



Summarized Key Findings: Child Welfare Outcomes and Data Findings

Partnership for Strong Families

Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families Grant Project Period: October 1, 2019 – September 29, 2024

Introduction

This summary presents key findings from the Child Welfare System Outcomes report, which evaluates the impact of Family Resource Centers (FRCs) operated by Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) in Gainesville and Lake City, Florida. The primary goal was to assess how FRC engagement influences child welfare outcomes, including verified maltreatment, out-of-home placements, and other indicators of child welfare involvement. Key findings from qualitative data collected is also highlighted

Child Welfare Outcomes: Types of Analysis Conducted

A mixed-methods approach was employed to evaluate the impact of FRCs on child welfare outcomes, including the following types of analysis:

- **Verified Maltreatment Trends:**
 - Examined the rates of verified child maltreatment per 1,000 children using data from the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) and U.S. Census Bureau.
 - Analysis compared FRC-served areas to non-FRC areas over the study period.
- **Out-of-Home Placement Trends:**
 - Assessed rates of out-of-home placements per 1,000 children, also using FSFN and Census Bureau data.
 - Comparison included pre- and post-engagement evaluations for patrons who received FRC services.



- Individual Patron Analysis:
 - Data from 169 consenting patrons who authorized the evaluation team to examine their previous child welfare system involvement was reviewed.
 - Detailed records were available for 76 of these patrons, enabling comprehensive analysis of their interactions with the child welfare system.
 - Analysis focused on changes in child welfare involvement before and after engagement with FRCs.
- Statistical Analysis:
 - Paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare pre- and post-engagement outcomes for patrons receiving FRC services.
 - Statistical significance was measured at $p < .001$ for various metrics, highlighting meaningful and statistically significant reductions in child welfare system involvement.

Time Frames of Analysis

The analysis conducted for this report covered child welfare history spanning a period from 2006 to 2024. This 18-year timeframe was selected to provide a comprehensive view of trends and outcomes related to verified maltreatment, out-of-home placements, and other child welfare system indicators. The timeframe also allowed for comparisons between pre- and post-engagement outcomes for patrons receiving FRC services, as well as regional comparisons (2015-2023) between areas served by FRCs and non-FRC areas.

Key Outcomes

The analysis yielded statistically significant reductions across multiple child welfare system metrics, including:

- Abuse Hotline Calls:
 - Reduced by 50%, from an average of 2.59 calls per patron before FRC engagement to 1.30 calls per patron post-engagement.
- Screened-In Hotline Calls:
 - Reduced by 64%, from 2.18 calls per patron to 0.78 calls per patron post-engagement.



- Children Subject to Investigations:
 - Reduced by 62%, from 4.89 children investigated per patron to 1.88 post-engagement.
- Alleged Maltreatments Investigated:
 - Reduced by 65%, from 7.78 allegations per patron to 2.74 post-engagement.
- Out-of-Home Placements:
 - Reduced by 98.6%, from 0.71 placements per patron to 0.01 post-engagement.
 - Only 1 removal occurred involving 1 child after FRC engagement, compared to 20 patrons with 51 children involved in removals prior to engagement.

Qualitative Research and Findings

The evaluation of the Family Resource Center (FRC) model employed a robust mixed-methods approach, with significant emphasis on qualitative research. The project prioritized Community Based Participatory Research, capturing the lived experiences and insights of families, staff, and partners to ensure the model was responsive, inclusive, and effective. Key qualitative methods included:

- **Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Process-** Each FRC conducted a biannual self-assessment using a standardized tool aligned with the Protective Factors Framework. Teams composed of staff, patrons, and community stakeholders assessed FRC practices, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. This process led to the development of 18 formal action items across sites, reinforcing fidelity and driving continuous quality improvement.
- **Patron Feedback Groups-** Focus groups (rebranded as "Patron Feedback Groups") were held at each FRC to gather detailed insights from randomly selected, consented patrons. Participants provided rich narrative data regarding how FRCs supported their needs, reduced stress, and fostered parenting and child development. Common themes across groups included feeling respected, receiving non-judgmental support, and benefiting from child-focused activities.



- **Informal Patron Input and Feedback Mechanisms-** Staff regularly incorporated informal patron feedback into programmatic adjustments, such as creating culturally relevant events and responding to emerging community needs. Satisfaction surveys and “Getting to Know You” forms further enhanced data collection, allowing patrons to share needs privately and respectfully.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

Highlights from the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool

- **Alignment with Protective Factors:** All FRCs demonstrated varying degrees of fidelity to the five protective factors. The most consistently strong areas included “Concrete Support in Times of Need” and “Social Connections.”
- **Action Plans and Adjustments:**
Across the four FRCs (SWAG, LPRC, CPLRC, NSFRC), a total of 18 action item documents were developed to address identified needs and preserve effective practices. These included:
 - Expansion of co-located services (e.g., behavioral health, food pantry)
 - Engagement with local businesses, schools, and faith-based groups
 - Programs for youth and fathers (e.g., All Pro Dads events)
 - Enhanced cultural responsiveness (e.g., bilingual services, cultural celebrations)
- **Site-Specific Highlights:**
 - **SWAG FRC:** Hosted community safety events and partnered with local providers for mental health and education.
 - **NSFRC:** Built a garden and pantry network, offered computer literacy programs, and collaborated with schools.
 - **LPRC:** Supported youth through homework help and expanded program offerings using feedback loops.
 - **CPLRC:** Launched a community garden initiative and continued patron engagement even after site closure.
- **Ongoing Monitoring and Accountability:**
FRCs provided biannual updates and revisions to action items. Advisory groups such as the RCAC played a key role in co-developing and monitoring changes, ensuring the assessment remained grounded in lived experience and community voice.



The SFSA process not only identified fidelity to evidence-based strategies but also reinforced the model's community-driven nature. Through structured self-reflection and stakeholder input, each FRC was able to sustain effective programming and adjust where needed. This strengthened both the quality and responsiveness of services aimed at promoting family well-being and preventing child maltreatment.

Themes from Patron Feedback Groups

- **Trusted, Welcoming Environment**

Patrons frequently described the FRCs as calming and welcoming spaces:

- "The communication with the staff here is very nice. Everybody [is] calming and relax all the problem."
- "You don't feel pressured, you don't feel looked down upon."

This culture of non-judgmental support made it easier for families to seek help without stigma.

- **Concrete Supports**

Patrons highlighted the value of essential supports like food, diapers, clothing, and help with housing or technology access:

- "I came here to apply for HUD housing... I've been using all the resources that they'll give me, and it's been incredibly helpful."
- "Instead of me stressing about what they [the kids] going to eat, it's already done... the food thing definitely helped my family."

These services alleviated immediate family stressors and promoted stability.

- **Empowerment and Skill Building**

Staff were praised for encouraging autonomy and guiding families to become self-sufficient:

- "They show you how to [get help and help yourself] ... to be your own hero."

This aligns with the Strengthening Families framework's protective factors, especially around parental resilience and social connections.



- **Cultural Responsiveness and Relationship Building**
FRC staff were recognized for forming personal connections and being culturally sensitive. Many patrons noted that staff took time to understand their circumstances and build trust:
 - “She [staff member] is like family to us, she knows who we really are.”
- **Youth & Family Programming**
FRCs offered a variety of child-centered programming such as tutoring, emotional literacy, art, and summer camps. These programs were important for children’s social-emotional development:
 - “We don’t just help with homework; we help children recognize their emotions and learn how to deal with them in a positive manner.

These qualitative findings highlight the pivotal role FRCs play in delivering both tangible supports and emotional guidance to families. Patrons consistently described FRCs as safe, welcoming spaces where they felt respected and supported. Staff were praised for their personalized, compassionate approach and ability to build lasting trust. FRC programs improved parenting skills, reduced stress, and strengthened family functioning, while also fostering child development and resilience. Patrons reported feeling more empowered and confident in accessing resources and overcoming challenges. Partnerships with schools, churches, and service providers further enhanced support, positioning FRCs as trusted community hubs for family well-being.

Conclusion

These findings demonstrate that Family Resource Centers have a substantial impact on reducing child welfare system involvement. Statistically significant reductions in abuse hotline calls, screened-in calls, child investigations, maltreatment allegations, and out-of-home placements were observed. Qualitative findings further support the effectiveness of FRCs in improving family resilience and overall satisfaction with services. Continued monitoring, evaluation, and strategic improvements are recommended to ensure sustained positive outcomes and broader applicability.