. With the family's financial assets completely depleted, PFF helped pay a month's rent and connected the family with a food bank.

According to Tina, *"None of these blessings would have happened without PFF and our Angel."*

SPA 3 CARIÑO PFF established a protocol for distributing emergency flex funds that guides families to develop a budget and a plan for resolving their financial crises. The approach maximizes the impact of the resources by helping families hold themselves accountable for improving their financial situations.

In partnership with the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, SPA 1 Antelope Valley PFF established a "child care bridge fund" to cover temporarily the costs of part-time child care while parents seek employment, participate in job training, or obtain needed respite.

SPA 8's Family Support Collaboration links PFF parents to job pipelines through programs that provide job training and access to careers in education and in the well-paying local oil refineries. The PFF lead agency works as part of a county-

wide economic development alliance to help local families and businesses obtain financial education and asset-building opportunities.

INFORMAL SOCIAL SUPPORTS. PFF helps families cultivate the social connections demonstrated by research to protect children from the risks of abuse and neglect. Parents attest to the motivation, skills, and confidence they gain from connections with other parents and community residents. Strategies that help parents overcome their sense of social isolation include support groups, peer mentoring, community events, and opportunities to socialize with other families. Parent cafés provide opportunities for parents to learn with and support each other as they discuss their families' needs and how to address them.



RESPECT FOR RACE, CULTURE, AND LANGUAGE: A KEY FACTOR IN ELIMINATING DISPARITY

Spanish-speaking parents in SPA 5 who are recent immigrants with little or no familial support in their communities describe feeling isolated and struggling with depression, including post-partum depression. They credit their worker's attitude and "positive" way of looking at situations with helping them overcome feelings of hopelessness. Planning for the future alleviates worry about their families' livelihood and stability.

4. Culturally respectful and inclusive practices. PFF highlights the importance of prevention strategies that embody respect for each family's culture, race, ethnicity, language, and gender composition. By putting the mutual learning approach of PFF into practice, workers learn from families about their beliefs and customs. They are able to appreciate and draw on the strengths of varied cultures. These and other practices contribute to a growing body of learning about what it takes to eliminate the disparity in treatment and outcomes that children and families of color face – including disproportionate entrance into the child welfare system.

A SPA 4 parenting class, *Los Niños Bien Educados*, encourages new immigrants to examine their culturally-based parenting norms, which may differ greatly from mainstream American approaches. Parents also explore how local norms can be useful and integrated into their family life.

D. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS

For many practitioners and agencies, PFF strategies mean a new way of operating. Institutional supports — provided by First 5 LA program officers, evaluators, and consultants — help local partners achieve high standards for serving families and protecting children.

1. Support and oversight by First 5 LA. By focusing on partners' strengths, the hands-on work of PFF program officers serves as a model for relationship-based institutional support. First 5 LA avoids focusing solely on Collaboratives' compliance with PFF requirements and performance measures. Instead, the program officers and consultants incorporate the initiative's commitment to learning and continuous improvement.

2. Flexible and customized learning opportunities. The urgency for full implementation of a complex, comprehensive initiative must be balanced with the need to allow for differences in community context and implementation capacity. First 5 LA provided customized consultation and support to help local partners develop their Collaboratives. Ongoing training and consultation help partners learn specialized skills for working with families who have young children or who are experiencing domestic violence, substance abuse, or other crises. Continuous learning opportunities allow partners to adapt to emerging lessons and promote sustainability.



Technical assistance helped the SPA 5 lead agency — an established provider of clinical mental health services — take on a new collaborative role in a region with an intermittent history of social service agencies working together. Skilled consultants aided the agency in building structures, processes, and leadership roles that in turn allowed partners to collectively grow the Collaborative.

Just as PFF was getting started in SPA 7, turnover occurred among the lead agency's program leaders. The impact rippled throughout the Collaborative, causing the work to stall, membership to wane, and progress toward service and programmatic targets to slip. The lead agency hired staff to refocus the Initiative, and the First 5 LA program officer assisted the leadership to clarify the principles and core strategies of PFF and to develop a plan for regrouping. The Collaborative has rebounded to become a powerful resource for families and their communities.

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP: A KEY FACTOR IN PREVENTING CHILD NEGLECT

Nationally, the majority of families investigated for maltreatment live below the federal poverty level, and most intact families who receive child welfare services also qualify for cash assistance. While poverty does not cause parents to neglect their children, it hinders the ability of parents to provide basic resources that help children thrive — adequate food, clothing, housing, medical services, child care, and supervision.⁶

PFF PARENTS DESCRIBED THE IMPACT OF PARENT CAFÉS:

“Being here gives me strength to speak up and have confidence. Before, I used to stay home all day. Now, I know people in my community and attend lots of events.”

“I realize that I'm not alone, that there are people going through what I'm going through and that we can help each other.”

III. IMPLICATIONS OF PFF



Implemented across the diverse and complex landscape of the nation's most populous county, PFF offers lessons that both local and state jurisdictions can leverage. Especially in the current fiscal environment, PFF presents important lessons about what it takes to prevent child abuse and neglect and how to strengthen local safety nets to which parents can turn in times of stress.

Combining PFF lessons with national developments and other communities' experiences, the Center for the Study of Social Policy case study team suggests that PFF can serve as a platform to continue building strong, community networks for vulnerable children and families. The full case study report contains specific options to consider for sustaining and increasing progress toward better outcomes for children, families, and their communities. A few strategies are highlighted here.

A. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION FIELD: Evidence-based approaches in the context of community

PFF has potential for contributing to a comprehensive continuum of prevention that leverages the protective assets of communities. Steps to consider:

- > SET OPTIMAL WELL-BEING AS THE GOAL for children and families rather than focusing exclusively on prevention of problems.
- > COMBINE EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION SERVICES with the power of community and committed parents.

- > APPLY A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK to reduce risks of harm and strengthen connections across multiple fields.

B. IMPLICATIONS FOR PLACE-BASED INITIATIVES: Achieving ambitious outcomes in targeted neighborhoods.

A growing trend in Los Angeles and other jurisdictions, place-based initiatives aim to infuse specific neighborhoods with a long-lasting "conveyor belt" of opportunities, services, and supports for all children. Although PFF was not created as a place-based initiative, its principles, strategies, and lessons provide community building-blocks from which new efforts can take root. Steps for building on the lessons of PFF:

- > BALANCE FIDELITY TO CORE VALUES AND EVIDENCE-BASED COMPONENTS WITH FLEXIBILITY TO ADAPT to the unique context of individual communities.
- > DEVELOP COHESIVE COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SUPPORT NETWORKS that welcome everyone with a stake in stronger families and communities where all residents thrive.
- > MAINTAIN A LEARNING AGENDA WITH STRONG INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS, including well-resourced evaluation, training, consultation, and peer support that focus on continuous progress toward desired results.



C. IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS: Partnering with families and communities to protect young children

Increased understanding of the importance of strong families and communities for child safety and well-being offers potential to shift child welfare practice, roles, and relationships with other organizations. Options for child welfare systems to consider:

- > RE-THINK THE RELATIONSHIPS AND ROLES OF PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, by promoting ongoing communication and carefully negotiated partnerships.
- > LEVERAGE THE IMPACT OF SERVICES AND SUPPORTS by strengthening families with young children and improving the likelihood that children will start life on a positive track that avoids future problems.
- > BUILD ON PFF LESSONS TO ENHANCE DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE through strong community networks of voluntary services and ongoing informal supports.

D. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND FUNDERS: Maximizing outcomes and investments

As policymakers and funders strive to maximize resources in the current fiscal climate, PFF offers compelling lessons and considerations for helping children and families thrive.

- > MAKE SMART INVESTMENTS BY PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY from the beginning of an initiative.

- > RIGHT-SIZE THE INVESTMENT to fit the ongoing expectations, infrastructure, and capacity requirements of the initiative.
- > FOCUS ON IMPROVED FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ECONOMIC CONDITIONS as key factors in prevention and family well-being.
- > ENSURE THAT PARENTS AND RESIDENTS HAVE AN AUTHENTIC VOICE IN ALL DECISIONS that affect them.

CONCLUSION: Building on Strong Foundations

Preventing child abuse and neglect hinges on stronger partnerships that enhance the protective power of families and communities. At the same time, building community partnerships and capacity to support parents is a fundamental shift for many funders, service providers, and local organizations. In addition to learning different skills and behaviors, partners often must negotiate new roles that involve shared resources and decision-making. The time, resources, and will required to make these changes represent a sizeable investment of social and financial capital.

PFF Collaboratives are constructing community networks of services and supports that help parents safely care for their children. These networks weave the strengths of families and communities into opportunities for the future. PFF contributes a ready platform for continued learning about both the challenges and the potential of local partnerships. The initiative provides traction for developing and sustaining broader, deeper improvements.

A SUCCESS STORY WITH FAR REACHING IMPACT

While PFF has made a difference for multiple generations of the family described below, the impact does not stop there. As this mother learns to recognize and build on her strengths, she creates an expanding network of social connections and supports that benefit her family and many others. Her leadership and capacity-building skills enhance her community as a place where all children and families can thrive. This story exemplifies the potential and reality of PFF.

Four years ago, Lara (a pseudonym) was a single mother doing her best to care for her six children and three grandchildren. Although Lara was unemployed and on welfare, she was attending college and trying to get ahead. But, Lara says, *“I was really overwhelmed and struggling to make ends meet, and I needed help.”* Adding to the crowded household, Lara’s recently evicted sister and her six children were staying in the living room. All the children slept on mattresses laid over the bare, flood-damaged floor.

Then, one day, Lara’s five-year-old son Manny injured himself playing with a stick, and the hospital staff called the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). When a DCFS worker arrived at her door, Lara admits, *“I thought she was there to take my children.”* Instead, the worker conducted an assessment and referred Lara to Partnerships For Families for help.

According to Lara, that was the turning point for her family. The PFF in-home worker treated the family with respect, kindness, and dignity. Immediately, the worker provided referrals to food banks, assistance with rent and bill paying, transportation, and beds for the children. Lara took advantage of all the opportunities that PFF offered. She and the children participated in counseling and a communication class. Joined by her oldest daughter — herself the parent of three young children, Lara took parenting classes. Manny was diagnosed with ADHD and obtained treatment. Lara completed a financial literacy class and advocacy training.

As she gained confidence and knowledge, Lara’s relationships with her children and her hopes for the future blossomed. She developed relationships with other parents and began participating in local PFF Collaborative meetings and community activities. She explains, *“I learned that I was a strong person, and I had to start taking action.”*

Today, Lara glows as she reflects on the changes in her life and her family. She recently obtained her college degree and married. She has become very close to her children. And she has a full time job as a PFF Family Advocate — engaging parents and community participants in parent education programs, providing peer support for PFF families, co-facilitating parent cafés and bilingual parent education. She leads the PFF Parent Advisory Committee in her SPA and a parent support group. And she has been selected as a mentor for new Family Advocates.

Lara speaks with pride, *“I want to give back, to help others...I know that there are so many families out there who have struggled like I have. I want to reach out and help them.”* She also notes that, *“Through all of this, my children have been able to witness that perseverance pays off.”*



¹ Strengthening Families. Electronic Library, Evidence. Retrieved December 30, 2009 from http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/index.php/main_pages/electronic_library/evidence/

² Belsky, J. Etiology of child maltreatment: A development ecological analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol.114 (3), November 1993: 413-434;
Chalk, R., and King, P. Assessing family violence interventions. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 14(4), 1998: 289-292.

³ First 5 LA. *Year 5 Evaluation Report for the Partnerships For Families Initiative*. Retrieved December 20, 2009 from http://www.pffevaluation.org/research/documents/PFFEvaluationYear5ReportFINAL_revised.pdf

⁴ Chrislip, D.D. and Larson, C.E. (1994). *Collaborative leadership: How citizens and civic leaders can make a difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, as cited by London, S. (1995). *Collaboration and community*. Retrieved October 15, 2009 from <http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/collaboration.pdf>

⁵ Diagram adapted from Act for Youth, www.actforyouth.net/documents/Collaboration%20Continuum2.ppt

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. (2005). National survey of child and adolescent well-being (NSCAW): CPS sample component, wave 1 data analysis report. Washington, D.C.: author; Geen, R., Fender, L., Leos-Urbel, J., & Markowitz, T. (2001). Welfare reform's effect on child welfare caseloads. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.



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