

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE
REGION 2

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES PROGRAM

Program Evaluation Report

2001-2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

The Community Resources for Families Program (CRFF) is a collaborative, school-based service program between the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) and individual school districts throughout Region 2 in the state of Idaho. During the 2001-2002 school year the program served 27 schools in 9 school districts in Region 2.

Two kinds of intervention were performed, a) Assessment and Referral Services (AR services), and b) Emergency Assistance Services (EA services). AR services are 30-day interventions designed to assess family needs, and then to refer and assist in connecting the family with community and school resources. During this time, Community Resource Workers (CRWs) help families locate sources of support to fill their family needs on an individual basis. During the 2001-2002 school year, 412 families received AR services in Region 2.

A second type of service, Emergency Assistance (EA) services, provided an additional 90-day intervention with families who continued to have needs. During this second phase of service, actual dollars were provided to assist the family with needs. Although the total amount of dollars spent on any one family is minimal - the average across Region 2 was \$324 per family per year - the impact of the money was significant. In Region 2, 197 families received EA services with actual funding during the 2001-02 program year.

A program effectiveness evaluation was undertaken to assess the ability of the Region 2 CRFF program to achieve its stated goals, namely:

1. Increase the safety and well-being of children
2. Increase the school readiness of children
3. Increase the self-reliance of families.

To accomplish the evaluation, a regionally distributed, convenience sample of families who had received A&R and EA services during the 2001-2002 school year was chosen from Region 2 caseloads. The sample families were contacted by CRWs to obtain a signed consent to participate in the study. Data were subsequently collected in October, 2002 from 65 families. Data included parent/guardian interviews, teacher, principal, or counselor interviews, case file analysis, and from CRWs evaluations of client progress. The parent/guardian reports of contacts made during and after the service period provided a family-orientated approach to evaluating services.

Evaluation Findings

1. Family Characteristics:

- 55% of the families were two-parent families or families with two adults in the home.
- 43% of the families were single parents.
- 74% of the families surveyed earned less than \$15,480 per year.
- 78% of the families reported that employment was an issue either at entry into the program or became an issue during the time of service.

- Families averaged 2.7 children per family.
- 68% of the families indicated that housing was a problem at the time of referral.
- 77% of the families in this study had not had TAFI (cash assistance) from state, federal, or tribal funds prior to referral to the program.

2. Service Needs

- 37% of referred families had financial needs
- 23% of families had housing needs
- 21% of referrals were for major schooling issues
- 17% of referrals were for health needs

3. Program Effectiveness Findings

Summary of Child Safety and Well-Being Measures

The overall picture of increases in child safety and well-being as a result of referral to the CRW program is one of an increased safety net for children. The families in this sample displayed:

- an increased ability to help their children participate in school and community activities.
- an increased access to health insurance.
- an increased ability to meet the basic physical and emotional needs of children.
- an increased and continued connection to community agencies to get their basic emotional, physical, and recreational needs met.

Summary of School Readiness Measures:

Data indicates that the Community Resources Program strongly impacted school readiness.

- The percent of failing grades out of total grades decreased significantly ($p > .001$) from 38% of grades to 20% of grades for those children who had failing grades as a referral issue.
- 66% of parents indicated that their children had participated in new after school activities.
- In 81% of the cases, the intervention increased the child's likelihood of school success, as rated by teachers.

School personnel indicated that:

- In 71% of the cases, the intervention had successfully supported the child in improving or maintaining school performance.
- In 61% of the cases, the intervention had successfully increased the child's school attendance.
- In 87% of the cases, the intervention had successfully supported the child's improved behavior.
- In 29% of the cases, educational staff predicted that the program has successfully precluded the need for special education or special programs funding, thus potentially saving districts up to \$60,000 per year.
- Building principal interviews indicated that the program is seen as supporting the school mission and school improvement plans.

Summary of Self-Reliance Measures:

Data related to families being able to provide for the basic living and emotional needs of children indicates that sample families achieved strong outcomes in terms of promoting family self-reliance. Data show that:

- 33% of those families referred for employment purposes found new employment.
- 23% increased their employment situation as a result of services.
- 95% of those families needing housing accomplished that goal.
- 27% of the families needing housing reported that their housing situation was upgraded as a result of services.
- 100% of the families without health insurance applied for insurance either during or after service.
- Families averages 2 community contacts after services had ended, with 61% of those contacts relating to self-reliance needs.

Evaluation Summary

This study looked at the data of 65 families chosen out of a caseload of 412 families served by the DHW Region 2 Community Resources for Families Program in 2001-2002. Data show that the program effectively met its goals by delivering services that were aligned closely with 1) the needs of families; 2) the learning readiness and safety needs of referred children; and 3) the needs of schools to leave no child behind in school success because of unmet basic needs.