

Participants of the State and Local Joint Meeting on January 6, 2004 through random selection were asked to participate in small group discussions that examined the strengths and challenges for these five key objectives from the Strengthening Families Proposal: 1) Information Sharing/Public Awareness; 2) Culturally Appropriate Service Models; 3) Policies and Protocols; 4) Outreach and Access; and 5) Technology. Each group was also asked to make recommendations to address the challenges for their objective. Identified priorities are highlighted in red. ”

What are the models of family support that respond to the severity and intensity of families’ needs?

What current models of family support do you use that respond to each individual families needs which also takes into consideration each family’s unique cultural?

- Ask families, “What works for you.”
Example: Father’s Group on Autism, facilitated by someone from that unique culture or group
- Using a Family-Centered approach
- A desire to partner with families as equal partners, (but need more tools/resources)

What are the barriers to providing family support that is culturally responsive and cultural appropriate for each unique family situation. (CHALLENGES)

- Lack of interpreters
- Lack of trust among some cultural groups
- Large number of various ethnic groups in NC
- Ethnic Groups/Religious Beliefs and Practices
- Poverty/Lack of Education
- Lack of Access to care – services, resources
- Lack of Services

What are strategies for providing cultural appropriate services, resources, and activities that respond to the severity and intensity of the families’ needs? (RECOMMENDATIONS). What are your top three recommendations?

- Recruit more diversity among service providers
- Improve cultural sensitivity in providing information and resources
- Be more flexible with Linking and providing support that families desire. For example
 - Individual support (P2P)
 - groups (support groups)
 - E-groups (online chat groups)
- Increase cultural diversity training for service providers
- More diversity among program planners/developers
- Get more families involved from diverse backgrounds who receive services
- Find out what makes folks comfortable – so they are willing to participate
- Respect the family’s decisions regarding service needs
- Improve process for linking parents of newly diagnosed children with culturally appropriate services, resources, and supports during the evaluation process
- Ask family what they need (varies so much). Show RESPECT

How do we share information about existing family support resources, services, and activities among stakeholders?

What are we currently doing to share information about existing family support resources, services, and activities that works well? (STRENGTHS)

- Seven family resource centers meet quarterly to keep each other informed about the activities and programs that are being offered in each family resource center.
Monthly meetings are held with community partners to share information about current issues and events, including representatives from guardian ad-litem, public health, families of Latino community, and other family members
- Quarterly newsletters are distributed and information is provided on various websites
- Fund projects at other agencies to provide linkage and partnership
- Foundations that fund outreach in rural community for at-risk children
- The Central Directory of Resources provides information and resources across the state
- State & local Family Support Networks provide information and resources to families and service providers
- Partnership for Children websites provide information
- Sharing information had promoted fewer turf issues and increased collaboration
- Include parents of diverse backgrounds as partners and sharing information with them
- E-North Carolina network, an effort to provide internet access across the state including rural areas and offers classes to teach families how to access internet too.
- ECAC offers workshops, distributes quarterly newsletter, provides information about resources, services, and activities on their website
- Community information fairs at different, public locations provide information to the community.
- Pediatricians have information to share with families.

What are the challenges to sharing information more effectively?

- Reaching out to the Faith Community
- Providing more publicity about the FSNNC Central Directory of Resources
- Lack of internet access and/or knowledge of the internet by families
- Low Literacy and inability to speak and understand English
- Lack of transportation
- Turf issues prevent agencies from sharing information openly
- Professionals /service providers reluctance to share information with families about services that might cost money for fear that it will have negative impact on their job security, work environment
- Lack of funds to cover costs of advertising
- Families often have Complex needs that don't fit service system array.

What can we do to increase the amount of information we share with each other about existing family support resources, services, and activities? (RECOMMENDATIONS). What are your top three recommendations?

- Brochures could be provided in doctors' offices, health departments and other health care providers' offices. Framed information (like FSN information, 800 # that could be permanently displayed in public places
- Participation in Information fairs, piggy-backing on other events (such as Kindergarten registration)
- Public service announcements on TV, radio, print, etc.
 - Church bulletins/announcements
 - Childcare settings, schools
 - Internet – websites
 - List-serves

How do policy-makers at the state and local levels provide policies and protocols that promote family support?

What are the current state and local level policies and procedures that promote family support? (STRENGTHS)

- Federal IDEA language/mandates
- Federal monitoring emphasizing family involvement
- CDSA redesign/family support principles
- State Interagency Coordinating Councils (ICC) roles and mandates (Local and Regional)
- Money available from the state through Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC) to support parent involvement
- Requirements for family participation on decision-making advisory/agency boards
- Head Start/Even Start/Family Literacy policies

What are the barrier to implementing policies and procedures? (CHALLENGES)

- Not enough family representation in services for typically developing populations
- Lack of policies to promote integration of family support efforts
- Administrators who do not recognize the value of family participation in policy formation
- Lack of adequate funding for family involvement in policy development
- No structure for keeping track of parent leaders
- Need for a culturally diverse group of parent leaders
- Tendency to involve parents who are not representative of the population served

What are strategies for providing policies and procedures that support families? (RECOMMENDATIONS).

What are your top three recommendations?

- Effort/program/blitz to broadcast value of family involvement in policy development
- * Involve families in policy development
- * Examine value of family involvement in policy making in different areas and with different populations
- * Identify what is effective family support in different areas and with different populations
- * Disseminate findings:
 - Working conference to present focus group results to relevant stakeholders
 - Dissemination of findings via web
 - Dissemination of findings via written report
- Develop structure to keep track of parent leaders available to help form policy
- Use local community leaders to identify representative parents

What can we do to provide effective outreach and improve access to family support services, resources, and activities?

What are we currently doing that is providing effective outreach and access to family support services, resources, and activities? (STRENGTHS)

- ECAC newsletters, state-wide toll-free numbers, okay with basic resources
- Transition coordinators in metropolitan hospitals
- Opportunity with reorganization of early intervention/CDSA to structure outreach/access
- Good databases of available services & 800-numbers
- ECU focus on family-centered care
- Information available in other languages

What are the challenges that hinder outreach and access to family support services, resources, and activities? (CHALLENGES)

- UnLinked databases from multiple sources
- Segregated family support programs due to turf issues and/or money issues
- Lack of understanding of what family support is
- “Work of service providers follows funding, rather than work being guided by the needs of the families)
- Lack of medical homes/Little or No buy-in by physicians
- Lack services and supports for non-medicaid eligible families

What strategies might be used to increase effective outreach efforts to families and improve families abilities to access family support services, resources, and activities? (RECOMMENDATIONS). What are your top three recommendations?

- Making meaningful family involvement mandatory in program design and implementation
- Systematic linking with physicians, health departments, and hospitals for family support resources
- Put together comprehensive public awareness campaign
- Involve faith-based and community groups
- Simple language brochure in other language → get information to frontline support, service coordination
- Systems come from “top-down”
- Include missing “players” like schools, universities & HIV programs
- Tie state, regional, and local planning together → don’t focus on only one
- Include special populations, like military, migrant into overall planning

How do we use new technology and information systems to create an innovative, efficient, and effective strategy for increasing access to and availability of family support?

What are we currently doing with new technology and information systems that increases access to and availability of family support? (STRENGTHS)

- Knowledge of the huge potential of technology to increase access: telephone? computers? others?
- Tele-medicine (emerging technology)
- Teleconferencing (for home-based)
- Compiled databases of resources, providers
- Libraries, community colleges, churches, schools, early care (child center, Head Start, Smart Start), family resource centers/Parent/Center, cooperative extension (100 counties)
- Role of ICC in some communities

What are the challenges that inhibit the use of new technology and information systems to increase access to and availability to family support? (CHALLENGES)

- Families lack of access to any/all of: telephones, email service, Web connections, computers
- Literacy levels
- Lack of Training available to families(mouse, computer language)
- Politics – who controls information
- Too much info/not organized (ex: search google)
- Agencies may lack info about what resources, training available or those that are using technology could share

What strategies might be used to increase access to and availability of family support using new technology and information systems? (RECOMMENDATIONS). What are your top three recommendations?

- Home visits with computers & cell phones with child and family
- Document info requests from parents (during home visits or any contact with family to drive website development/info and sheets, education info)
- Revisit current literature to learn more about what's worked/hasn't worked in similar communities that have strong integrated/technology driven family support networks across agencies
- Conduct a Needs assessment with
 1. Families/Children
 2. Agencies