PART 3
Enriching Families’ Community Connections

A Two-Way Street

THE AMERICAN Family Assets STUDY

• 1,511 families
  – One parenting adult
  – One 10 – 15 year old

• Oversampled
  • African Americans
  • Latino/Latina
  • Asian Americans

• Weighed to U. S. Census

Key Findings from the Study

• 21 family strengths (Family Assets) identified
• Average family scores 47 out of 100 on an overall Family Assets Index
• Overall levels of family assets vary little, if at all, across different types of families
• Family assets are associated with a range of measures of youth and family well-being

OVERVIEW PRESENTATIONS
• www.parentfurther.com/webinars/family-assets
• disneydiscovertogther.com

Family Assets Webinar Series

November | May* | September | March*
Nurturing RELATIONSHIPS | Establishing ROUTINES | Maintaining EXPECTATIONS | Adapting to CHALLENGES

* Archive: www.parentfurther.com/webinars/family-strengths
Session Overview

• Why Connect?
• Current Patterns
• Barriers & Challenges
• Reframing the Opportunity
• Starting Points for Action

Why Connect Families and Communities?
POLL: As a Parent
Why is it important for your family to connect the people/organizations of your community?

a. It makes our family better
b. We can access activities and services
c. Expose kids to different ideas, people
d. We want to make a difference for others
e. Other (please write your thoughts in the chat box)

POLL: As a Family Ally
Why is it important for your organization to connect with families?

a. A requirement of the funder or program
b. Get more support or volunteers
c. Improve young people’s outcomes
d. Strengthen families
e. Other (please write your thoughts in the chat box)

* Family Allies—Includes family-serving professionals, parent educators, parent involvement coordinators, and others who work with or advocate for families.
Why Connect: Families’ Perspectives

- Friendship and support
- Access opportunities, support
- Live out values and priorities
- Help their kids
- Protect your family
- Make the community a better place

It contributes to your family’s strength and resilience

Why Connect: Organizations’ Perspectives

What happens in families is consistently a powerful factor in youth learning, well-being, and development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Better: Families Offer</th>
<th>For Worse: Families Undermine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm, caring relationships</td>
<td>Abuse and neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep, mutual affection, care</td>
<td>Dysfunctional relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictable routines, rituals</td>
<td>Family conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent expectations</td>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong networks of support in the community</td>
<td>Harsh, inflexible, inconsistent discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustain commitment to each other</td>
<td>Chaotic, unpredictable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Better: Families Offer

- Warm, caring relationships
- Deep, mutual affection, care
- Predictable routines, rituals
- Consistent expectations
- Strong networks of support in the community
- Sustain commitment to each other

For Worse: Families Undermine

- Abuse and neglect
- Dysfunctional relationships
- Family conflict
- Substance abuse
- Harsh, inflexible, inconsistent discipline
- Chaotic, unpredictable
Family & Community: Mutual Interest

“It is the family that determines our capacity to function effectively and to profit from later experiences in the other contexts in which human beings live and grow. . . . To a far greater extent than we have previously imagined, the capacity of a family to function effectively, to create and sustain competent and compassionate human beings, depends on the support of other, larger contexts.”

— Urie Bronfenbrenner


Current Patterns of Family-Community Connections
Parent Involvement in School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Same pattern is likely . . .
- Youth services
- Mental health services
- Family services
- Faith communities

“A Fragile Foundation, 2011

“Social Poverty” and Isolation

“Social poverty—social isolation and a lack of easy access to help—had become rampant, regardless of families’ socioeconomic status. To a large extent, help had become a commodity that people buy, not what they do.”

— Gary Melton (2010)

Adding to the Challenge
- Low-income single mothers tend to have weaker social networks.
- Those with the weakest social networks are the least likely to seek professional help.

—Attree, 2005
Community connections, relationships, and participation sustain, shape, and enrich how families live their lives together.

Notes. Each category ranges from 0 to 20.
Connecting to Community

Informal Connections
- Neighborhood Cohesion: 33%
- Relationships with Others: 22%

Formal Connections
- Enriching Activities: 56%
- Supportive Resources: 45%

PLUS: Civic Contributions of Family

Enriching Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Parenting Adults</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recreational clubs, teams, organizations</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing, practicing art, music, drama</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs, activities in a spiritual/religious place</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Supportive Resources

Has helped “a lot” strengthening family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church, synagogue, mosque, etc.*</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor/Health care provider*</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local schools*</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor/social worker</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places of employment</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organizations (e.g., YMCA)*</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites/social media</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police*</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Much higher for African American families than all other groups.

Neighborhood Cohesion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mostly/Completely True</th>
<th>Parenting Adults</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good friends in neighborhood</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good friends who support parent</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors look out for kids</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent looks out for other kids</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent knows my friends’ parents</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors care about me</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chicago’s Gautreaux Project


Relationships with Others

- Neighbors: 41% (Parent), 37% (Youth)
- Mentor(s): 55% (Parent), 44% (Youth)
- Coaches/Group Leaders: 48% (Parent), 45% (Youth)
- Youth’s Teachers: 48% (Parent), 53% (Youth)
- Youth’s Friends: 55% (Parent), 87% (Youth)

Feel “close” or “very close” to each
Civic Contributions & Commitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree or Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Parenting Adults</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spend time on projects helping others</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important to change unfair things in society</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have done things to help people in my neighborhood</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can make a difference in community</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth suggests things to help others</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family does things to help the environment</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POLL

Which one of these do you emphasize most in your family's participation or in the opportunities you offer to families?

a. Informal supports for families (informal relationships, neighborhood cohesion)

b. Formal supports for families (enriching activities, supportive resources)

c. Civic contributions of families

d. Other (please write your thoughts in the chat box)
Relative Strength of Associations

Three types of family-community connections:
- Informal supports for families
- Formal supports for families
- Civic contributions of families

Which matters most for youth well-being?

1. Civic Contributions
2. Informal Connections
3. Formal Connections

These are likely mutually reinforcing: Families with more informal supports also are more likely to seek services when needed (Attree, 2005)

Barriers and Challenges

Parents and families matter for virtually every youth outcome. Yet . . .
Brownsville, Texas (United Way)

- Population: 140,000
- 91% Hispanic
- 53% of children in poverty
- Per capita income of $9,700
- 49% of population over 25 haven’t graduated from high school

Talking Past Each Other

**SCHOOLS SAY . . .**
- Families don’t care what happens at school.
- We communicate with families ALL THE TIME.
- Families don’t take advantage of school-based services, like tutoring.
- Families won’t return our phone calls.

**PARENTS SAY . . .**
- School doesn’t care about families.
- School NEVER communicates.
- They have TUTORING?
- They’ve CALLED?
Brownsville, TX: Barriers Identified

- Families are really busy.
- Families haven’t felt welcome in the past.
- Families are worried that they won’t understand.
- Families think that their immigration status might be questioned.
- Families believe that everything’s okay because they haven’t heard otherwise.
- But mostly—families did not believe they could do anything to make a difference.

Why It Can Be Hard to Engage
(From the family services field)

- Practical: Time, schedule, transportation, language
- Attitudes & expectations
  - Perceived stigma or prejudice: Being judged, labeled, diagnosed
  - Blame: Kids’ problems are their parents’ fault
  - Loss of privacy
  - Fear of consequences
  - Embarrassment, sense of failure, competition
  - A sense of obligation to reciprocate

Reframing the Opportunity
Toward Family-Centered Engagement for Transformation

Reframe the Question, Focus

How do we get families more involved or engaged?
How might we work together as partners to enrich the lives of families?

Increased Family Strengths
Improved Youth Outcomes
Increased Engagement
Family-Centered Engagement

Shift Emphasis from . . . Organization-Centered
- Activity based
- Parents as individuals
- Parents follow the organization’s agenda
- Workshops that provide information
- Organization to parent communication

Toward . . . Family-Centered
- Relationship based
- Parents as members of the community, networks
- Parents as collaborators in setting the agenda
- Build capacity for growth and leadership
- Mutual exchange of relational power

Starting Points for Families (summary)

- Build relationships
- Align with your passions, values
- Take advantage of transitions

(All webinar participants will receive a PDF with additional slides offering more detail)

Build Relationships

- Who do you trust, enjoy in your community? How can you deepen or enrich those ties?
- Take small steps to get to know your neighbors—and help them get to know each other.
- Connect across differences that expand horizons and build mutual concern.
Align with Your Passions, Values

• What’s really important you and your family?
  – Spending time together as a family
  – Supporting family members around a particular issue
  – Being with people with shared beliefs and values
  – Expanding your family’s horizons
  – Making a difference for others or for a cause

• Resist “volunteering” for things that aren’t important to you.

Take Advantage of Transitions

*Triggers to try something new*

• **A move:** Intentional meet the neighbors (or greet people who move in)
• **New school year:** Establish new routines that include community connections
• **Change within the family:** Reassess what matters now
• **New life stage:** What opportunities open up?
Starting Points for Family Allies (summary)

• Start with building relationships, trust
• Tap families’ interests, priorities, dreams, strengths
• Walk alongside families, when needed
• Give voice and support action for change

(More details are available on additional slides. Everyone who attends will receive a link to download the complete deck with “bonus” slides.)

Start with Building Relationships, Trust

What Influences Parents to Seek Help

Practitioners who . . .

• Gave enough time to talk it out
• Had a trusting relationship with parent
• Validated parents’ concerns
• Showed interest in the family’s situation

What Families Are Looking for . . .

Low-income parents valued professionals and programs who . . .
- Took them seriously
- Did not judge them
- Treated them with respect
- Offered practical parenting help

Low-income parents were less likely to seek support from agencies when they . . .
- Were not aware of what was available
- Were afraid of being labeled as “inadequate” parents
- Were afraid of outside interference in family life
- Had a sense that the services available did not meet the family’s needs


Tap Parents’ Motivations, Interests

Questions parents ask before participating
- Perception of the benefits: Is it important to me and my family? Will it really help? It is worth it (cost, barriers)?
- What would other parents like me do in this situation? What will they think if I do it?
- How will I be treated?
- Do I have the skills, knowledge, and resources to be successful if I do something?

Tap Sparks, Dreams, & Strengths

• Assume families have strengths and want the best for their kids.
• Normalize the challenges. All families have them.
• Encourage families to look within themselves for wisdom, knowledge, and solutions to their challenges.
• Listen for and tap the sparks (passions) of both parents and kids.

Walk Alongside

• Help to set me up for success
• Go with me:
  – Help me navigate the systems
  – Mentor me
  – Connect me with others
  – Help with cultural translation
  – Encourage me
  – Rebuild my hope and self-efficacy
Give Voice. Empower for Change

• What changes do parents want to see in their schools, communities? How can they be a voice for change? How can you guide them?
• The most powerful community connections come through action not receiving services


Questions?
Parenting Resources

Available at: www.searchinstitutestore.org

NEW Search Institute Workshops

Discovering Your Family's Strengths
A workshop for parenting adults

Engaging the New American Family
Relationship-based strategies for nurturing families' strengths

More Info on these and other workshops:
CALL: Mary Shrader: (800) 888-7828 ex. 526
VISIT: www.search-institute.org/presentations-workshops
Next Webinar: September

November
Establishing ROUTINES
May*
Maintaining EXPECTATIONS
SEPTEMBER
Adapting to CHALLENGES
March*
Connecting to COMMUNITY
July*

* Archive: www.parentfurther.com/webinars/family-strengths
Info: www.search-institute.org/research/family-strengths

Thank you for joining us!

VISIT AND COMMENT:
www.parentfurther.com