



Brown County Community Partnership for Children

Focus, Discipline, Leadership

Introduction

In early 2000, the Brown County United Way led an assessment of local needs and assets related to health and educational issues facing young children and their families. The results showed the county was resource rich, but identified gaps in services and a need for a better coordinated system of care for children ages 0-5. These gaps were particularly prevalent for high-risk families. This research prompted the development of the Community Partnership for Children (CPC) by the Brown County United Way in 2005.

Today, the CPC is a partnership among human service agency representatives, hospitals, businesses, educators and individuals who work together to coordinate and enhance services for parents and their children starting at birth. The vision of the CPC is to ensure all children are safe, healthy and enter school prepared to learn and thrive.

“Gateway” services include Welcome Baby Visits at the hospital, in-home visits and parenting support services. If a family is identified as at-risk during the initial screening, a family resource specialist from the CPC meets with the family to further identify needs, risks and strengths. The family is then referred to the full spectrum of community services available to them, as well as offered enrollment in the evidence-based home visiting programs of Healthy Families, Early Head Start or Parents As Teachers. These services typically last until the children enroll in Head Start or kindergarten.

Fast Facts

Community/Organization: Brown County, WI, The Community Partnership for Children (CPC)

Problem/Issue: To ensure all children born and living in Brown County are safe, healthy and prepared for school

Impact: In 2011, 1,135 first-time parents received a Welcome Baby Visit. In addition, 320 families who screened at-risk were assessed and linked to services.

Differentiating Feature: The CPC is unique in the range of partners involved in the initiative. It is truly a multi-sector community partnership that involves seven committees and over 90 volunteers.

Leaders/Lead Organization: The CPC is coordinated through the Brown County United Way.

Recent Results

- In 2011, 1,135 first-time parents received a Welcome Baby Visit.
- An in-depth assessment was given to 320 families who were screened as at-risk to determine their needs and strengths.
- More than 750 at-risk children and their families received home visits and/or parenting support classes and playgroups.
- These interventions are making a difference: 79% of children scored at or above age-appropriate developmental levels in each of the key developmental areas of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, and 86% of parents expressed more confidence in their ability to parent, help their children develop and/or improved their parenting skills.

Identified Themes Supporting CPC's Success

Partnerships – The Community Partnership for Children (CPC) has a wide variety of partners, including but not limited to hospitals, business leaders, educators, and human service agencies. It is these partnerships that sustain the CPC; without them, the services provided to children and families in Brown County would not be possible. Local agencies, hospitals, businesses and individuals are jointly committed to ensuring the availability and accessibility of a consistent prenatal and hospital screening process, Welcome Baby Visits, home visiting and wrap-around services. Every potential partner that was asked to be involved was receptive in part because the CPC approached them with a detailed action plan and a best practice model.

Framework/Model – Key to CPC's success has been their local adaptation of the Healthy Families Partnership model used in Hampton, VA (<http://www.hampton.gov/yef/hfp/>). This model was selected after extensive research into various national models. Outcomes data on the model's effectiveness was a significant reason it was selected. The CPC was able to take the strongest components of the model and tailor components to fit the needs of their community. In addition, the CPC formed a connection with the model developers, which involved regular phone conversations, purchase of a “starter kit” and video, and key members of the Hampton team travelling to Brown County to meet with the CPC.

Funding – CPC partners fundraised to secure major gifts that they leveraged to ramp up CPC services such as Welcome Baby Visits, home visiting and

Lessons Learned

- Develop a plan and methods of program evaluation before getting started
- Have a central coordinating agency
- Engage people who are known to have a passion for the issue – this way they won't need a lot of convincing
- Have the research done – if local data is not available use state and/or national data
- Don't call major stakeholders together unless there is a plan in place – just because it is the right thing to do does not mean there is no need for a plan
- Base the plan on what resources are available in the community, rather than starting from scratch
- Have a best practice model

parenting classes. Additional funding for the CPC comes from state grants, county funding, the United Way and other local grants. One of the CPC's goals is to develop a sustainable public/private partnership that will support the CPC model at a full scale. The overarching goal of the CPC is for its core services to become part of the community fabric and a consistent, universally available part of what it means to live in Brown County.

Challenges

Evaluation – The CPC recognizes that in order to have a strong program they need to prove the work they are doing produces results. While the CPC tracks and reports on key program metrics, program partners recognize that they need additional evaluation help from a research partner as well as mentoring for smaller agencies in the CPC that may not currently have the capacity to conduct their own evaluations.

Funding – Funding from private and public sources continues to be essential. Despite strong and diversified financial support from various sources, the valuable services provided by the CPC are not at scale: the CPC is not yet able to reach every family in need. In addition, one partnership member stated, “Just because a family receives home visits ... that is not all they need, they often will also need counseling, childcare, etc., so we need to emphasize all of the gaps in services. The entire community of early childhood providers [also] needs to collaborate at a higher level.”

Competing Priorities – All partnership members have “day jobs” and other priorities that prevent them from focusing fully on the work of the CPC. The partners feel it would have been helpful to have a full-time staff person who could be dedicated solely to coordinating the project, as it would have helped move things along quicker.

Next Steps

Starting in July 2012, **all** parents in Brown County will receive a Welcome Baby Visit prenatally or at the hospital. Furthermore, CPC “gateway agencies” will collectively serve an estimated 120 additional families through evidence-based home visits, parenting support classes and structured playgroups thanks to a new Family Foundations grant from the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. The CPC's lead staff coordinator and CPC partners have visited five communities in Wisconsin thus far and plan to visit others in order to assist in setting up evidence-based systems and to mentor new home visiting programs. The goal of these visits is to help others get similar initiatives off the ground.

The CPC's overarching goal is that its core services become part of the community fabric so that all children born and living in Brown County are safe, healthy and enter school prepared to learn and thrive.

For More Information

For more information on the Brown County United Way Community Partnership for Children, visit www.browncountychildren.org or contact Sarah Inman at sarah@browncountyunitedway.org.