Program Focus Team Action Plan:

Building Strong Families

2012-2013

Strategic Opportunities Addressed:

- Prepare People in Kansas to Thrive in a Global Society and All Aspects of Life
- Create Opportunities and Support People in Kansas to Improve Their Physical, Mental, and Emotional Health and Well-Being

Situation:

Strong, stable, and resilient families are crucial to the health and well-being of individuals, communities, and society. Children and adults with stable and satisfying family relationships experience greater emotional stability and physical health than individuals who live with constant family tension, negative interactions, and disruptions. Although a family's financial advantage is associated with higher marriage rates, less divorce, greater marital happiness, and greater child well-being, some families find themselves in situations where job readiness skills and economic choices are limited, especially during global financial and cultural changes. Living in a stepfamily involves more complex and challenging family dynamics and interactions, leading remarried couples to having higher divorce rates than first time married couples. Cohabitation is an increasing phenomenon among unmarried couples in the United States. Thirty percent of cohabiting couples have children living with them from an earlier relationship although family stability has been reported lower than for married families. Military-connected families must deal with unique post-deployment reintegration and reunion challenges. The majority of military families manage well, but geographic isolation, limited access to installation resources and hesitation to ask for help strain many National Guard and Reserve families. Though the rate of teen pregnancies has decreased, the issues of helping teen-led families cope with social and economic challenges continue. A research-based model of family strengths delineates six major qualities that strong and successful families exhibit across cultures worldwide and in all family types: appreciation and affection for each other, commitment, positive communication, enjoyable time together, spiritual well-being, and coping abilities in time of stress and crises. Additional research has delineated specific practices and patterns for stable and healthy marriages and relationships with evidence of positive impact when these skills are taught in culturally appropriate ways.

Appendix

- The state of Kansas and county marriage and divorce most recent data can be found at: http://www.kdheks.gov/hci/as/2010/AS_2010.pdf
- Healthy Kansas 2020 data and objectives can be found at: http://healthykansans2020.com/index.asp#&panel1-1
- Indicators of child well-being in Kansas can be found at: http://www.kac.org/kac2.aspx?pgID=977
- Kansas Communities That Care data on student demographics, risk behaviors, and other information at: http://beta.ctcdata.org/index.php?page=login.php&funct=funct.select_data.php&grp_name=Kansas&bld=0&grp_typ=cnty

Public Value:

Positive family social-emotional interactions and relationships result in strong and sustainable families, which lead to

fewer divorces, less litigation associated with custody/child support, decreases in family conflict and improved family member well-being. Thus, strong families build strong communities.

Outcomes:

Short-Term:

Family members are knowledgeable about the six qualities that make families strong and resilient:

- - showing appreciation and affection toward family members,
  - demonstrating commitment toward each other,
  - using positive communication with each other,
  - having enjoyable times together,
  - building spiritual well-being within the family,
  - managing stress and crisis effectively.
- Parents understand the significant role they have in the lives of their children and the importance of: 1) Communication, 2) Flexibility and 3) Cohesion in their parenting practices.
- Family life educators and community leaders demonstrate increased awareness and knowledge related to:

  - program planning. implementation and evaluation,
  - understanding the connection between family relationships and well-being, community quality of life and creating opportunities to build strong families
  - understanding family systems and family development,
  - effective programming approaches for targeted audiences (e.g, military families, teen-led families, families in transition).
  - understanding evaluation of behavior and social change.

Evaluation Questions:

What knowledge do participants gain about the six basic qualities that make families strong?
What understanding do parent participants have about their roles in the lives of children and how to be successful in those roles?
Do family life educator and community leader participants gain awareness, and knowledge in program planning, implementation, and evaluation for building strong families?

Medium-Term:

- Participants contribute to each of their family members' well-being.
- Participants contribute to their family members' satisfaction in their relationships with each other.
- Participants identify their family's strengths and continue to build upon those strengths.
- Participants identify those areas of their family life which they would like to positively impact.
- Parents actively and positively influence the lives of their children.
- Participants use their attention, talents and service to strengthen the family life of others.
- Professionals, educators, and community leaders build strong and resilient families through practices, programming, and policies.

Evaluation Questions:

How do participants practice the six basic qualities that make families strong?

What changes do parents make to ensure the strength of their family members?

Do participants use their talents and service to strengthen the family life of others?

What practices, programming and policies do professional, educator, and community leader participants seek to support strong and resilient families?

Long-Term:

Strong and resilient families in Kansas that consistently exhibit positive family relationships and strengthen the family life of others.

Evaluation Questions:

How many Kansas families exhibit positive family relationships and strengthen the family life of others?

Outputs:

Potential Participants

Families and individuals throughout the state of Kansas, fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, other extended family members, middle and high school students, teachers, civic club members, professionals in the human service delivery sector, educators, military members, youth workers and community leaders.

Potential Activities

· Identify and establish group linkages (i.e. electronic and/or face-to-face formats) among Extension agents, other area, state and national Extension specialists, and community professionals that have an interest in programming for building positive relationships for strong, resilient families.

· Identify regional, statewide and local agencies and foundations that have similar interests as an avenue for collaboration and creative partnerships.

· Work with the above entities for innovative and effective program development (i.e. websites, conferences/camps for targeted audiences, social media, etc.), implementation, evaluation and scholarly dissemination.

Potential and Existing Products

Websites: www.ksre.ksu.edu/families www.ksu.edu/wwparent

Extension professional training on lifespan and family development

FCS lesson and fact sheet titled FamilyTALK: Making It Work

FCS lesson and fact sheet titled Loving Long-Distance: Families Separated by Distance

FCS lesson and fact sheet titled From Awareness to Action: Army Families in Our Communities

FCS lesson and fact sheet titled Stepping Stones for Stepfamilies

Resiliency camps, trainings for military-connected families

Adoption of nationally recognized teen-parent, adolescent family life programs

Other more dated FCS lessons and fact sheets found on the 'families' website

Viva La Familia Sanos - A program for building and maintaining strong Latino marriages and families

Army Family: From Challenge to Resilience - Online professional development class for persons working with military families

Other more dated programs related to couple relationships, stepfamilies, and divorcing parents.

Stronger integration of resource development and training among the FCS Program Focus Teams

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