Program Focus Team Action Plan:

Building Strong Families

2013-2014

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 health than do individuals who live with constant family tension, negative interactions, and disruptions. Indicators of whole family and individual family member stress and disruption include:

- 21% of Kansas children live in poverty (2012 Kansas Kids Count)
- 27% of Kansas children have no parent in the household who works 35 hrs/wk (2012 Kansas Kids Count)
- 41 of every 100,000 teens between the ages of 15-19 die violently each year (2012 Kansas Kids Count)
- 37.7% of all births in Kansas were to unmarried parents as compared to 12.2 % in 1980 (KS Child & Family Wellbeing Indicators, KS Dept. of Children and Families, 2012)
- 25,981 Kansas children enrolled in TANF benefits each month (2012 Kansas Kids Count)
- 6.5% of Kansas veterans deployed after 9/11 experience thoughts of suicide (Army OneSource, 2013)
- In the US, the unemployment rate for post 9/11 veterans is 10% as compared to 8% among civilians (Army OneSource, 2013)
- In Kansas, the rate of children in need of care (ie., protection services) is 8.4 as compared to 5.2 for the nation (Casey Family Programs, 2012)
- Between 5,500 – 8,500 children are receiving foster care services in Kansas (Children's Alliance, 2012).

Although a family's financial advantage is associated with higher marriage rates, less divorce, greater marital happiness, and improved 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. Many Kansas families must cope with repeated transitions, prolonged stress and unstable situations. For example, 636 families were identified as homeless in the 2013 Point-in-Time count. Military families typically 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.

These societal issues impact many aspects of of child and family living such as health and wellness, educational attainment, family member relationships, emotional health and stability, home environments, food consumption, community involvement, and political participation. However, 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, enjoyment with being together, spiritual well-being, and coping abilities in time of stress and crises. Also, research on family and individual resilience in times of stress and crises indicate that attributes of individual resilience include optimism, resourcefulness, and determination. Research has revealed specific practices and patterns for stable and healthy marriages and family member relationships with evidence of positive impact when these skills are taught in culturally appropriate ways. Kansas State Research and Extension is dedicated to providing community leadership for child and family development programming to sustain and improve the lives of inidividuals and their families throughout the state.

Appendix

- The state of Kansas and county marriage and divorce most recent data can be found at: www.kdheks.gov/hci /as/2010/AS_2010.pdf
- Healthy Kansas 2020 data and objectives can be found at: healthykansans2020.com/index.asp#&panel1-1
- Indicators of child well-being in Kansas can be found at: www.kac.org/kac2.aspx?pgID=977
- The State of the Family: Kansas Child and Family Wellbeing Indicators report can be found at: www.dcf.ks.gov/Newsroom/Documents/Childhood-Poverty-Task-Force /State%20of%20the%20Family%20Report%20Child%20and%20Family%20Wellbeing%20Indicators%20by%20Dr%20Jared%20

Public Value:

K-State Extension's Family and Child Development programming contributes to positive family member relationships and social-emotional interactions for strong, sustainable families. The impact of stronger families is fewer divorces, decreased risk of out-of-home placement of children (ie., protective custody, foster care), decreases in family conflict, improved family member emotional stability and well-being. Consequently, stronger families improve the health and well-being of all Kansas communities.

Outcomes:

Short-Term:

Programs will result in short-term outcomes for family members, parents and community members/providers.

- **Family members** will improve their awareness, knowledge and intentions about the six qualities that make families and adult couples strong and resilient:

- showing appreciation and affection toward each other,
- 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** will improve their awareness, knowledge about their role in the lives of their children and will focus on:

- positive parent-child interaction (e.g. support, caring, enjoyment, decrease in hitting and neglect)

- clear and consistent communication (e.g. clear/age-appropriate directions, positive messages, decreased adult harshness, bullying and verbal abuse)

- adaptable and flexible parent practices (e.g. giving age-appropriate choices, age appropriate expectations, decreased stress and anger with parenting)

- effective parental monitoring (e.g. knowing children's activities and friends, and knowing what makes them thrive, using technology effectively and appropriately)

- **Family life educators, providers, family and child workers and community leaders** will increase their awareness, knowledge, understanding and appreciation for:

- effective program planning. implementation and evaluation of child, youth and family programs

- the connection between family member relationships and well-being, creating opportunities to build strong families and healthy family members and community quality of life.

- family systems and child, youth and family development,

- effective program approaches for targeted audiences (e.g, military families, teen-led families, families in

transition, foster families).

Evaluation Questions:

1. **Family member** program participants agree that they have increased awareness, knowledge and intention of/about the six qualities that make families strong and resilient.

2. **Parent** program participants that they have increased awareness, knowledge of/and intend to successfully practice: Positive parent-child interaction; Clear and consistent communication; Adaptable/flexible parenting practices; and Effective parental monitoring.

4. **Family life educators, family and child workers, community leader** program participants agree they have increased awareness and knowledge of: Program planning, implementation, and evaluation of effective child, youth and family programs; Connections between family member relationships and well-being, creating opportunities to build strong families and healthy family members and community quality of life; Family systems and child, youth, family development; Effective program approaches for targeted audiences.

Medium-Term:

Programs will result in medium-term outcomes for family members, parents and community members/providers.

- **Family members** will:

- contribute to each others' well-being.
- contribute to satisfaction in their relationships with each other.
- identify their family's strengths and continue to build upon those strengths.
- identify those areas of their family life which they would like to make a positive impact.
- develop skills that support their resilience during times of stress and adversity.

- **Parents** will practice:

- positive parent-child interaction (e.g. support caring, enjoyment, decrease in hitting and neglect).
- clear and consistent communication (e.g. clear/age-appropriate directions, positive messages, decreased adult harshness, bullying and verbal abuse).
- adaptable/ flexible parenting practices (e.g. giving age-appropriate choices, age appropriate expectations, decreased stress and anger with parenting).
- effective parental monitoring (e.g. knowing children's activities and friends, and knowing what makes them thrive, using technology effectively and appropriately to help with parenting).

- **Family life educators, child and family workers, community leaders** will:

- practice planning, implementation and evaluation of effective child, youth and family programs.
- support connections between family member relationships and well-being, the creation of opportunities that build strong families and healthy family members and community quality of life.

- use their understanding of family systems and child, youth and family development in programming.
- advocate for effective programs for targeted audiences.

Evaluation Questions:

1. Three to six months after completion of the program, **family members** report they have practiced the six qualities that make families strong and family members resilient.

2. Three to six months after completion of the program, **parents** report they have practiced: Positive parent-child interaction; Clear and consistent communication; Adaptable/flexible parenting practices; and Effective parental monitoring.

3. Three to six months after completion of the program, **family life educators, child and family workers and community leaders** report that they have: Strengthened the six qualities of strong families; Supported positive and effective parenting; Conducted program planning, implementation, and evaluation of effective child, youth and family programs; Used practices and programs that support the connections between family member relationships and well-being, creating opportunities to build strong families and healthy family members and improve community quality of life; and Integrated family systems and child, youth, family development in programming; and Advocated for effective program approaches for targeted audiences.

Long-Term:

Strong and resilient Kansas families and family members who consistently exhibit positive family relationships, resilience and health, and who strengthen the family lives of others.

Evaluation Questions:

After the program has been completed, [insert number of] Kansas families and family members have improved their family relationships and are stronger more resilient (ie. able to 'bounce-back' in spite of adversity).

Outputs:

Program Participants

- Families, individual family members and adult couples.
- Parents and guardians/care-givers of children (e.g., foster parents)
- Family life educators, child and family workers, community leaders.

Programs

(Evidence-based programs)

1) Together We Can: Creating a Healthy Future for our Family

- Prepares unmarried parents to set goals to promote and create a healthy future for their children
- Helps unmarried couples establish positive co-parenting relationships
- Ensures on-going and sustained involvement of both parents
- Encourages on-going payment of child support and other tangible supports
- Prepares couples to make healthy decisions for their children

[Suitable for teen parents, teen couples]

2) **Kansas Rock Solid: social emotional education for school-age children to early adolescence**

- Adapts the University of Nebraska's Rock Solid Foundation's curriculum which is built on concepts from the Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)
- Integrates concepts from the national Collaborative for Academic, Social Emotional Learning (CASEL)
- Supports the Kansas school social emotional learning standards

[Suitable for parents and family life educators, child and family workers, providers and community leaders]

3) **Stepping Stones for Stepfamilies**

- Helps couples navigate the dynamics and normal challenges of stepfamily relations, management and parenting. Includes a six-lesson home study course, a teaching guide with video/DVD and participant fact sheets, and a comprehensive training manual for community family life educators.

4) **Viva La Familia Sanos (Long Live the Healthy Family!)**

- An interactive program for building and maintaining strong Latino marriages and families. Includes leader training, Powerpoint masters, evaluation surveys, certificate of completion and instructional manual for community family life educators to deliver a four-lesson series in groups. All available on the Families! website.

5) **Advancing Youth Development (AYD)**

- Derived from the national 6-city BEST project to train youth development professionals, AYD is a 7 module, comprehensive training program for providers, youth workers and community leaders on adolescent development. The Cornell University curriculum is taught to groups in a total of 12 hours or can be broken into hourly modules.

[Suitable for family life educators, child and family workers, providers and community leaders]

6) **Kansas Operation Military Kids: OMK (family camps and community engagement, capacity building)**

- Serving military-connected families and youth across Kansas, OMK provides community-level training, workshops and activities for military-connected youth and families. Providers and community leaders can request presentations about the military culture and developing resilience among military youth. Kansas OMK family camps and retreats are organized to give families time to learn new skills, recharge after deployments and prolonged absences and strengthen family member resilience.

[Suitable for parents and family life educators, child and family workers, providers and community leaders]

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(Evidence-informed, minimal commitment - such as 1 hr/1 session - programs)

- Family Change: Separation and Divorce (Olsen, C.)
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- CoupleTalk: Enhancing Your Relationships (Olsen, C.)

- Breaking the Code: Understanding and Preventing Teen Bullying* [series program and FCS lesson] (Johannes, E. & Hartman, A.)

- FamilyTalk: Making it Work* (Olsen, C.)

- From Awareness to Action: Army Families in our Communities* (Johannes, E., Olsen, C., & Domsch, A.)

- Loving Long-Distance: Families Separated by Distance* (Bishop, E. & Olsen, C.)

- PeopleTalk (Olsen, C.)*

- Seize the Moment! Bonding Thru Board Games * [proposed for 2014] (Brunscheen-Cartagena, L.)

- When Words Become Weapons: Verbal Abuse Awareness and Prevention (Johannes, E.)*

*FCS lessons include leader training, teaching guides, fact sheets, evaluations and other support materials

Educational Products

Websites:

www.ksre.ksu.edu/families (Kansas Extension Families website)

www.ksu.edu/wwparent (Wonder Wise Parent)

www.ksu.edu/wwparent.games/index.htm (Wonder Wise Parent Board Games)

www. cyfernet.org (national Extension Children, Youth and Family Education and Research network website)

Supplies:

Board Game samples

OMK - bags, displays

Building Strong Families - displays, info cards

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