Northwest Institute for
Children and Families

Foster Family Constellation Project

First Evaluation Report
Project Start-up
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Executive Summary

The Foster Family Constellation Project is mounting successes among the participating families—a 12 year old boy is improving in classwork after receiving help from the project tutor, a mother and father with two foster children have had respite care for the first time in over a year, a grandmother who cares for two children has positive peer support and encouragement for the first time, and the children who are coming to the project hub home are learning what it is like to be among their peers in a nurturing atmosphere. The Project is moving toward reaching the intended goals through the ongoing efforts of the Project Director and the steps of the key partner agencies to form a working relationship to benefit children and families. Efforts should continue to recruit and orient families to the project so more foster children as well as parents will be in a position to benefit from the available services.

The overall accomplishments of this project in the first six months of funding are comparable to the start-up phase of other projects. This project is experiencing the common challenges when two key agencies are coming together to establish just what the project services will be and who the providers will be and how the services are to implemented. The project leadership team is working out the tasks to define roles for the partnering agency directors and to develop project procedures. This is occurring in an atmosphere that is respectful and inclusive of the participating family members' perspectives and experiences as evident in how respite, tutoring services, and the monthly family gatherings are being planned with families' input.

The initial results of the project are positive and the families' enthusiastic reactions are a good indication that foster parents are benefiting from this new service delivery model. This project model that is introducing a planned source of support appears to be effectively diminishing the isolation and the negative consequences that have unfortunately occurred among many foster children and parents.

How well is the Foster Family Constellation Project meeting the planned project goals ?

Project Implementation

The Foster Family Constellation Project (FFCP) is an innovative effort to support nurturing, stable family relationships for children and youth in the foster/kinship care system. A recently released report from the Pew Commission documented, from the perspective of former foster children and parents, that the system has not consistently succeeded in serving the children and families who need it most (Pew Commission,2004). The Commission report indicated many children in the foster system have not experienced supportive family relationships but have sustained psychological, social, and emotional scars. Siblings placed in foster care have often been separated, endured multiple placements, and faced numerous disruptions in school attendance. As a result, foster youth have higher patterns of under-achievement in school, suffer from insecurity, and lack comfort in forming interpersonal relationships. The need is apparent to improve the existing foster/kinship care service delivery model that has not only led to the consequences that have already been described but has also placed foster children in homes where foster parents face challenging parenting situations in relative isolation. The foster parents have taken in children with social and emotional needs while not always receiving the training, support, encouragement, or respite that would sustain them in their caregiving efforts that would lead to optimal child and youth outcomes.

The Foster Family Constellation Project (FFCP) is well planned and focused in implementing a model that is an improvement to the cited shortcomings in the foster/kinship care system. To achieve the overall aim of supporting families to improve the situations of foster youth, the Project (FFCP) identified several goals:

(1) The first goal is to support the foster family parents/ guardians' caregiving that will ultimately lead to positive youth outcomes including reducing the number of placements for youth. These supported family relationships should also lead to foster children and youth having more stable school placements and a home environment that is more conducive to the young students improving in regular school attendance, class behavior and academic performance.

(2) Another Project goal was to have siblings placed together or to stay in close contact with each other by being placed in homes in close proximity. The support available to foster parents and the peer connections with other parents should assist parents in their efforts to care for siblings.

(3) The third Project goal was to help the youth to feel culturally connected by placing them in families where they could identify with their heritage and feel supported in developing and maintaining their cultural identity.

(4) The Project was also designed to meet the goal to increase youth connections with peers and adults. The project can offer mental health counseling for children and/or parents, tutoring services for children and youth, and additional social and recreational activities and events to encourage child and adult interaction.

(5) The last Project goal was to also provide the children and youth with the benefits of an "extended family" relationship. This would give the foster child an alternate place to stay, on a planned occasion or if a situation arose when the child was not getting along in the assigned foster home. The Project is designed to have a hub home available as a resource in a constellation of other foster families, much as a grandparents' home might be available in an extended family. If a child makes a short stay in the hub home that could minimize a disruption in the child's life and allow for the child and the foster parents to work out disagreements while another placement option is considered.

In the six funded months of project implementation, the Project has made progress in each of the goal areas. Chapter 2 of this report has the discussion of factors that contribute to or slow project progress. Below are the highlights of the project accomplishments relative to the identified goals:

(1) Providing support to foster parents: In the initial months, the Project leadership team spoke to groups of foster parents and informed them about this project. These meetings elicited interest and support from foster parents who were potential project constellation homes. The project families were recruited from interested families. Five foster families completed an orientation session for the Project and embraced the ideas of respite services and peer support. Beyond meeting for an overview of the Project services, the families have come together twice in the hub home where they have had peer discussion and shared food in a family style. The children in the constellation homes and hub home have met and interacted with each other. The hub home parents have welcomed the children to the home, provided them with an overview of household expectations and made the children feel part of a family through interacting with the children .

The parents have signed up for respite care and they have become familiar with the option for regular, planned respite care as well as respite available for an emergent situation. Thus far, the constellation families have used respite for planned occasions, including overnight care, but have not made extensive use of respite for emergent care. The Project Director has identified two options to revise the service delivery model in order to increase the use of respite. Since the hub home family has time available for respite care, beginning in March, the Project Director planned to offer the respite care openings on nights and weekends to other foster families receiving case management services through UJIMA Community services. The second revision recommended by the Project Director was to ask the Coordinator at UJIMA Community Services to identify two or three additional families that could be oriented to and integrated into the project.

(2) Sibling Placement: To date, the four constellation families each care for two siblings. Two foster parents are each caring for two sisters. Two other foster parents are caring for a brother and sister. Over time, we may be able to assess if the support that is offered to the families encourages them to care for siblings and to help siblings to keep in contact with each other.

The Project is very well focused in supporting the care of siblings together. Research has shown that foster children who have suffered so many disruptions in parental relationships find comfort in being placed with or in having contact with

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a sibling. During family transitions, similar to what the foster children in the constellation homes are undergoing, the sibling subsystem offers continuity within the reorganization of the family (Drapeau,Simard, Beudry& Charbonneau 2000).

(3) Cultural Appropriateness: At this time, all of the children are in homes where they would feel comfortable with their cultural and ethnic heritage. The project foster children are all African American. Four of five foster parents in the constellation families are African American and one of the two hub parents is also African American. The project is further supporting the positive family and cultural identity of the children through their placement with family members. The four constellation families are caring for related children. Two foster parents are grandparents to the foster children and two families are the aunt or uncle to the foster children.

(4) Services to youth and families: At the Project orientation, families heard that the services will include counseling, tutoring and social and recreational opportunities with transportation provided. The families have been offered mental health counseling, family counseling, and facilitated discussion time about family roles and relationships. While indicating an interest in these services, the families have not used the counseling services. The interest continues and as the parents get to know each other more, they may want planned discussions. The hub home provided an evening with a focus on self care for the foster parents at the very beginning of April. To date, the parents have requested tutoring services for the children. One foster parent requested help in a specific subject for her granddaughter. Another parent asked for homework help in all subjects for both children in her care. The tutoring started on March 22 and has been two afternoons a week. At the families request, one session is at the hub home and one is at Garfield Community Center that is convenient for at least two families. The tutoring has been provided by an experienced tutor who has worked with youth in foster care through the Treehouse program.

(5) Extended family relationships: The Project is meeting the intended goal to provide the kind of support that adults and children would experience if they had extended family members available. The foster parents indicated at the first orientation that they were not necessarily supported, or offered any respite

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care, by their own family members in providing care to the children. One foster parent indicated that she and her husband had reorganized their lives to take the niece and nephew in their care, when their parents were not able to care for them. This parent was not offered a lot of help from family members leading to her to say:

> "One of our relatives said well I can take one of the kids for an hour or so. But I don't want to take both of them. "

Another parent indicated that the children could only stay over night at a friend's house if the friend's parents had completed a background check. This requirement had limited the children from being able to stay with friends so consequently the foster parent didn't get any respite time as the children were not visiting away from her home. She was interested that the children could stay at the hub home for respite care. Knowing that the hub home parents were approved foster parents who were recruited through UJIMA was very positive for the foster parents and encouraged them to think about using respite care. The foster parents welcomed the chance for respite care and saw it as a means for support that was not immediately available through their families, so the hub home was taking the place of an extended family.

The hub home has functioned in a way similar to an extended family gathering when all the children were together for monthly get-togethers. The children had the option of playing organized games away from the adults or staying and listening to adults. The children heard from the hub parents there were a few house rules, such as not running in the house, and their respective parents reiterated that the hub home "sounds just like home.' The hub home was serving the way a grandparent's home might have because it offered the children some reinforcement and stability for family expectations about behavior.

The project plan is succeeding in that the hub home serves as a welcoming environment to offer the nurturing positive relationships for the children in the constellation homes. They might not otherwise experience, this kind of environment where everyone crowds around the table to eat and there are some shared expectations on how children behave, as the extended family members

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are not accessible or available for some of the project foster families. The research shows that children who have been in at-risk environments, as have the foster children, are more likely to have positive outcomes when they experience caring relationships with adults (Moore & Zaff 2002). The project is creating the opportunity for these positive relationships to occur with the project children and the hub home parents or the tutor or other project family parents.

What factors have influenced whether the Project is meeting the planned goals?

Project Start-Up

There are several factors that are facilitating or speeding up the progress that occurs on the project and there are factors that are tending to hinder the pace of full project implementation. These are explained below as dynamic factors that have been developing in the first six months of the project. There are likely to be other factors that will affect the ongoing project progress that will emerge in the future.

Factors that are facilitating the Project Start-Up

Focused effort: The Project Director with the lead agency, the Mockingbird Society, has worked to make this a cooperative endeavor among agencies that have unique strengths and capacities to contribute to the project's success. The Mockingbird Society Project Director has developed a working relationship with UJIMA Community Services to be the sole agency to recruit foster families. UJIMA Community Services has an established position in the local Seattle area as the premier agency in promoting more effective and culturally appropriate model for interactions with African American families. UJIMA is recognized for its efforts to address the issues of disproportionality of African American children and youth in the foster care system. UJIMA has also increased the recruitment of families to provide kinship care for African American children and youth placed in the foster care system. The Executive Director and the Project Coordinator from UJIMA are also actively involved in providing training to social workers to improve the quality of practices that all workers use in family interactions with African American families.

The project leadership team was formed with a representative from the Mockingbird Society and UJIMA Community Services. The leadership team has met to identify the implementation of the planned activities including respite care for parents, training and focused support groups for parents, tutoring services for children and youth, and social and recreational activities for children and families. The team has also discussed the projected timeframe for implementing events. The leadership team also reviewed the project contract and finalized the approval of the terms of the agreement which was a process of extended discussion and thoughtful consideration.

The Project director from the lead agency, Mockingbird Society, has made a very dedicated and focused effort to work with UJIMA to bring together the foster families to launch the project. The Project Director has also worked independently to complete the planning of the initial orientation for the families, suggested follow-up to explain the project to the families, and facilitated that the project families receive computers to increase their communication and networking. The Project Director initiated communication directly with the hub home foster parents to plan a parent function. The Project Director has also offered to conduct trainings for the families on topics suggested by the families or by the UJIMA Project Coordinator. The Project Director took the initiative to extend the respite services to additional families. The Project Director also identified a new tutor that was instrumental in getting the tutoring started when it did because the intended lead tutor and additional tutor who had been known to Ujima were not available as expected.

Inter-agency alliances: The Project Director has extended the working partnership with the Children's Home Society of Washington (CHSW). The CHSW residential program in north Seattle planned a parallel effort to identify one of their cottages as the hub resource home to two other foster homes. The residential cottage is staffed to provide the extensive behavioral and psychosocial comprehensive services to bolster and strengthen the caregiving capacity of a foster home. The project director successfully facilitated the working relationship between the Children's Home Society program and Youth Advocates

that provides for several foster youth to receive comprehensive services as they reside in a foster home. The model that makes the hub home available as a resource is a sound means to provide youth with the services they need and to support the foster parents in the demanding job they have. The model is appropriate for the challenging situations that are an everyday reality for some foster parents. Children who are placed in foster care who have very complex psychosocial and behavioral problems may not progress in a linear fashion but make incremental steps and then regress in their development. These setbacks make it very difficult for parents but the hub home with its supporting resources including behavioral and medication management could sustain the family to continue to provide care to these foster children.

The project is also exerting a positive influence in leadership among agencies serving foster care youth. The Mockingbird Society most effectively provides the voice for foster youth through its newspaper, the Mockingbird Times and through developing self-advocacy skills among older foster care youth.

Local Presence: The Lead agency, The Mockingbird Society, is housed in a location that is convenient to the families. The new building that is home to the Mockingbird Society has meeting room facilities that were accessible and comfortable for orienting the parents and for dinners and functions for the parents and children. The presence of the Mockingbird Society in its neighborhood location is conducive to families attending meetings. The location is also conducive to the project being a part of the local effort so the Project does not carry any negative connotation of being a downtown or north end agency when the families live in South Seattle and Skyway.

Parent Readiness: The parents were invited to an orientation meeting on December 2 and another orientation meeting was held in January. Parents at the first meeting indicated that having respite care available would be very helpful as they were caring for two to three children that was time consuming and challenging. Despite the foster parents' expressed interest in respite, they did not use it when it was initially offered. The Director and the Coordinator at UJIMA , explained that when the parents appear to delay in using respite, this is due to the culturally influenced patterns and expectations. The UJIMA Coordinators

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explained that the African American relatives who accepted the children into their homes, did so as if the foster children were their natural children. So, just as the foster parents would not be inclined to leave their natural children in the care of another family, the foster parents were similarly not leaving their foster children in respite. The UJIMA directors explained that the foster parents would probably warm up to the idea of respite and would use respite care during the summer if the parents wanted a brief vacation.

The foster parents are well prepared in their roles and their interests and their dedication are very positive factors pushing forward the momentum on the project. Three of the foster parents are social workers. One works as a director of youth services, one works as a director of a residential youth program, and one works with an adoption services agency. Three parents work in other fields, one works in recreation, one in insurance, and one is an ESL teacher. The parents were willing to complete some monthly forms to provide information to track project services and they speak enthusiastically about this project when they are gathered together. This was evident when a new family that had not attended the project orientation joined the other families at a gathering at the hub home, and the foster families who had been the first to join the project were quick to tell the new parent- "you'll like it," "wait till you hear about this, and there's more," "listen to what you can get and how this helps the kids too."

Factors that hinder the pace of the Project Start-Up

Schedule Challenges: The Director and the Project Coordinator at UJIMA have endorsed this project and welcomed the opportunity to participate. They share in the goals of the project to meet the needs of foster parents who deserve support as well as to support foster youth to achieve improved outcomes. The key individuals at UJIMA who are involved in the Foster Family Constellation Project also have demands placed on their time to attend meetings with other community and state agency child welfare representatives and to conduct other business specific to their agency. So, it takes days or weeks to find mutually agreeable times to get the leadership team together.

The first start-up months of this project also fell in the last quarter of 2003 which is often a very busy season for human service agencies that meet holiday related needs of children and families.   These schedule demands have made it

challenging for the Project Director at Mockingbird Society to complete planning meetings with the UJIMA coordinator and agency director. The challenges are evident in: setting times for the project planning meetings and in postponing an initial meeting and monthly meeting for the parents. The delays that occur in planning and actually completing meetings as well as in carrying out the tasks that are identified during the meetings slow the project from the most desirable pace to fully implement project goals.

Pre-existing relationship: The time spent in communication between the Mockingbird Society and UJIMA, during theses initial months, might have been more efficient if the agencies had previously had a working relationship. It is to be expected that agencies each bring their respective work culture to an interaction and have to develop an appreciation for each other's values, project specific expectations, and customary styles of communication. The leadership team members on this project are very respectful of each other and are committed to the project but it is naturally taking some time for the comfort of a cooperative relationship to develop.

Family selection: The families who were selected for this project by UJIMA have been very positive in their outlook about the project. The foster parents' responsiveness to the services, including respite and tutoring have been described in different sections of this report. While positively inclined, the current families are not high users of the available services. Given that these foster parents have expressed a need for this program, more foster parents would certainly also have some needs for respite, family support, family counseling or mental health counseling and tutoring. To better achieve the goals of the program, there could be more active recruiting of more foster families through UJIMA. There is every indication that new families could be absorbed in the existing model as there are very capable hub home parents who are prepared to offer support and the project director is well prepared to provide family or mental health counseling and broker other supports such as tutoring.

Contextual Factors: Another explanation that the number of children being served was less than initially anticipated, was that the state of Washington Department of Social and Health Services changed its funding direction and decreased payments for the extensive special mental health and counseling services that some foster children needed. The Children's Home Society of

Washington had developed a means to provide foster care including extensive counseling, medication management, and anger management counseling in foster homes on their campus, but the loss of the focused state agency funding made it financially unfeasible for that agency to implement the services for a hub resource home for other foster homes with children needing very intense comprehensive services. As an example, a nine-year child who might have been served had 22 prior placements and the child received 40 hours of services weekly in behavioral, psychosocial, and medication management. When the state funding level was cut in late 2003, the CHSW planned efforts to try and serve children similar to this with in-home services and respite resource home services was not fully implemented. The Children's Home Society had expected to be serving more children, but the costs to do so were excessive for the agency. At this time, the CHSW provides a high intensity of services to two foster children living with a very experienced and devoted foster mother who relocated to a foster home on the agency campus. A third child is cared for in another foster home and receives coordinated intermittent services through the residential program that supports this child being able to remain in a community placement.

What are the responses from the children and parents being served by the Foster Family Constellation Project?

Project Results

The focus of the evaluation of the Project is to assess the effectiveness of the services to create positive outcomes for children and their families including improving situations in the lives of the children and the foster parents. There are four primary areas where we expect results for children:

Reduced costs, financial and psychological, of multiple foster care placements. For the remainder of the Project, we will collect data on the numbers of placements for the children including if any of the children leave their respective homes. The initial data collected for the children shows that they have had multiple placements, as have other children in the foster/kinship care system, as shown in the following table.

Identifier for the child	Age (in years) at first placement	Number of placements prior to the current placement	Years in placement prior to this placement
TA	11	5	2
LA	12	6	3
JG	10	4	2
RG	12	4	2
TM	8	2	1
MW	7	2	1
DJ	10	1	1
EJ	8	1	1

The families in the project have cared for the children for a range of time, from the shortest period being of two months to the longest of four years. The families are providing kinship care and we will identify if any of these situations remain stable.

In addition, we will ask the parents what, if any, benefits are occurring for the children through the kinship care placements. To the extent that the foster youth are agreeable and the parents feel that it is acceptable, we also plan to ask the youth what they perceive as a benefit of being in the Project.

The interactions among the foster youth have just begun in the last month, so there has not been sufficient time to ask about benefits associated with these interactions. These will include, but not be limited to collecting information if the foster youth experience any of the following:

- Increased emotional stability and happiness
- Increased number of positive interactions with other foster youth
- Reduced incidents of running away or leaving the foster home.
- Increased involvement in tutoring, youth leadership, and recreational activities.

Tutoring: The tutoring services are starting and will be offered one day a week at the hub home and one day a week in a room at the Garfield Community Center. The latter arrangement was facilitated by one of the constellation foster parents who could access a community center room and found it most convenient for her two foster children. Another family with three children said the location was convenient for them as well and the families jointly made a decision that the two different locations should meet their needs. All the parents were comfortable in the decision to implement the tutoring in this model and to assess how well it works and reassess it as needed.

The tutoring services are intended to reduce one of the major adverse effects of foster care has been low educational achievement (Jackson 1994). At elementary and secondary levels of education, twice as many foster youth than non-foster youth had repeated a grade, enrolled in special education, or changed schools during the year. Youth who are at risk for school failure are also at high risk for substance abuse and violence (Maquin & Loeber 1996). Providing tutoring combined with having the hub home and another convenient site available for tutoring is expected to positively influence the educational achievement of the participating youth. The baseline data on the participating youth indicates that they would benefit from tutoring. The foster parents have

identified that the older children have learning challenges including problems completing work and paying attention. The small number (n=6) of children for whom baseline data are available reflect the same educational problems that were described for the larger population of children in foster/kinship care. These include decreased educational achievement that is due in part to multiple school placements and lack of stability in school.

Baseline data on Project children (n=6) Feb. 2004

Children in Special Education classes part or full day	Children receiving counseling	Children doing work at below grade level	Children receiving behavioral therapy or other therapy	Children who find school to be difficult
5	3	2	5	3

The evaluation data that will be collected monthly will track if the foster parents report any improvements in the foster children's class performance that is attributed to the project tutoring services. In the first month of tutoring, one foster parent observed improvement in her two foster children's preparation to study, completion of homework, and class participation. For the first six children to use tutoring, who have completed initial and progress data the promising results are as follows:

Child Progress (n=6) Attributed to Project Tutoring Feb.-April 2004

	Number of children not needing to improve	Number of children not yet showing improvement	Number with positive behavior change	Number showing big change, noticeable progress
Completing homework		2	2	2
Prepared to study	2		3	1
Participating in class work		2	3	1

Respite Care: The early results from Respite care show that the children aged 9 and 11 years have come to enjoy time with other kids and adults. The children have participated in the group activities with the other children in the hub home and enjoyed their time there. The evaluation data that will be collected

monthly will track if the children in respite care interact with their peers and the adults while spending time in respite care.

The evaluation data that will be collected will also track how often parents are using respite care, any patterns in planned use or emergent care, and any changes in respite care use that occur when services are made available to other parents. In the first full month of respite care, 104 hours were provided to two children in one family.

Increased placement of siblings in the same constellation of foster homes. To date, the four families each have two siblings and we will assess if these placements change over time. In the continuing months of the project, the evaluation will track that the children remain in the homes where they have been placed and will identify if the children or youth have any relocations to other homes. In the future, the evaluation will ask foster parents if they have perceived positive signs of caring for siblings or identified any suggestions regarding foster/kinship care of siblings.

Increased foster parent respite and technical support. The foster parents are positively responding to the services that have been made available to them. The families are signing up to use an evening or two of respite care per month. The respite care will be extended to other foster parents who have case managers through UJIMA. The parents had their first parent-focused session in April and parents learned and experienced ways to better care for themselves and reduce stress.

Reduced isolation and perceived burnout. In the future, we plan to ask the parents if they feel less isolated as a result of being in the Project. To date, the parents have identified they feel better meeting other parents who are in similar circumstances. One of the parents feels less isolated by connecting with other parents including the hub parent, which is an indicator of project success.

"Just having L. call me made me feel so much better. You know she called to remind me about coming tonight and just having somebody to check in and say we'd like you to come, I had so much on my mind, and that (call) made all the difference."

What are the lessons learned from this Project that will be useful to improve the foster care system service delivery model ?

Project Replication

Informal discussions among the project parents and interview data from local agency coordinators who are informed about this project overwhelmingly endorse the project model that offers a planned means of support to sustain foster parents. One of the project parents volunteered that in her previous experience as a foster parent she was caring for a very challenging adolescent and after repeated efforts to maintain the relationship the foster mother was in a position where she could no longer care for the teen-ager. This parent expressed that had she been offered the kind of support that this project is now providing, she most likely could have continued in the role as a foster parent and the adolescent in her care might have avoided another placement. Another foster parent who was interviewed indicated that having peer support as well as resources offered to her is giving her a lot of encouragement to continue in the role of a foster parent.

Were it possible to take the service delivery model of the hub home that offers respite and support to foster parents that care for very challenging children with mental health, social and behavioral management problems, the quality of life would surely improve for the foster youth and for the foster parents who would be more satisfied and prepared to cope and continue to care for the children.

The leadership team meetings with the Mockingbird Society and UJIMA have generated several ideas for program development as well as policies and procedures that will be implemented in this Project. These ideas could be relevant for future projects as well.

A finding from this project is that it takes foster parents some time to come together to feel comfortable among each other and to develop acceptance of what this new project can offer to them. In the interest of trying to implement a

project in a relatively short time frame, an alternate option for the start-up of a project similar to this would be to recruit families first. The next step would be to assess the services most needed by the families and to initiate very early in the program any necessary relationships with agencies to provide the services that are identified by the families.

Planning for services: The services that are planned for the families have been explained to them and they have been very positive. The tutoring services for the children and youth seemed to be a priority for the project parents and they requested specific times and locations. This has been an area where the parents seemed to readily agree on what they wanted, so it may be a good starting point to bring the parents together and to get specific input from parents, if there is a future similar project.

Respite care: At the first mention of respite care at the orientation, several families stated aloud how glad they would be to get some occasional respite care. They welcomed the idea and they participated in signing up for respite dates. In spite of their positive attitude to this service, their demand is not excessive or even at a level that they are filling the available respite times offered from the hub home. This is prompting the expansion of the service delivery model to other families from UJIMA so more foster children receive the benefit of peer and adult interaction and the foster parents receive the support that sustains them. There may be several reasons that the foster parents did not immediately take all the available times. One foster parent described her reaction that she just needs to get used to the idea that she can plan for respite. After organizing her afternoons and evenings around the grandchildren that she cares for, she just needs time to work respite into her already hectic schedule. She fully intends to use respite, it is just taking time to make this adjustment. The parents all felt that they needed respite care but as they have not previously been offered that type of support, they took some time to accept it. This finding suggests that it takes time to get project participants fully engaged into planned services so it is desirable to allow time to reach the intended capacity.

Procedure for a Monthly calendar: The hub family will make a calendar available each month showing dates for a social get-together, a training or support session, a children's activity, and available respite. The pace of the project activity seems to move ahead when the hub family is encouraged to plan

activities and keep in regular contact with the project families to inform and invite them to organized events.

Procedure for families to communicate: The hub parents assumed the task to call parents to tell them about the get-together for all families and to remind families to attend.

Procedure for sharing child's information: Out of respect for the children and the parents who have had to relay personal and family information in numerous situations, the project operates on the basis that only necessary information about the families is to be shared. The satellite family will provide the essential information to the hub family in order for the hub family to give safe respite care. It is not necessary that the satellite family provide all dimensions on the child's life as the hub family is not on a need to know basis.

These procedures are being developed as a means to keep all project families aware and informed about the project and to encourage the optimal participation from the project children and parents. One aim is to track these procedures as part of the project start-up and implementation and to identify if other procedures evolve as the project continues.

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