

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE
REGION 2

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES PROGRAM

Program Evaluation Study

2001-2002

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INTRODUCTION

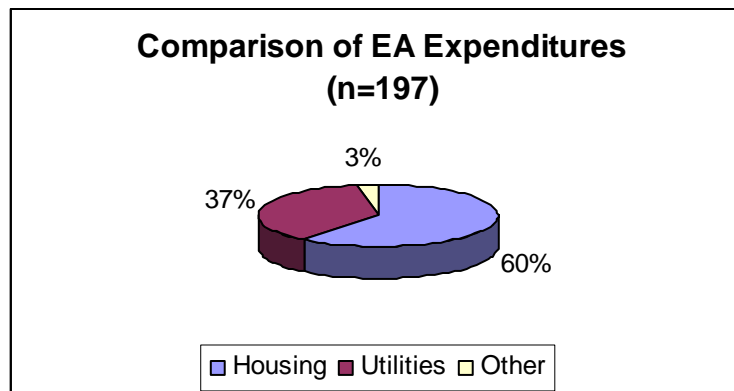
The Community Resources For Families Program (CRFF) is a collaborative, school-based services program between the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) and individual school districts throughout the Region 2 in the state of Idaho. During the 2001-2002 school year the program served 27 schools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

The Community Resources for Families Program is staffed by Community Resource Workers (CRWs), social workers who are hired by school districts under a collaborative funding agreement between independent school districts and Idaho DHW. Throughout the region, 12 CRWs co-located in 27 schools, where they worked with school principals, counselors, and teachers to first identify and then connect with children who displayed evidence of physical or emotional needs arising outside of the school environment. The CRWs hold master's degrees in social work, psychology or counseling, or are licensed social workers in Idaho.

The CRWs deliver two kinds of services: 1) Assessment and Referral Services (AR services), and 2) Emergency Assistance Services (EA services). AR services are a 30-day intervention designed to assess family needs, refer and assist in connecting the family with community and school resources. During AR services a great deal of the CRWs time was spent helping families connect with community resources to support the needs of family members. In this ecologically intensive intervention program the CRWs helped families locate sources of support to fill their family needs on an individual basis. During the 2001-2002 school year approximately 412 families received AR services in Region 2.

A second type of service, Emergency Assistance (EA) services, provided an additional 90-day intervention with the family. During this phase of service actual dollars were provided to assist the family with needs. This unique aspect of the Community Resources for Families program allowed CRWs the ability to access EA funding to support families. Although the total amount of dollars spent on any one family was minimal - the average across Region 2 was \$324 per family per year - the impact of the money was significant. Families were supported in choosing areas they needed to improve, and then in learning how to sustain their improvements after the 90 days of service. In Region 2 approximately 197 families received EA services with actual funding. The chart below depicts how families utilized the funding primarily for housing needs.

Chart 1. Comparison of Emergency Assistance Expenditures (n=197)



A program effectiveness evaluation was undertaken to assess this program's to achievement of 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 having received A&R and EA services during the 2001-2002 school year was chosen from Region 2 caseloads. CRWs contacted these families and obtained their signed consent to participate in the study. The data were subsequently collected included parent/guardian interviews, teacher, principal, or counselor interviews, case file analysis, and CRW evaluations of client progress. The parent's reports of contacts made during and after the service period provided a family-orientated approach to evaluating services.

This report describes the data collected from this sample, and the extent to which the Community Resources for Families Program met the program goals. Part I describes the sample family characteristics, and Part II asks study questions of each of the three goal areas. Part III presents the findings from data analysis, and Part IV describes the study conclusion resulting from data analysis.

PART 1: DESCRIPTION OF STUDY SAMPLE

The sample for this outcome study was composed of 65 families across Region 2. The sample represents approximately 11% of the total number of families receiving Community Resource services during the period. All of the families in this sample received EA services, as compared to 48% of families who received EA services region-wide. Therefore, the evaluation findings for these families may not be accurate representations of the larger client population. However, the sample represents 33% of the population receiving EA services; therefore evaluation findings may be more representative of the EA population region wide than of the total population.

The following statements and charts further describe the sample.

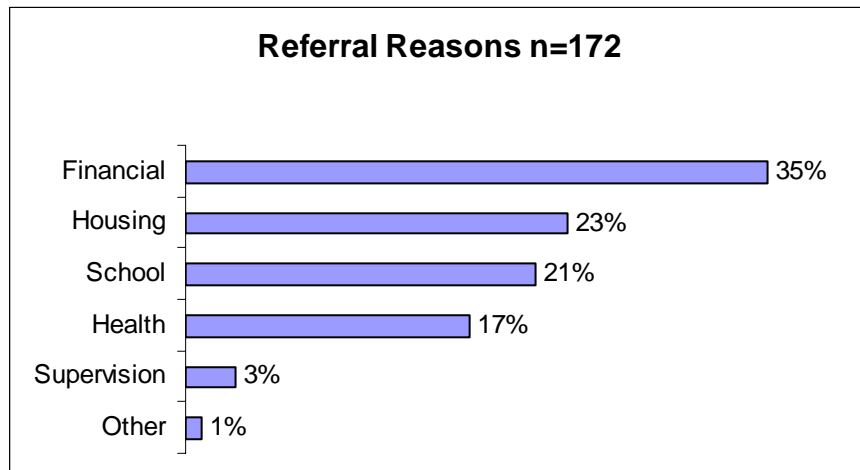
1. Family Characteristics:

- 55% of the families were two-parent families or families with two adults in the home.
- 43% 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. Referral Reasons for Sample Families: Referrals to the Community Resources program were categorized into eight major areas. CRWs indicated that families were referred for anywhere from 1 to 5 reasons. Families averaged 2.6 referral reasons. The results show that the number one referral reason was financial, which included a) money management and budgeting,

b) utilities, household items, c) employment, and d) transportation. Housing needs, the second most common referral reason, included a) rent, b) security deposit, and c) homelessness. For this study, three school referral reasons (behavior, attendance and academic performance) were aggregated into one category. These aggregated school reasons represented 21% of the total. Health and physical concerns was the fourth most frequent referral category. Supervision and care issues, including parenting, daycare, safety, domestic violence and custody issues, was the next largest referral category.

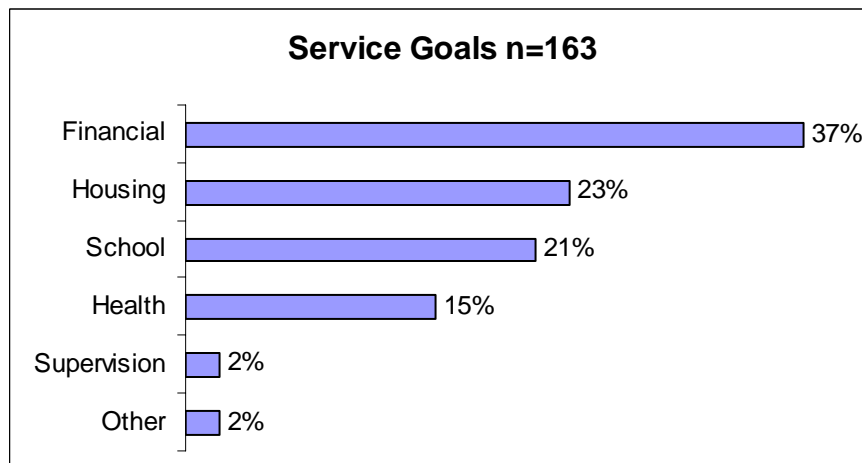
Chart 2. Referral Reasons. (n=172)



Because families could be referred for more than one major issue, it was possible to track the total number of referral issues across families. Data show that 95% of the families had financial issues and 62% of the families had housing needs. Fifteen percent of the families indicated EA services helped them avoid an eviction.

3. Service Goals Set for Sample Families: Service goals were set for each of the families as they entered the program. The following chart illustrates that the most common goals; the school goal includes attendance, grades, and behavior:

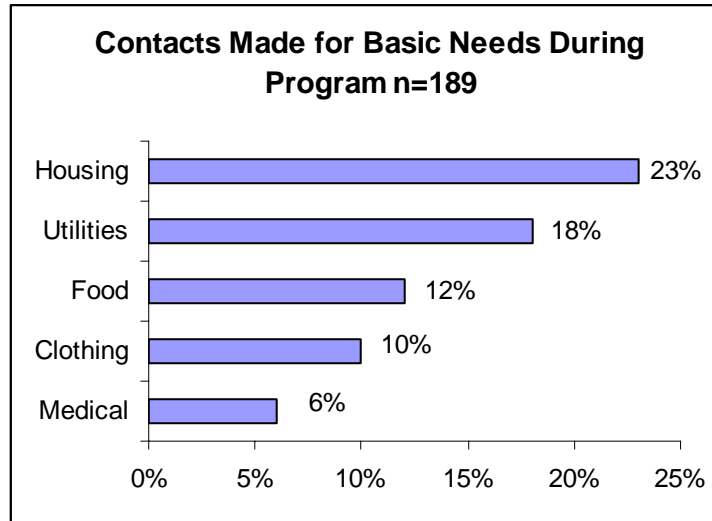
Chart 3. Service Goals.



4. Types of Services or Agencies Contacted During the Service Period: In the sample of 65 families, a total of 274 contacts were reported during the service period. The first category of

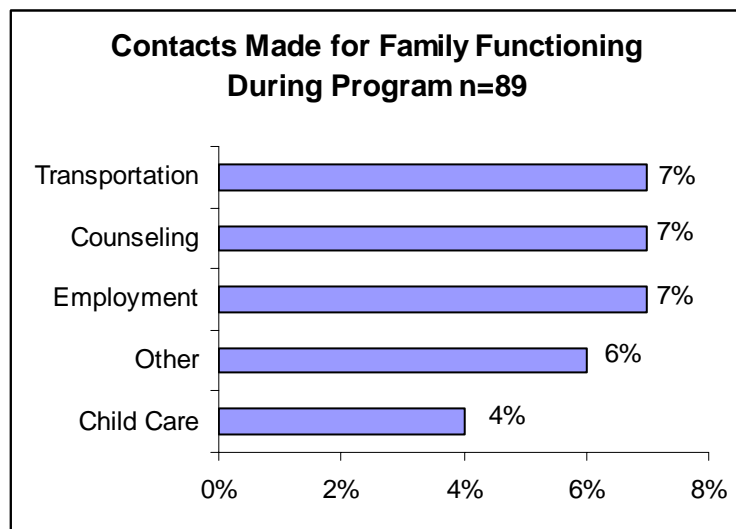
service contacts is labeled Basic Needs Contacts. This category included assistance with basic needs such as housing, utilities, food, clothing and medical assistance. Sixty nine percent of family initiated contacts involved getting basic needs met, as seen below:

Chart 4. Types of Basic Need Services Contacted by Sample Families During the Service Period.



A second category of services needed by the sample families was family function. This category included employment, counseling for family members, childcare and transportation to work, medical, or educational services. Thirty one percent of family needs involved contacting services or agencies to assist with family functioning.

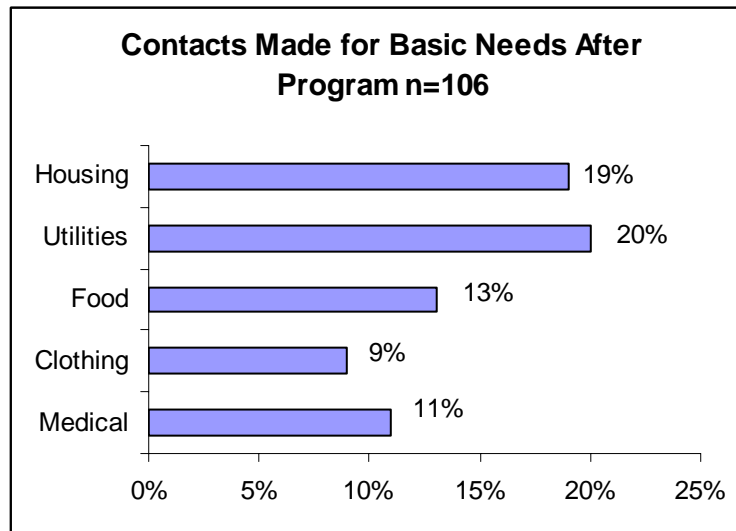
Chart 5. Family Functioning Services Contacted by Families During the Service Period.



5. Types of Services or Agencies Contacted After the Service Period: A final way of illustrating the families served in this sample is by showing the types of services or agencies families reported contacting after their service period ended. In the sample of 65 families, a total of 148 contacts were reported after the service period. This represents 54% of the number of contacts made during the service period. The types of services are again grouped into two categories. 1.) Services contacted for basic needs, and 2.) Services contacted to help the family

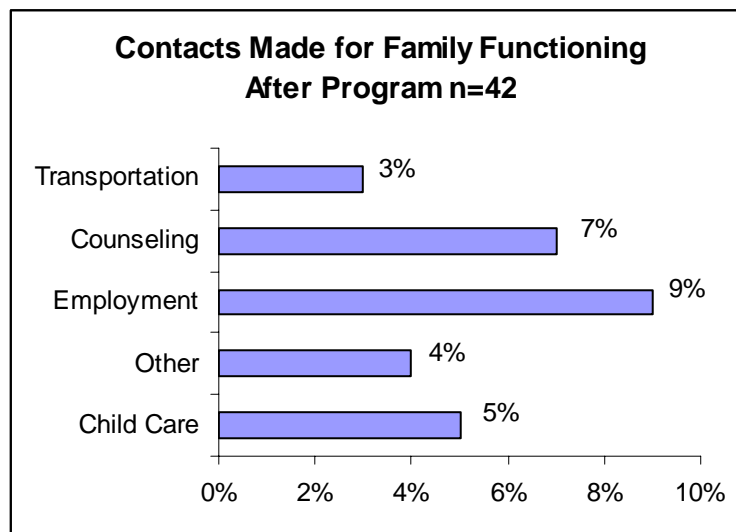
function as a unit. Seventy two percent of these post-service family contacts were to meet basic needs met, as seen below:

Chart 6. Types of Basic Need Services Contacted by Sample Families After the Service Period.



Additionally, families made 28% of the total post-program contacts to meet their family functioning needs. Chart 7 shows the breakdown of this category of contacts.

Chart 7. Types of Services for Family Functioning Contacted by Sample Families After the Service Period.



Summary Profile of Families in the Study Sample

The data above indicate that the families in the study sample were for the most part:

- Making less than \$16,000 per year
- Two-parent families or with two adults in the home
- Relied on Medicaid or CHIP for their primary health insurance coverage (84%).
- Averaged 2.7 children who were experiencing difficulties being successful in school due to family living situations rather than learning difficulties
- Had basic living needs such as housing, utilities, food, and clothing, in addition to family support needs such as child support, transportation, and counseling
- Had not experienced a CPS referral during the service period (88%)
- Had not received TAFI or Tribal TAFI before being referred to the program (77%)

PART 2: STUDY FINDINGS

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Community Resources for Families Program by looking at outcomes achieved by a sample of families served during the 2000-2002 program year. Below, the findings of the investigation are described in light of the questions posed around the program goals.

Study Question #1: To what degree has the program been successful in helping sample families gain, sustain, or increase a climate of safety for their children?

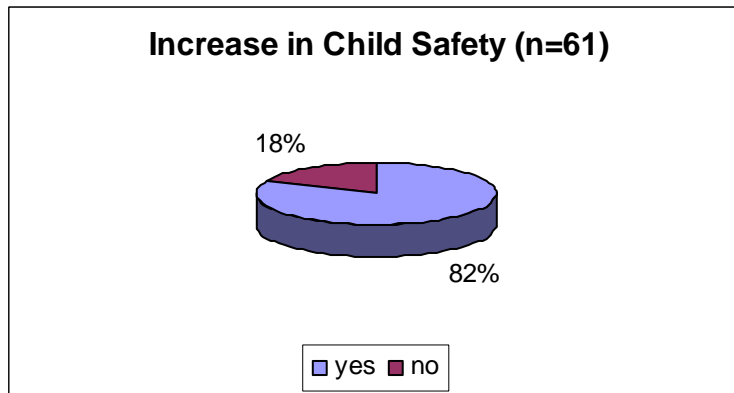
To answer this question, the study looked at five measures related to child safety and well-being.

- How the CRWs rated the family at the end of service in terms of child safety outcomes.
- How many of the sample families had received a CPS referral since service.
- The family's access to medical insurance.
- The types of post-service connections families were able to make with community agencies to get child well-being needs met.
- The extent to which children were connected to activities in the school and the community.

A. Outcome Measures as Rated by CRW Case Worker

Individual CRWs were asked to indicate at the end of service if the level of Child Safety, Family Self-Reliance, and School Readiness had increased as a result of the services provided. Complete data was available for 61 families. Chart 8 on the next page shows that CRWs across Region 2 perceived a marked increase (82%) in child safety by the end of the service period.

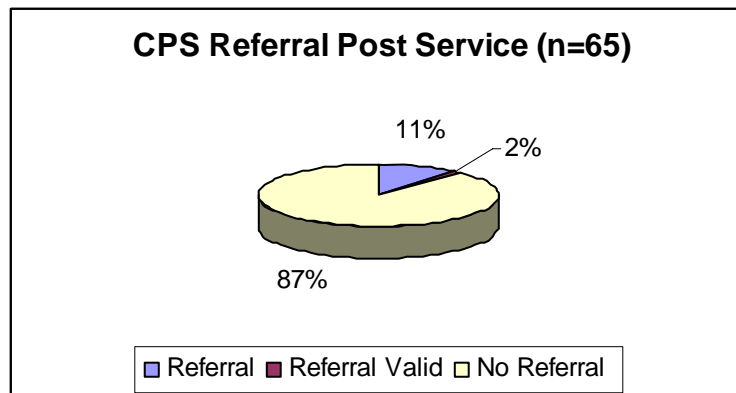
Chart 8. CRWs Perception of Increase in Level of Child Safety.



B. Number of Families Receiving Previous or Subsequent CPS Referrals

Out of a sample of families who received services, 8 of the families, or just over 11%, received a referral to CPS between the beginning of services and October 2002. One CPS referral, representing 2% of the sample, was found to be valid by CPS workers.

Chart 9. CPS Referrals After Service Period.



C. Family Access to Medical Services

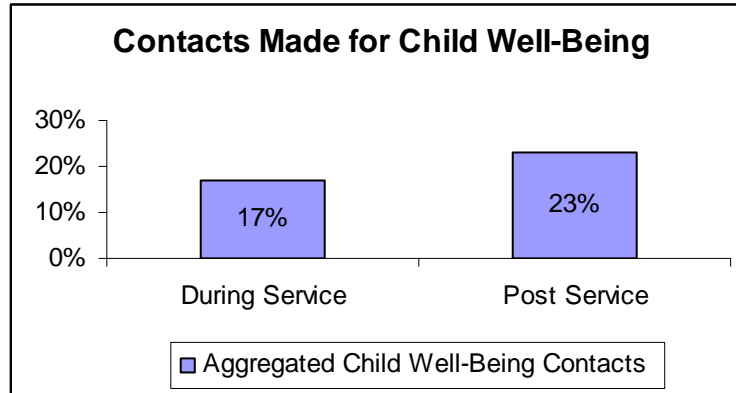
Another measurement of child well-being used in this study was the access children had to medical treatment. Out of a sample of 65 families, 88% had access to health insurance at the beginning of services. By the end of service, 100% of the families in the sample had applied for health insurance.

D. Family Connections to Community Agencies

Another measure of child safety and well-being comes from the types of connections families were able to make with community agencies to get family needs met. For this study, data was collected from parents as to the types of community connections made during the service period and after the end of services. Sample families made an average of four community contacts each during the time they received services, and averaged another two community contacts between the end of service and October 2002. By aggregating childcare, counseling and medical

connections, 23% of the community connections made by families after services were completed related to child safety and well-being, representing an increase of 5% over the service period. The chart below depicts the sample families' responses.

Chart 11. Comparison of Contacts Made for Child Well-Being During Services (n=47) and Post Services (n=35)



E. Connections to Community/School Activities

Children referred to the CRW program typically have few connections to school or community activities as a part of their routine life activities. A measure of child safety and well-being for this study was the extent referred children became involved in activities outside of the school day, in which they have previously not been involved. Sixty six percent of the parents and guardians indicated their children participated in an activity at school or in the community that they hadn't participated in before. Activities included various kids clubs; church groups; park and recreation programs; after school programs including parent/child activities; and school activities including sports, cheerleading, counseling, tutoring, band, choir, and mentoring programs.

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.**

Study Question #2: To what extent did the Community Resources for Families program increase school readiness among children served by the program?

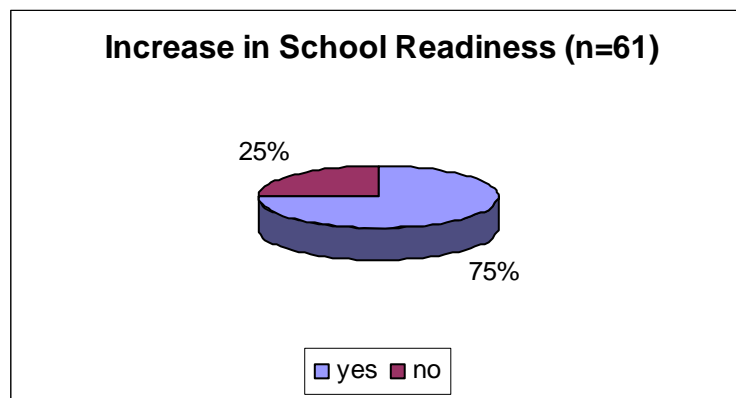
To answer this question, the study looked at five measures related to promoting school readiness.

- How the CRWs rated the family at the end of service in terms of child school readiness outcomes.
- Ratings obtained from interviewing school teachers, principals, and counselors on the progress made by children in the areas of academics, attendance and behavior.
- Ratings obtained from interviewing school teachers, principals, and counselors on the overall effectiveness of the program in supporting children toward school success.
- The extent to which children were connected to activities in the school and the community.
- Pre-post comparisons of the percentage of failing, unsuccessful, or not-at-grade-level grades received by students in the sample.

A. Outcome Measures as Rated by CRW Case Workers

Individual CRWs were asked to indicate if the level of School Readiness had increased as a result of working with families. Complete data was available on 61 families in the sample. The following chart shows that CRWs across Region 2 perceived a marked increase (75%) in school readiness after the service period.

Chart 12. CRWs Perception of Increase in School Readiness



B. Interviews with School Personnel on Grades, Attendance and Behavior

School personnel were interviewed to collect data about the progress made by individual client children. In the table below, the first measurement relates to children who had been referred to the program for specific reasons such as grades, attendance, and school behavior. The second measurement relates to the teacher's perception of general student performance as influenced by their participation in the Community Resources program. Table 1 on the next page shows the questions and results for students referred to the program for Low Grades.

The program appears to have had a positive impact on academics since 71% of children referred because of low grades made improvements after services. Fifty-nine percent of those students were still achieving acceptable levels of academic performance at the time of data collection in the fall of 2002. It should be noted that all services ended before the summer of 2002, thus improvements perceived by teachers persisted over the summer months.

Table 1. Students Referred for Low Grades.

Data Category: Low Grades (n=68)	Percent of Cases
Were low grades a referral issue or did they become an issue during service?	Yes=25%
If yes, was there an improvement after service?	Yes=71%
If low grades were a concern, is this student achieving at an acceptable level at this time?	Yes=59%

The next table shows the disposition of children referred to the program for attendance reasons. The program appears to have had a positive impact on attendance, in that 61% of children referred to the program for attendance reasons made improvement after service, and 72% of those students maintained their improvements through the middle of the first semester of the next school year.

Table 2. Students Referred for Attendance Problems.

Data Category: Attendance (n=68)	Percent of Cases
Was attendance a referral reason or did it become an issue during service?	Yes=28%
If yes, was there an improvement after services were provided?	Yes=61%
If attendance was a concern, is this student's attendance acceptable at this time?	Yes=72%

Students were also rated on their improvements in school behavior as a result of service. The table below indicates that 87% of children referred for behavior made improvements and that those improvements continued into the next school year.

Table 3. Students Referred for Behavior Problems.

Data Category: School Behavior (n=68)	Percent of Cases
Was poor behavior a referral reason or did it become an issue during service?	Yes=24%
If yes, was there an improvement in behavior after services were provided?	Yes=87%
If behavior was a concern, is this student's behavior acceptable at this time?	Yes=87%

C. Interviews with School Personnel on the Overall Effectiveness of the Program

School personnel (principals, teachers, counselors) were also asked to rate the overall program effectiveness in supporting client children toward school success. Complete data for this question was available for 61 cases. The table below indicates school personnel positively rated the program at 3.23 out of a possible 4 in terms of supporting children in improving or maintaining school performance. In 79% of the cases, school personnel agreed to strongly agreed the intervention had successfully supported the child in improving or maintaining school performance. School personnel were also asked to rate the overall program effectiveness in improving the student's chance of being successful in school this year. Complete data for this question was available for 58 cases. School personnel rated the program at 3.26 out of a possible 4 in terms of improving a child's chance of being successful in school this year. In 81% of the

cases school personnel agreed to strongly agreed that the student had an improved chance of being successful in school this year as a result of the intervention.

Table 4. Effectiveness of Intervention on Improving/Maintaining School Performance.

Interview Statement	Mean level of Response (4=strongly agree)	Standard Deviation
The 90-day intervention successfully support this child in improving or maintaining school performance. (n=61)	3.23	.86
As a result of the intervention, this student has an improved chance of being successful in school this year. (n=58)	3.26	.76

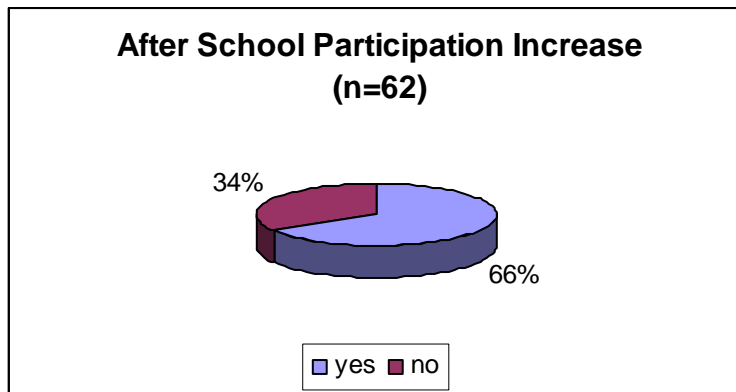
D. Referral to Special Education or Special Needs Funding

School personnel were asked about the likelihood that individual children would have required special education services or future special needs funding if the program had not been able to serve these children. Complete data for this question was available for 68 cases, 25 of which were already utilizing special needs funds. School personnel agreed to strongly agreed that 29% of the eligible cases would have required special education or special needs funds to support the student if the intervention had not occurred. Potentially, this represents an educational savings of approximately \$60,000 to the schools involved, using a baseline of \$5,000 per special education child.

E. Connections to Community/School Activities

Children who attend after school activities have an increased ability to succeed in school due to the additional adult role models and their capacity for relationship building around learning activities. A measure of school readiness for this study was the extent to which referred children became involved in activities outside of the school day in which they had previously not been involved. Parents reported that their children became involved in school and YMCA homework clubs, obtained tutors, and participated in a wide assortment of enrichment and recreational activities during and after service. The chart below indicates substantial increases in parental reports of school participation on the part of their children.

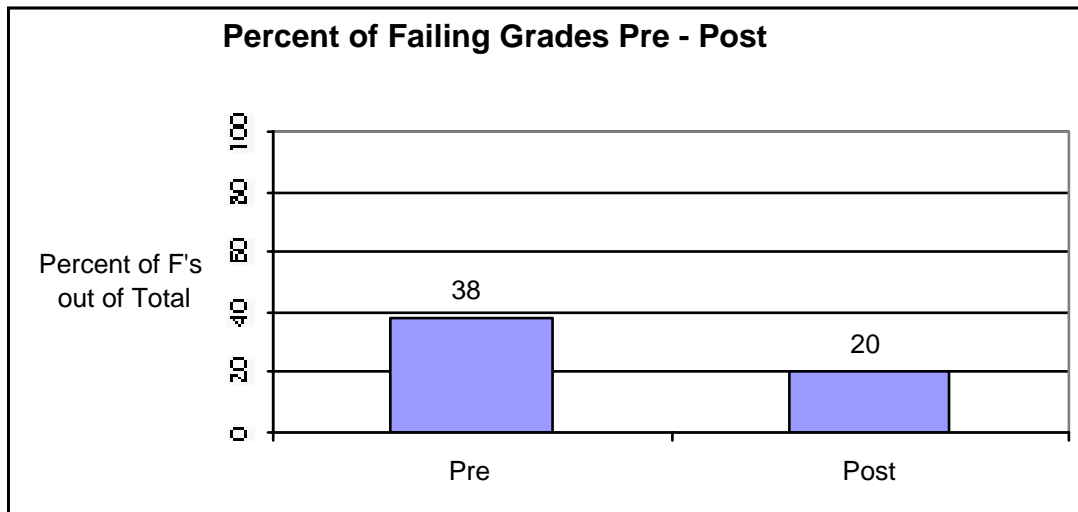
Chart 13. Parental Report of Children’s Increase in School and Community Activities



F. Pre-Post Measures of School Failure Indicators

School final (spring) report cards were collected for the children in the sample families. Twenty five of the children were referred for school reasons, mostly failing grades. At the elementary level, being "unsuccessful" or "in need of improvement" translates into failing grades. A pre-post analysis of the grades, using either the first or second quarter of the school year as "pre", and the fourth or final grade as the "post," indicated that children served by the program made significant ($p < .001$) decreases in the percentage of failing grades pre-post. The mean pre rate of 38% failing grades decreased to a post rate 20% of the failing grades at the end of the school year.

Chart 14. Pre-Post Grades



G. Building Principal Interviews

Seven building principals were interviewed to measure the impact the relationships CRWs built with families had on schools as institutions. Findings included the following:

- Building principals identified meeting the child's basic needs as a critical piece of coming to school ready to learn.
- The CRWs were seen as staff members who built comfortable relationships with families, which helped families come to the school more often and be more supportive of school success.
- CRWs stabilized families, which helped families stay in one place so children could attend one school.
- CRWs supported the school mission when basic needs were met and children were able to be successful in school.
- CRWs support the school mission when a positive relationship helps families see school as important.
- CRWs supported the school improvement plan by getting children to school so they could meet academic goals.
- CRWs provided services that the school couldn't otherwise provide, such as connections to community resources, assistance in family emergencies, and getting parents to informational and training groups.

Principals were also asked to rate the effectiveness of the Community Resources for Families Program in two areas. The table below indicates that principals perceived the program to be highly effective in both areas.

Table 5. Principals' Effectiveness Rating (n=6)

Interview Statement	Mean level of Response (5=high)	Standard Deviation
How effective is this program in increasing the learning readiness of children?	4.7	.5
How effective is this program in increasing the school connection of families served by the program?	4.8	.4

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% 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 the following:

- **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 supported the child school attendance.**
- **In 87% of the cases, the intervention had successfully supported the child's improved behavior.**
- **In 29% of the eligible cases, if the intervention had not occurred, special education or special funds would have become necessary to support the student.**

Study Question #3: To what extent did the Community Resources for Families program increase the self-reliance of families who were referred to the program and who received support from the CRWs?

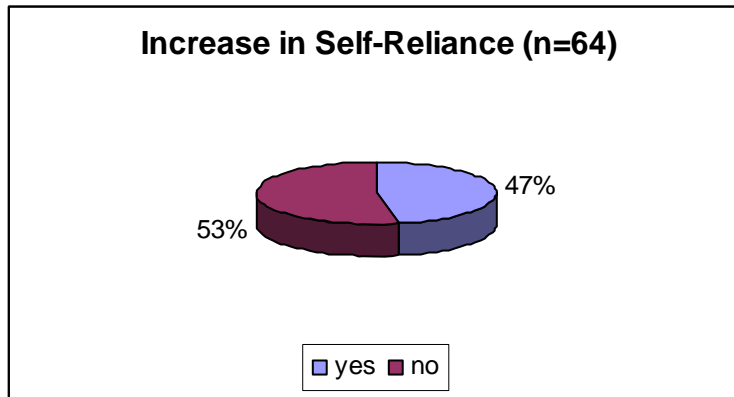
To answer this question, the study looked at three measures related to increasing self-reliance.

- How the CRWs rated the families at the end of service in terms of increasing self-reliance.
- Increases in 1.) employment, 2.) increases and/or upgrading of housing facilities, and 3.) increases in health insurance among client families as reported by parents.
- The number of community agencies contacted by clients during and after services as reported by parents.

A. Outcome Measures as Rated by CRW Case Worker

Individual CRWs were asked to indicate if the level of Family Self-Reliance had increased as a result of the services provided. Complete data was available on 64 families in the sample. The following chart shows that CRWs across Region 2 perceived an increase in self-reliance (47%) after the service period.

Chart 14. CRWs Perception of Increase in Self-Reliance



B. Increases in Employment, Housing and Access to Health Insurance in Sample Families

Families included in the study were interviewed to collect information pertaining to employment, housing and health insurance access prior to and after services by the CRW 's. Data from the sample used for this study indicate sample families achieved increased self-reliance around providing for the basic living needs of their children. The table below reflects increased employment, acquisition and/or upgrades in housing, and increased access to health insurance across the sample.

Table 6. Increased Employment, Housing Conditions and Access to Health Support.

Basic Need	Percentage of Families with Need	Percentage of Families with Need Reporting Services Fulfilled Need	Percentage of Families with Need Reporting Services Upgraded Situation
Employment (n=62)	77%	33%	23%
Housing (n=65)	68%	95%	27%
Health Insurance (n=65)	12%	100%	N/A

B. Number of Community Agencies and Services Contacted by Clients During and After the Service Period

One measure of self-reliance comes from the number of connections families were able to make with community agencies to get basic family needs met. Sample families made 4 community

contacts each during the time they received services. By aggregating the connections made for housing, utilities, food and clothing, 63% of the contacts made by families during the service period related to self-reliance. Families continued to make community contacts on their own after services ended. Data show that the sample families averaged 2 community contacts each between the end of services during the 2001-02 school year and October, 2002. Sixty one percent of those contacts related to self-reliance issues.

Summary of Self-Reliance Measures:

Data used for this regarding providing for the basic living and emotional needs of children indicates that sample families achieved strong self-reliance outcomes. Data reflect the following:

- **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 averaged 2 community contacts after services had ended, with 61% of those contacts relating to self-reliance needs.**

PART 3: STUDY CONCLUSIONS

This study has looked at data from a regionally distributed convenience sample of 65 families served during 2001-2002 by the Community Resources for Families program in Region 2. The data was used to examine the effectiveness of the program in meeting the following goals:

1. Increased child safety and well-being for Idaho youth
2. Increased school readiness
3. Increased self-reliance for families referred to the program.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the data displayed above:

1. Child safety and well-being was actively promoted by the Community Resources for Families program. The integration of the program into the school setting allowed school personnel to make appropriate referrals for children who were under-performing in school due to environmental influences. Many of the referral reasons related to getting the basic physical and emotional needs of children met, and data support the conclusion that the program was successful in helping families learn to provide for these needs.

Data also show that the sample parents themselves were active agents in meeting these needs. Families made multiple contacts with community agencies as a result of working with the program. These contacts included health, counseling and child care services in addition to the more basic needs for food, clothing and housing.

Data support a conclusion that the program was effective in providing for the safety and well-being needs of vulnerable referred children. One of the goals of the programs was to prevent entry or re-entry into the Child Protection System. In this sample, 12% of the families experienced a CPS referral while receiving services, with only one family having a valid referral. This represents an overall picture of an increased safety net for children.

2. *School Readiness was another program goal that was met by this program.* Between 61% and 87% of the students referred to the program for grades, attendance, behavior or lack of parent/guardian participation were evaluated by school personnel as having made improvement as a result of the program. In addition, between 59% and 87% of those students were rated as having acceptable performance at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year, after the summer break. In addition, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of failing grades on the part of students for whom failing grades was a referral reason.

School personnel also highly rated the program in a) its general ability to support children in successful learning, and b) its ability to increase student success in school. School personnel indicated 10 of the referred children may have needed special education or special needs support in the future, if this program had not helped their families improve living conditions. In addition, school principals indicated that the program was effective in reaching its goals and in supporting the school in reaching its mission and improvement plans. The results of this study indicate that the school readiness of referred children was effectively enhanced by the Community Resources for Families program.

3. *The goal of increasing the self-reliance of referred families was met by this program.* Evidence shows that families in this program learned to make community connections to support their own needs in areas such as health, employment, housing and medical needs. CRWs guided families in making connections with their communities to assist with a wide variety of family needs. CRWs kept track of the number of agencies they contacted during and after services. In the 65 cases, a total of 426 separate contacts were made during and after services for an average of 6.5 contacts per family.

For this program, self-reliance is more than families learning to make community contacts to receive services. According to the data, self-reliance is also about recognizing the need for different types of services to help children be healthy and safe. Data show that parents continued after services ended to contact a variety of community agencies to support the physical and emotional needs of children. In addition, 66% of the sample families indicated their children had increased participation in community or after school activities as a result of the intervention.

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.