



Summary of Family Strengthening Peer Network Meetings

October 17, 2007, AARP, Washington, DC

- and -

October 23, 2007, via teleconference

Co-Chairs

Caroline Crocoll, USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service

Jennifer Davis, Goodwill Industries International

OCTOBER 17, 2007, MEETING IN WASHINGTON, DC

I. Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

Presenters by Amy Goyer, National Coordinator, AARP Foundation, and Brent Elrod, Program Director, Generations United

- About 2.4 million grandparents are responsible for meeting the basic needs of children living in the same home. Grandparents are also a leading provider of child care for preschoolers.
- 4.5 million children live in grandparent-headed homes, and another 1.5 million children live with other relatives. These numbers seem to be rising, perhaps in part due to increased and longer military deployments.
- The multiple challenges facing grandparents raising children can be overwhelming. These include financial, housing, social isolation, legal, and employment. Many of the children they are raising come from unstable backgrounds.
- The AARP Foundation seeks to be a catalyst for social change and champion for people 50+, particularly those facing significant challenges in meeting their basic needs. It offers information, education, programs, services, and legal advocacy.
- The [AARP Foundation's Grandparenting Program](#) strives to assure that grandparents and grandchildren have access to resources that strengthen their health, finances and family connections. Highlights include consumer-focused articles and newsletters, outreach, and tools such as Benefits QuickLink to help grandfamilies connect to benefits and services. Research reports, state fact sheets, and more are available on the program Web site. Grandparents can find jobs and training opportunities through WorkSearch,

and the AARP Foundation's Women's Scholarship Program helps make education and training affordable.

- AARP Foundation and Generations United, together with Brookdale Foundation, Child Welfare League of America, and Children's Defense Fund, produce state fact sheets containing the most up-to-date state information related to grandfamilies. These are available at http://www.giclocalsupport.org/pages/state_fact_sheets.cfm or <http://ipath.gu.org/State8101506.asp>.
- [Generations United's \(GU\) National Center on Grandfamilies](#) works to improve quality of life for grandfamilies by providing resources, technical assistance, and training. The center also educates policymakers and the public how to help meet the needs of these unique families.
- In addition to the state fact sheets, GU has produced action agendas and guidance on some of the foremost challenges facing grandfamilies, including housing, respite care, and more. Its All Children Deserve a Permanent Home Campaign is seeking endorsements of the Kinship Caregiver Support Act (S. 661 and H.R. 2188).
- In part due to GU's public policy work, resources and supports for grandfamilies have been addressed in recent federal legislation: the LEGACY Act, the National Family Caregiver Support Program in the Older Americans Act, and the Lifespan Respite Care Act.
- GU is partnering with Casey Family Programs, American Bar Association, and National Conference of State Legislators to track state legislation impacting grandfamilies. In December, this new resource will be available at <http://www.grandfamilies.org>.

II. Integrating Positive Youth Development into Family Strengthening Approaches

Presenter: Julie Bass, Goodwill Industries of Northern Louisiana

- For many years, [Goodwill Industries of Northern Louisiana](#) has used a family-strengthening approach in its services. In 2005, the agency received a [FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Award](#) from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) and [Goodwill Industries International](#).
- Reintegration is a relatively new program that provides intensive case management and training for youth and their families with an overarching goal of reducing recidivism and helping youth return to school. The program reaches out to youth while they are incarcerated and concurrently starts working with their families to develop goals, discuss parenting skills, and find ways to improve the home environment. When youth are released, Goodwill connects them and their families to community resources. Agency staff help parents and youth navigate the process of gaining re-entry to public school or finding alternative vocational/educational resources. The program also helps youth and their families gain and maintain employment, provides intensive case management, and teaches soft skills. Other program components are weekly trainings for youth; a monthly parents night featuring a meal, parenting skills training, and information about community resources; and a

parent newsletter. Goodwill is in the process of adding a grandparent support group to Reintegration due to the large number of youth who are living with their grandparents.

- The program has been most successful with youth who have minor offenses or whose parents have been involved in Reintegration. Program challenges include gaps in community literacy programs for youth under 17, difficulty in getting parent/caregiver involvement, and a lack of good alternatives for youth who have been incarcerated such as half-way houses so they do not have to be released back into tough environments.
- Goodwill keeps adjusting its tactics to further improve results. For example, through partnerships with faith-based organizations and others, the agency is closing a gap in sports programs for youth who are no longer in the K-12 educational system,
- Broader, systemic changes are needed to prevent young offender recidivism. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Alternative to Juveniles in Detention Program and family drug courts are two examples.

III. Updates and Sharing

Peer Network members provided the following updates.

[AARP Foundation](#) also offers has Home Made Money, a program that offers reliable information to older people about reverse mortgages.

[Catholic Charities USA](#) is planning two-day immersion site visits at its new FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Award recipients as a way of advancing other affiliates' work.

[Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service](#) offers [Just in Time](#) newsletters for parents that provide age-paced resources and expert advice. Evaluations have shown Just in Time is effective in strengthening parenting. Also, as a member of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Child Abuse and Neglect, CSREES is promoting parenting education and involvement and the family-strengthening model.

[Generations United](#)'s [Seniors for Kids](#) campaign is engaging older adults as advocates who promote high quality early care and education for children,

[Goodwill Industries International](#) is recruiting for a new staff position that will support its local and national work on family strengthening.

[Mayor's Office of Children, Youth and Families](#) (Baltimore) is beginning to infuse family strengthening throughout the city now that Mayor Dixon adopted the National League of Cities' platform. The office is actively reaching out to, engaging, and training major service agencies in the city on family strengthening.

[National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments, Inc.](#) has a new book on what parents need to know about special education. The association is redesigning its Web site to provide customized and timely information to parents.

[National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education](#) will feature a Sacramento home-visiting model at its October 31 meeting. NCPIE's policy focus is on parent and community engagement in education.

[National Council of La Raza](#) is organizing peer-to-peer training at its five FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Award recipients. NCLR is also exploring how to link together its individual programs in order to increase its impact.

[National League of Cities, Institute for Youth, Education, & Families](#) was recently in Baltimore when Mayor Dixon announced her support of the NLC platform for strengthening families.

[National Network for Youth](#)'s annual conference in Washington, DC, in January 2008 will feature a full track of sessions for youth. Also, H.R.3409, A Place to Call Home Act, was recently introduced and outreach is occurring to add co-sponsors.

[NeighborWorks America](#) has fielded about 60,000 calls/month at its Center for Foreclosure Solutions: 888-995-HOPE. The Center and related work has been and will continue to be a major focus for the foreseeable future.

[Points of Light Foundation](#) is in the midst of its merger with Hands On.

Also, Jo Johnson reported that the [Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families](#) conference in Atlanta explored knowledgebanking, or creating a shared database of policies and programs.

IV. Successful Parenting Framework

- In late October, the Family Strengthening Policy Center (FSPC) will release its policy brief focused on parenting success. FSPC asks for assistance in disseminating the policy brief to network members' affiliates and partners.
- The brief was developed in close collaboration with practitioners, researchers, advocates, and other professionals.

V. Follow-Up Teleconference on National Family Week on October 23, 2007

- On October 23, the Peer Network will host a special interactive teleconference featuring Paula Purcell, director, special projects, National Family Week, Alliance for Children and Families.
- The call will enable the Peer Network to continue to explore how national organizations can work together to promote National Family Week.

VI. Connecting FSPN with Other Family Strengthening Networks

- What other organizations could be at the Family Strengthening Peer Network table?
- Ideas included think tanks, professional or research journals, and other groups that address family strengthening (e.g., the National Council on Family Relations).

- If Peer Network members are making presentations to groups, FSFC can provide handouts about the Peer Network and policy briefs.

VII. Closing

- A schedule of meetings for 2008 will be set and shared with network members.
- One upcoming meeting might focus on ways to better integrate Benefits QuickLink, Benefits CheckUp, and other resources into our work.

Participants

Julie Bass, Goodwill Industries of Northern Louisiana
 Sarah Bainton, National League of Cities
 Caroline Crocoll, USDA CSREES, Families, 4H & Nutrition
 Jennifer Davis, Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
 Lorrie Davis, Baltimore Rising
 Khyati Desai, Points of Light Foundation
 Brent Elrod, Generations United
 Sue Ferguson, National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
 Ross Ford, Baltimore Rising
 Molly French, National Human Services Assembly
 Amy Goyer, AARP
 Kayla Jackson, National Network for Youth
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 Susan LaVenture, National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments
 Matt McCloy, AARP
 Gabriela Mossi, National Council of La Raza
 Mildred Reyes, National Council of La Raza
 Bernard Sims, Mayor's Office of Children, Youth & Families
 Jane Stenson, Catholic Charities USA
 Steven Tuminaro, NeighborWorks America

OCTOBER 23, 2007, TELECONFERENCE ON NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK

Presenter: Presenter: Paula Purcell, director, special projects, National Family Week, Alliance for Children and Families

Background

- [National Family Week](#) (NFW) is an annual celebration that will occur this year on November 18-24. With a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the [Alliance for Children and Families](#) supports its community-based members in planning and conducting local celebrations. The Alliance also works with national partners to promote NFW in their networks.

- The Alliance for Children and Families has led NFW efforts for more than 30 years. The guiding premise of NFW, which has been supported for the past eight years by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is clearly defined: Children live better lives when their families are strong, and families are strong when they live in communities that connect them to economic opportunities, social networks, and services.
- NFW connects families to supportive resources. It recognizes and bolsters the year-round contributions of family-strengthening programs and services. Over time, NFW celebrations advance meaningful, systemic changes in communities that will improve the wellbeing of families with children.
- NFW benefits local sponsoring organizations by giving them visibility as leaders in their communities and creating opportunities to both build relationships with local partners and involve municipal/county leaders. NFW activities have linked community leaders/policy makers, connected leaders and families, attracted media coverage, enabled sponsors to reach new families, and furthered fundraising efforts.
- Organizations just getting acclimated with NFW should start small. Consider presenting a NFW Advocacy Award at an annual meeting or requesting mayoral or gubernatorial proclamations. With each year of participation, you should aspire to lead stronger NFW celebrations. Examples of strong NFW celebrations are available at: www.alliance1.org/magazine/Summer2007/su07_NFW.pdf.
- After this year's NFW, the Alliance with the Family Strengthening Peer Network may establish a small working group to explore how national partners can work together to achieve a strong, national voice for family strengthening during NFW 2008.

NFW Resources for National Partners

- NFW is currently partnering with over 75 national organizations to spread awareness of NFW. Specifically, many of these organizations have agreed to promote NFW via their various communication vehicles such as e-news, newsletters, Web site and providing a link to www.nationalfamilyweek.org.
- In the past, the Alliance has helped its national partners by tailoring the NFW resource packets and creating two-page promotional overviews for partners' affiliates. National partners can consult with Paula on strategies for promoting NFW, have her present NFW via teleconference to affiliates, or obtain an electronic version of the NFW resource packet to send out via listservs.
- Additional resources are available at www.nationalfamilyweek.org.

NFW Resources for Community Groups

- The NFW Web site – www.nationalfamilyweek.org – has a wide range of resources and tools for community groups. In addition to resource materials, information on NFW partners, and tips on how to participate, the Web site offers a way for local groups to learn if others in their community are planning celebrations.
- Local groups participating in National Family Week are encouraged to present a National Family Week Advocacy Award to an individual who has significantly

contributed to state and local advocacy efforts on behalf of vulnerable children and families. There is no charge for this service.

- Americorps grantees can promote or sponsor NFW as part of their service-learning requirement.
- Community groups can be added to the NFW general mailing list by sending an e-mail to NFW staff (see contact information below).

For More Information

<http://www.nationalfamilyweek.org>

Paula Purcell, director, special projects, National Family Week, Alliance for Children and Families, ppurcell@alliance1.org, (414) 359-1040 x3648 or (800) 221-2681

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Participants

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Jennifer Davis, Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Molly French, National Human Services Assembly
Kayla Jackson, National Network for Youth
Nancy Krago, Penn State Extension
Cheryl Miller, Penn State Extension
Angeline Mutima, Youth Service America
Carlton Purvis, National Healthy Start Association
Mildred Reyes, National Council of La Raza
Andrea Schroeder, Camp Fire - NW Ohio
Bernard Sims, Mayor's Office of Children, Youth & Families