



Supporting Families by Providing
Concrete Support in Times of Need at
Cone Park Library Resource Center

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Institute for Child and Family Services Research



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Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Cone Park (CP) Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the CP Library Resource Center (CPLRC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on CPLRC's efforts at strengthening families by providing concrete support in times of need.

Cone Park Library Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In collaboration with the Alachua County Library District (ACLD), the Cone Park Library Resource Center opened part-time in December 2013, and with early indicators of high service utilization, the Resource Center began operating full-time in May 2014. Cone Park Library Resource Center is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy, community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of services to meet the needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Cone Park Library Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Lancaster, C., George, C., Goodman, R., Haughton, L., Jenkins, L., Johnson, D., McMillan, A., Reed, E., Seawright, S., & Spoliansky, T. (2022). *The Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the Protective Factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the CPLRC SFSA Team.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Celia George – Community Ambassador
Ruth Goodman – Community Ambassador
Lovell Haughton – Community Ambassador
Lashon Jenkins – Cone Park RC Volunteer
Diane Johnson – Cone Park Branch Library
Artie McMillan – Community Ambassador
Erica Reed – Cone Park Library Resource Center Manager
Stephanie Seawright – Community Action Agency

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on providing concrete support in times of need there are 8 topics with 39 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, its relationship to the CP Library Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members complete their

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>. Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

scores, these data were shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the CPLRC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. The team meeting that involved the discussion of Concrete Support in Times of Need questions took place on November 17th.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with providing concrete support in times of need. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

It is important to note, that although discussion and findings summarized in this report are informative and provide insights with respect to how CPLRC is responsive to providing concrete support in times of need, no specific action items were generated specific to any specific self-assessment questions or collection of topics associated with this specific factor.

Collectively, it was assessed that CPLRC is very responsive to the expressed need of patrons for select concrete supports and services. Findings detailed below reinforce the value and utility of concrete supports and services for community members and households and the efficiency and effectiveness of staff in responding to these identified needs in a supportive and non-stigmatizing manner. The provision of concrete supports to families in times of need is CPLRC's greatest strength.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis?

The following is measure of how the CP Family Resource Center respond immediately when families are in crisis. There were no SFSA questions for which the majority of team members thought were not applicable. Findings highlight a team consensus of agreement with 14 of the 15 questions (93%), with 1 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of CPLRC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

The supportive environment and proactive efforts of staff to connect with patrons/parents reinforces a caring environment and helps build trust and social capital within the neighborhood/community... CPLRC is perceived...as a valued member and contributor to the community

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis.

There was uniform consensus in the assessment that staff at CPLRC and CPL are engaging and responsive to parents and families in times of distress and crisis. The supportive environment and proactive efforts of staff to connect with patrons/parents reinforces a caring environment and helps build trust and social capital³ within the neighborhood/community. With respect to concrete supports CPLRC is perceived by the team as a valued member and contributor to the community. This status is maintained given that supports and activities are implemented with clear fidelity to the CSSP model as such relates to how: parents are encouraged to turn to staff in the event of a crisis, staff proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress, and how staff and the program supports families experiencing extreme difficulties or crises. There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports/activities, and actions are implemented with fidelity at CPLRC:

Parents are encouraged to turn to staff in the event of a crisis through:

- The fact that staff listen, show concern and share their own personal challenges as appropriate in informal conversations and regular interactions.
- Materials regularly provided to participating families.
- Information on which staff members can help families with particular issues.

Staff proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress by:

- Expressing concern and offering help in line with the program's philosophy and resources.
- Offering to connect families to resources, including help lines, community resources or public agencies.
- Making space available for staff to meet with parents privately.
- Ensuring that parents can talk with staff members with whom they are the most comfortable.
- Being sensitive and responsive to the impact of family stress on children.
- Keeping family issues confidential unless given explicit permission to share information (except when potential abuse or neglect is at issue and a report is made).

When a family is experiencing extreme difficulties or crisis:

- At least one staff member with a close relationship with the family reaches out to the family proactively.
- If the family wants assistance, staff members, including supervisors or a staff team, work with the family to help them manage the crisis.
- The programs has resources for family assistance, such as diapers, transportation, a safe sleeping environment or even emergency funds.

³ The term "social capital" used here relates to the "...ability of individuals to benefit from their membership in social networks or other social structures" (CSSP, 2003, p.13). See: Center for the Study of Social Policy (2003). *Strengthening Families Through Early Care & Education: Protective Factors Literature Review*. https://www.matrixoutcomesmodel.com/EvaluationMenu/Protective_Factors_Literature_Review.pdf

- If the family agrees, staff connect the family to resources outside the program that can help them, such as medical or mental health specialists, or services such as respite care or emergency crisis services.
- Staff continue to offer support to the family and monitor the situation daily until the situation is manageable.

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Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis.

There was only one item whether the consensus rating with neither agree nor disagree:

When a family is experiencing extreme difficulties or crisis:

- The program has flexible hours of operation to accommodate families outside of regular business hours.

Variance in responses to this item existed between Community Collaborators and Community Ambassadors. Community Collaborators felt that the CPLRC should be open with the same hours as the Cone Park Library. The current Cone Park Library hours are 10am-6pm Monday through Friday and Saturdays 10am-5pm whereas the Cone Park Library Resource Center is open 10am-5pm Monday through Friday. The CPLRC Manager (Ms. Reed) has not been asked to extend the hours of the CPLRC. Ms. Reed and the Community Ambassadors believe that the current hours “work well” and are conducive/sufficient for patrons getting help. Should CPL identify patrons on Saturdays or hours when CPLRC is not open, contact information of patrons (and any identified service requests or needs) is taken and shared with Ms. Reed. These actions reinforce the existence (identified in other reports) of a strong collaborative working relationship between CPLRC and CPL.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community?

There are 13 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Family Resource Center provides information and connections to services in the community. Findings highlight a team assessment (consensus) of agreement with 8 of these 13 questions, and 5 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. No questions had a consensus of disagreement.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community.

Staff proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress by:

- Expressing concern and offering help.
- Offering to connect families to resources, including help lines, community resources or public agencies.
- Being sensitive and responsive to the impact of family stress on children.
- Keeping family issues confidential unless given explicit permission to share information (except when potential abuse or neglect is at issue and a report is mandated).
- Helping families to identify short-term supports and prepare long-term strategies so they are better able to sustain themselves and endure hardships.

Efforts at provide information about and linking patrons to existing resources and concrete supports within the community (in addition to supports offered at CPLRC) were praised by the team and reflected in the agreement with the following items:

The program maintains up-to-date information about services in the community that includes hours of operation, fees, locations, eligibility requirements, language capacities, etc. Services to be included are:

- Food pantries
- Health providers
- Domestic violence services
- Shelters
- Respite care for children
- Alcohol and substance abuse services
- Mental health services (for adults and children)
- Economic supports
- Legal assistance
- Quality early care and education

The program actively builds collaborative links with other service providers by:

- Bringing services on site, when possible.
- Easing the referral process by ensuring the workers in different programs know each other and work together.

Again, as noted earlier and in other reports, these findings reinforce that the caring and responsive actions and attitudes of CPLRC and CPL staff are a valued asset toward engaging and establishing trusting relationships with parents and families that, subsequently, enhance the likely receipt of needed concrete supports.

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Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community.

The score of neither agree nor disagree on these questions may have been in part, impacted by a lack of awareness of select members of what trainings are provided to staff:

Staff proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress by:

- Making themselves and/or other designated home visitors available to parents if parents need to talk.

Home visitation is not a standard advertised service (given existing staff resources) for the CPLRC; however, such does take place, when necessary circumstances exist. Some team members were unaware that any home visits have ever taken place while others have experienced it firsthand. In addition to food distribution, other concrete supports (e.g., bus passes, diapers/infant care items, etc.) have been dropped off for parents with no means of transportation, those on bed rest, veterans, and those physically unable to visit the RC. Community Ambassador Ms. McMillan expressed her gratitude at personally receiving this delivery service when she was on bed rest or didn't have any transportation. This service is unadvertised and unknown to many but critical to those receiving the service. Many of the services at the CPLRC are similarly individualized and not advertised. These extra efforts are made to help maintain the autonomy and respect the privacy of the patron. These services and the commitment of staff, interns, and volunteers were praised as it was noted by one Ambassador that "...everybody and everyone seems to do good."

Parents are encouraged to share information about community resources (e.g., toy exchanges, resale shops, play lots, family activities), as well as more formal services.

The program actively builds collaborative links with other service providers by:

- Coordinating follow-up efforts across service providers, ensuring that the family is involved in service coordination and informed about all communication.
- Developing memorandum of understanding or established processes with partners to coordinate services for families in crisis.
- Using input from participating parents to identify and advocate to fill gaps in the services available to families.

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Although there was a score of neither agree nor disagree on these questions the CPLRC staff and PSF representatives have identified that memorandums of understanding exist for a plethora of community agencies, services, and supports across a wide range of service areas and need classifications as expanded in (Lancaster et al., 2021; Lancaster et al., 2021b).

How Does CP Library Resource Center Help Families to Develop Skills They Need to Identify their Needs and Connect to Supports?

There are 11 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Library Resource Center helps families to develop skills they need to identify their needs and connect to supports. Agreement existed for 10 of 11 questions, suggesting that staff do a good job helping parents to identify and mobilize their own resources to address their families' needs and supporting family leadership when they make referrals to outside services. There was question for which any team member disagreed with.

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What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Help Families to Develop Skills They Need to Identify their Needs and Connect to Supports.

Staff help parents to identify and mobilize their own resources to address their families' needs by:

- Encouraging families to take the lead when creating a plan to address family needs, including addressing barriers and anticipated outcomes.
- Communicating to families that seeking help is not an indicator of weakness or failure as a parent, but rather is a step toward building resilience.
- Encouraging parents to advocate for themselves and their child.
- Providing information and guidance to families so that they understand their rights in accessing services, gain knowledge of relevant services and learn how to navigate through service systems.

When staff make referrals to outside services, they support family leadership by:

- Brainstorming with families about what resources would be helpful.
- Respecting when a family is not comfortable with a specific provider by helping them to either address and resolve the issue or identify other resources.
- Helping parents learn how to address barriers to utilizing services (e.g., lack of transportation or childcare, fees, language barriers, lack of translation services, lack of cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness).
- Coaching parents as they fill out initial paperwork required to access these services, (e.g., insurance and eligibility forms).

- Following up with families on referrals to ensure that they were satisfied with the services they received and providing help in advocating for themselves if they were not satisfied.
- Making a personal connection between families and service providers (if families have agreed to share information through written consent).

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Help Families to Develop Skills They Need to Identify their Needs and Connect to Supports.

Staff help parents to identify and mobilize their own resources to address their families' needs by:

- Connecting parents to peer-to-peer navigation support

The consensus neither agree nor disagree rating on this question reflects select members' perspectives and comments shared in other reports (Perry et al., 2021a; Perry et al., 2021b) that highlight some hesitancy in creating peer to peer programming due to patron confidentiality and privacy matters. Regardless, the team rated CPLRC staff in a "very positive" manner on these items. There seems to be general agreement that CPLRC does a good job in providing concrete supports to its patrons and helping families in crisis with concrete supports.

Fidelity of Concrete Support in Times of Need Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

The SFSA Team identified the weighted average Team score as the consensus measure for each question associated with the concrete support in times of need assessment topics. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014) method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Concrete Support in Times of Need Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. **The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 32 (of a possible score of 39) or 82%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Concrete Support in Times of Need Protective Factor were implemented with high fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families' Protective Factor Framework.**

The Cone Park Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As shared earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, CPLRC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the CPLRC in accordance with the CSSP's protective factors framework. The biographies of these team members are detailed below.



Celia George has been a patron at CPLRC since 2015. She is a Florida native and has spent much of her life living in Gainesville, FL. She graduated from the Santa Fe College Police Academy and went on to work with the University of Florida Police Department. During her time as a police officer, she moved near Morningside Nature Center which is only a few miles from the present location of CPLRC. She has raised two daughters who have gone on to be college graduates, building upon her successes. When Celia retired, she turned her attention to her grandchildren and began using the Fred Cone Park Facilities with them. She has made sure they are included in CPLRC summer camps, family events and activities like Homework Help and Girl Scouts. One of her granddaughters currently participates in the Girl Scouts program at CPLRC. She frequently uses the track behind the Cone Park library and attends the food distribution programs. She has been an encouragement to her twin grandchildren who have started using the track as well. She wanted to be a part of this SFSA Team because “I want to help make a

difference”. Celia loves Cone Park because “it serves so many different purposes and meets the needs for so many families in the community”.

Ruth Goodman has been a patron at the CPLRC since 2019. During that time, she also utilized services at the SWAG Family Resource Center and the Library Partnership Library Resource Center. She was born and raised in the French West Indies but after visiting the United States as a young woman she decided to stay and make a life for herself in the US. She married at age 19 and has raised 4 children with her husband. After retiring as a lead teacher for 20 years, Ruth now focuses on assisting with her 10 grandchildren. One of the ways she does this is by reaching out to the Resource Centers. She is happy to be a part of the Cone Park Library Resource Center because “it’s very helpful and informative for children and families and the community”. Ruth wanted to be a member of our Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team because she wants to be a part of any work that could potentially help keep families together.



Lovell Haughton has been a patron of the CPLRC since August 2020. She is a native of New York but has been in this community for 30 years. Lovell has experience working with community organizations, resources, and support services for those diagnosed with HIV. Her drive to care for others pushes her forward in everything that she does. She strives to maintain and build partnerships with families and be a support and liaison for them. She also acts as a support for her family and 7 grandchildren. Lovell has enjoyed working with the CPLRC because it’s community and family oriented.



Lashon Antonia Jenkins first became involved with the CPLRC 10 years ago, as a patron to the CPL. Lashon is a Gainesville native, residing on the eastside of town, where the CPLRC is located. For the past 10 years, she has been an employee with Partnership for Strong Families in the adoptions department. She has worked directly with CPLRC as an intern this last year to satisfy requirements for her Master of Social Work degree. Currently, Lashon holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Human Services degree. Her parents also live in the community, and she makes time to visit them regularly between school, work, and an occasional rest. Lashon likes the way patrons are treated by the staff as they seek services that they do not have access to, like computer use or emergency food and clothing. She is glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because “when we know how to grow, it will make it that much better.”

Diane Holt Johnson was born in Newark, New Jersey and has worked in Gainesville, FL for six years. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in Sociology and the University of South Florida with a master’s degree in Library & Information Science. Diane has a lifetime of experience volunteering in churches, non-profit and social service organizations (i.e., United Way, Take Stock in Children, Boys & Girls Club, Reading Pals, American Cancer Society, local Community Development Corporations, and grassroots neighborhood associations.) She and her husband of 42 years, Derryl, have raised six children, who are their proudest accomplishments. She loves the CPLRC because it values families and works to preserve them; emphasizes preventing and protecting families from disasters rather than correcting after the problem has festered; and provides programs to “help families help themselves” as much as possible. Diane has been glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because it gives voice to the patrons, who historically have not been asked to have input into the programs and services designed for them.



Artie McMillan has been a patron at CPLRC since 2014. She has been a part of the local community for 14 years and frequented the Cone Park Library before the Resource Center opened. Artie has dedicated her life to serving others and has compassion for people who have fallen on hard times and are experiencing homelessness. She knows what it’s like to struggle and wants to help people in need. Artie also has an entrepreneurial spirit and has managed her own restaurant, daycare, and prayer ministry in the past. Her dream would be to work on a Tiny House community that could serve as a one-stop center for people experiencing homelessness, offering practical help to stabilize them. She lives with her son and her two grandchildren that she has legal custody of through Partnership for Strong Families. In 2014, she began seeking regular services at CPLRC when the children came to live with her. Artie loves the care and compassion that is displayed at CPLRC and says, “you can feel the good energy”. She joined the SFSA Team because she trusted Erica’s advice that she would be a good fit and because she wants to make a difference and have her voice heard, “not as a victim but as the victor”.



Erica Reed has been the Resource Center Manager of the CPLRC since 2016. She has been in this community her entire life and many of her family members live in the community. Erica graduated from the University of Florida with a B.S. degree in Family, Youth and Community Sciences with minors in nonprofit organization, leadership, and human services. In addition to her education, she has experience working as a Guardian Ad-Litem, a case manager for high-risk cases and in licensing foster homes. Erica has been married for 23 years and lives at home with her husband, two boys and two girls. She has a genuine compassion for people and loves the CPLRC because it gives her the opportunity to help individuals and families in need. Erica is pleased with the SFSA Team process because it brought together a team with a common goal of wanting to make things better and because she wasn't alone in the process.

Stephanie Seawright has been a member of the Gainesville community since 1987 and has been working with the CPLRC since 2017. She helped develop the local A. Quinn Jones Museum and Cultural Center in Gainesville and works with her church and sorority to be of service to mankind. With a lifetime of experience serving others, Stephanie chooses to collaborate with CPLRC because she loves that the staff are helpful and care about the community they serve. As the Chief Operations Officer of the Central Florida Community Action Agency, she works to bring services like the "Fight for your Money" class to patrons of the Resource Center. Stephanie chooses to be a part of the Strengthening Family's Self-Assessment team because she is impressed with the work that the Resource Center does and wants to be a part of its success in any way.



Although not formally members of the CPLRC SFSA Team, **Robin Perry** (Lead Evaluator) and **Christen Lancaster** (Community Research Coordinator for the CP Library Resource Center) attended each of the CP SFSA Team meetings, they, and **Toni Spoliansky** (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended the majority of the meetings served as key supports for Team processes. Robin Perry provided initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and recommendations by the Team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying Team members' views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the CP Library Resource Center. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the CPLRC, and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Lancaster maintained regular contact with Team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. Robin Perry and Christen Lancaster took the lead on report writing summarizing findings generated from the SFSA process. Toni Spoliansky served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual Team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the CPLRC.

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Supporting Families by
Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
at Cone Park Library Resource Center

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Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Cone Park (CP) Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the CP Library Resource Center (CPLRC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on CPLRC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development.

Cone Park Library Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In collaboration with the Alachua County Library District (ACLD), the Cone Park Library Resource Center opened part-time in December 2013, and with early indicators of high service utilization, the Resource Center began operating full-time in May 2014. Cone Park Library Resource Center is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy, community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Cone Park Library Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Lancaster, C., Perry, R., George, C., Goodman, R., Haughton, L., Jenkins, L., Johnson, D., McMillan, A., Reed, E., Seawright, S., & Spoliansky, T. (2021). *The Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

services to meet the needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the CPLRC SFSA Team.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Celia George – Community Ambassador
Ruth Goodman – Community Ambassador
Lovell Haughton – Community Ambassador
Lashon Jenkins – Cone Park RC Volunteer
Diane Johnson – Cone Park Branch Library
Artie McMillan – Community Ambassador
Erica Reed – Cone Park Library Resource Center Manager
Stephanie Seawright – Community Action Agency

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development there are 18 topics with 70 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors framework, its

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>. Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). *Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors*. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

relationship to the CP Library Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members complete their scores, these data were shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the CPLRC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings and additional contacts through December 2021. The team meeting that involved the discussion of Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development items took place on November 17th. A follow up discussion with the CPLRC and CPL managers took place on December 15th.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

It is important to note, that although discussion and findings summarized in this report are informative and provide insights with respect to how CPLRC is responsive to the parenting and child development knowledge needs of patrons/parents, no specific action items were generated specific to any specific self-assessment item or collection of items associated with this specific factor. There was only one action item that was established following the discussion of SFSA findings associated with three protective factors (Concrete Supports, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, and Social and Emotional Competence of Children):

Action Item #1: Explore the possibilities of enhancing/expanding staff and space resources so that CPLRC can ensure a maximization of potential service and support- benefits linked to protective factors.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children?

The following is measure of how the CP Family Resource Center models developmentally appropriate interactions with children. There were no SFSA questions for which the majority of team members thought were not applicable. Findings highlight a team consensus of agreement with 8 of the 14 questions on CPLRC modelling developmentally appropriate interactions with children, with 6 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of CPLRC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children

The SFSA team agreed that age and developmentally appropriate responses are modelled in interactions with children at the CPLRC and CPL. The Community Ambassadors praised Ms. Reed for her commitment and manner by which she engages and deals with children at the RC; it was noted “she’s always been good with kids” and engages with children generally in a “...gentle, calm, peaceful, reinforcing” manner. There was consensus by the team that the following is manifested:

Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of child development:

- Staff model developmentally appropriate responses to children’s behavior, interests, temperaments and need for exploration and learning.
- Staff understand and can explain the development arc for young children.
- Staff can explain to parents how various activities and interactions support their child’s development.

Physical discipline (i.e., spanking or hitting) is not allowed in the program by staff or parents.

When staff talk with parents about discipline, they:

- Explain why physical discipline is not allowed in the program, even though this may be different from the family’s approach to discipline.
- Offer ideas for alternate ways to manage children’s behavior and to recognize and reinforce desired/appropriate behavior.
- Encourage parents to discuss behavior challenges they may have at home.
- Connect parents to other parents who can share or model positive parenting approaches.

The SFSA team agreed that age and developmentally appropriate responses are modelled in interactions with children at the CPLRC and CPL...professional background, practice experience, collaboration/peer learning, and continuing education/training of key staff and administrators have been sources of support in enhancing the likelihood of developmentally appropriate interactions with children

Ms. Diane Johnson, the Cone Park Branch Library Manager, was also praised as being “very good” in her efforts to engage and work with children that come into the Cone Park Library and may display a variety of behavioral traits, issues, and needs. Ms. Johnson credits her collaboration with Partnership for Strong Families staff over the years with learning developmentally appropriate responses to children’s behavior. Here, professional background, practice experience, collaboration/peer learning, and continuing education/training of key staff and administrators have been sources of support in enhancing the likelihood of developmentally appropriate interactions with children.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children

The individual member ratings/scores may have been impacted by varied levels of knowledge on staff training and select interactions between staff and parents that resulted in a rating of Neither Agree nor Disagree for these questions:

Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of child development:

- Staff participate in regular training that updates their knowledge on advances in understanding child development.

Staff work collaboratively with parents to coordinate support for children's development:

- Staff develop an ongoing partnership with parents to ensure regular communication, common understanding of the child's development and coordinated action to provide each child with the appropriate experiences for their developmental stage.
- Staff and parents together use appropriate assessment tools to screen for developmental concerns and monitor development.

Though staff are trained in Mental Health First³ Aid USA and other evidence-based trainings it is not standard practice to post this information in the RC where space and time are focused on providing resources to community members.

CPLRC staff are trained regarding (and are aware of) needs among children with developmental delays/disabilities and reportedly work in a supportive and collaborative manner with parents to best address these needs

CPLRC staff are trained regarding (and are aware of) needs among children with developmental delays/disabilities and reportedly work in a supportive and collaborative manner with parents to best address these needs, especially within the context of existing services and supports offered at CPLRC and CPL. For example, an ongoing partnership with parents resulted in accommodations for a child who is on the Autism Spectrum to attend and have a favorable experience at a CPLRC Summer Camp for children. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. For the summer camp to be developmentally appropriate for

³ For more information regarding Mental Health First Aid trainings please see:

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/> These trainings are an initiative of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing (see: <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/> for more information). Staff at CPLRC have access to all professional development trainings offered or contracted by the Partnership for Strong Families. For a list of existing training provided by the Partnership, please see: <https://www.pfsf.org/training/professional-development/>

the child and his peers, a plan was put into place between CPLRC, CPL and CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services⁴ staff (who organized and directed the summer camp). All children were invited to engage in all activities though this child could move around and disengage when things became overwhelming for him. These accommodations resulted from the development of a trusting relationship between staff and parents, and a willingness of caring staff to listen to parents and be responsive to an individual child's needs while promoting inclusive group activities. In this way the programming for the developmentally average children were not deprived by this child's accommodations.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development?

There are 30 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Family Resource Center provides information and resources on parenting and child development. Findings highlight a team assessment (consensus) of agreement with 11 of these 30 questions, and 19 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. No questions had a consensus of disagreement.

Ms. Reed indicated that she works hard to build relationships with resource providers to reduce the "cobwebs" of red tape that people need to work through, saving them hours of frustration. The team agreed that services are provided in a respectful, strength-based manner. Ms. Reed is on a "first name basis" with providers who support for a variety of issues including (but not limited to): shelter needs, domestic/interpersonal violence (Peaceful Paths)⁵, behavioral/mental health services (e.g., Meridian Behavioral Healthcare⁶), academics, etc. Ms. Seawright writes proposals for grants that highlight a specific commitment to work with the CPLRC, citing Ms. Reed's "...follow-up and dedication" to patrons and families as a primary reason.

⁴ CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services, Inc. (as noted in their website) is "a private 501(c)(3) non-profit social services agency that has provided services in North Central Florida for over 51 years. CDS's has different programs and serves a wide variety of community needs, all of our programs fall under the umbrella of the organization's mission statement, "Strengthening Communities by Building Strong Families." [They] target familial strength through prevention, counseling, and youth shelters." For more information regarding this collaborative partner, see: <https://www.cdsfl.org/>. Partnership for Strong Families Network of Resource Centers has been partnering with CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services since the opening of their first Resource Center, the Library Partnership, in 2010.

⁵ Peaceful Paths (as denoted on their website) is the "...certified domestic violence center that serves survivors of domestic violence in Alachua, Bradford, and Union counties. Peaceful Paths provides a wide range of services including emergency shelter, 24-hour helpline, victim advocacy, children's programming, economic empowerment education and support, crisis counseling and support groups, community awareness and intervention, and violence prevention programs." For more information regarding this collaborative partner, see:

<https://www.peacefulpaths.org/>. Partnership for Strong Families Network of Resource Centers has been partnering with Peaceful Paths since the opening of their first Resource Center, the Library Partnership, in 2010.

⁶ Meridian Behavioral Healthcare is a private, non-profit organization with roots in the community mental health movement, which began in the 1960s, to "...bring education about mental illnesses and substance use disorders and treatment of those affected to the local level." For more information regarding this collaborative partner, please see: <https://www.mbhci.org/about/>. Partnership for Strong Families Network of Resource Centers has been partnering with Meridian Behavioral Healthcare since the opening of their first Resource Center, the Library Partnership, in 2010.

Ms. Reed...works hard to build relationships with resource providers to reduce the “cobwebs” of red tape that people need to work through, saving them hours of frustration... services are provided in a respectful, strength-based manner

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development?

Parenting education classes are offered in a way that reflects best practices in the field, including:

- Parents have opportunities to try out new parenting techniques in the context of parent child activities and/or as “homework” assignments between classes.
- Staff exhibit warmth, genuineness, flexibility, empathy and good communication skills with families.
- Transportation, food or other supports are provided as appropriate to enable parents to participate.

Parenting and child development information is provided through multiple avenues to meet diverse learning styles, including:

- Books and videos in a resource library.
- Regular postings on bulletin boards in public spaces.
- Posting of information and links on a program website and/or social media pages accessed by participants.

Parent education offerings and staff coaching on parenting are responsive to the needs of parents in different circumstances. For example:

- Different parenting styles of mothers and fathers and the strengths of each
- Needs and concerns of first time parents
- Needs of parents who are parenting a child with a disability
- Noncustodial parents
- Nontraditional caregivers (e.g., grandparents, foster parents)

Staff provide “just in time” parenting tips and discuss parenting issues with parents when:

- Child behavior or development issues arise (e.g., potty training, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, separation issues, aggressive behavior).
- A parent appears to be frustrated or stressed and in need of support.
- A parent appears to be having difficulty relating to or communicating with their child.

If the program serves expecting families and new mothers and fathers, the program provides opportunities for parents to learn about:

- Prenatal and infant health and development
- The birth process and what to expect
- The needs of postnatal women and their families
- The developing role of first-time parents (including adolescent parents, if appropriate)
- Planning for the child's needs after birth (e.g, car seats, cribs).

The Community Ambassadors highlighted an appreciation for CPLRC's email notifications where they receive the calendar of events and learn about the parental resources available to them through a variety of services.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development?

Parenting education classes are offered as one among several strategies for increasing parents' knowledge of parenting and child development.

Parenting education classes are offered in a way that reflects best practices in the field, including:

- Parents go through a series of classes as a group – with other forms of contact between classes to maintain their engagement.
- Course content is focused on parenting information and developmental information for a particular age group or targeted population, such as children with special needs.
- Classes are engaging and interactive with opportunities for discussion and reflection (rather than being overly reliant on lecture and written information).
- Classes and programs are delivered by staff with appropriate training and credentials for the program.
- Child care is offered while parents are in classes.
- If implementing an evidence-based or proven program, the program is delivered with fidelity to the original course design and content.

Information is provided to parents on stages of child development and what to expect of their children at each stage.

Parenting information and materials used by the program are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and:

- Are available in the language spoken by program families.
- Reflect a diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds and family structures.
- Encourage parents to reflect on their own parenting history and culture, rather than encouraging stereotypes.

Parenting and child development information is provided through multiple avenues to meet diverse learning styles, including:

- Parenting classes.
- Support groups.

- Opportunities for parents with similar concerns to come together and share specific information on such issues as accident prevention, toilet training, routine preventative health care, nutrition, sleep patterns, Shaken Baby Syndrome, safe sleep, etc.

Parents are connected to a variety of resources that can help them explore different ways of parenting, such as:

- Parent education groups (including fatherhood groups).
- Counseling.
- Support groups.
- Mentors/coaches.
- Parenting groups and organizations that promote social inclusion and host groups that correspond to different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups represented the community.

Though the CPLRC has had mothering and parenting classes in the past, Ms. Reed reports they have been difficult to maintain over time due to erratic/inconsistent funding, low patron engagement, and presenter/provider interest who have their own minimum participation requirements. Subsequently, direct support and referrals are provided to parents on an individual or case-by-case basis. Ms. Reed notes (and Community Ambassadors strongly agree) that she maintains contact with the family following a referral or connection, following up with them, and provides additional resources/supports (e.g., concrete supports, etc.) to the family.

The privacy of these one-on-one supports, and referrals that are provided on an individual level in direct response to a specific need may have affected the knowledge about and answers to these questions.

How Does CP Library Resource Center encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies?

There are 14 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Library Resource Center encourages parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues, and try out new strategies. Of these, the team scores signaled agreement with 10 questions (71.4%).

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies.

Parents and staff work together to design and organize opportunities for parent led discussions (such as a Community Café or Parent Café series) to explore:

- Parent/child relationships.
- Being especially supportive at the time that special needs are initially identified.
- Connecting parents with materials and websites, support groups, play groups and community resources specific to their children's special needs.
- Ensuring that program parent-child activities are appropriate for families with children with special needs.

Staff recognize and support the parenting challenges experienced by families with children who have special needs by:

- Regularly checking in with parents about parenting issues.
- Being sensitive to parents' frustration, protectiveness, guilt, loss and other related feelings, and acknowledging the challenges families may be experiencing.
- Supporting parents in understanding appropriate developmental expectations for their children with special needs.
- Being especially supportive at the time that special needs are initially identified.
- Connecting parents with materials and websites, support groups, play groups and community resources specific to their children's special needs.
- Ensuring that program parent-child activities are appropriate for families with children with special needs.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies.

Parents and staff work together to design and organize opportunities for parent led discussions (such as a Community Café or Parent Café series) to explore:

- Cultural/ethnic expectations and practices about parenting.
- Different parenting practices.
- How to interact effectively with their children (e.g., listening; appreciating ideas, efforts and feelings; creating a non-threatening environment).

When parents are assisted individually, they may be in a crisis or struggling with interpersonal stress within their family. Advice, referrals, and encouragement are given, in a non-judgmental way, regardless of the situation. Ms. Johnson "breathes a sigh of relief that she does not have to refer them outside of this building and hope they make it there".

Advice, referrals, and encouragement are given, in a non-judgmental way, regardless of the situation.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Address Parenting Issues from a Strength-Based Perspective?

The team scores signaled agreement with 6 of the 12 questions associated with how the CPLRC addresses parenting issues from a strength-based perspective; with the remaining 6 scoring as neither agree nor disagree. Much of the strengths-based perspective in working with patrons comes in the form of listening to the needs of the patron and providing encouragement to them. Recently a parent came to Ms. Reed with concerns about trouble her son was getting into. Ms. Reed was able to sit down and

privately discuss the situation with the mother and help her write a letter, notarize, and fax papers in one visit. Ms. Reed provided support and encourage her through the process.

Much of the strengths-based perspective in working with patrons comes in the form of listening to the needs of the patron and providing encouragement to them

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective.

Home visitors share their observations of children with parents to help the parents recognize:

- Signals that development may not be on track.

Staff reinforce positive parent-child interactions by:

- Sharing something positive with parents about their children's behavior and development.

Staff proactively and respectfully address concerns about parenting techniques or behavior by:

- Asking open-ended questions to understand the behavior from the parent's perspective.
- Acknowledging young children's frustrating behavior and recognizing parents' efforts to deal with it effectively.
- Sharing concerns about a child's behavior and/or about the parents' parenting practices and respectfully offering alternatives.
- Connecting parents to resources and supports that may help to address parenting issues.

Fathers reportedly have come in asking for help with food stamps or getting a phone and are guided through the process of gaining these supports. Many times, working with parents involves a process of encouragement and reinforcement to not give up. Some patrons reportedly come with a perspective that "I'll just deal with it" [hardship and stress] and need to be encouraged that they deserve food and assistance as well and are assured (through staff action and statements) that such is done without stigma.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective.

Though the following questions have a score of neither agree nor disagree emphasis was made on the individual referrals that are given in private followed by CPLRC staff intentional checking in on patrons. The Community Ambassadors strongly agreed and have seen and experienced these follow-ups being made.

Home visitors share their observations of children with parents to help the parents recognize:

- Their children's unique assets, temperament, personality, communication styles and behavioral cues.
- Their children's growth and development patterns.
- Their children's positive social skills and developmentally appropriate emotional behavior.
- Their children's independence and abilities.
- Activities families can use to enhance their children's skills and development.

Staff reinforce positive parent-child interactions by:

- Noticing and acknowledging when parents are attuned to their children's needs or are communicating effectively with their children.

Fidelity of Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

As denoted earlier, the SFSA Team identified the weighted average Team score as the consensus measure for each item associated with the Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)⁷ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. **The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 35 (of a possible score of 70) or 50%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families' Protective Factor Framework.** As suggested earlier in the report, there are several select itemized services and supports highlighted in the SFSA Tool that the CPLRC does not directly provide. However, CPLRC may use or refer parents/patrons to collaborative partners for more individualized support for parenting and child development needs. Although staff are attentive and responsive to these protective factor needs for individual parents and families, select demands by patrons/parents and resources needs of the CPLRC limit the feasibility and applicability of integrating

⁷ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Tarr, J., Harnar, M. A., & Ahsan, N. (2014). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Unpublished whitepaper presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children's annual conference in Dallas, TX.

several of the listed services and supports (especially those that are group-based). These contextual factors adversely impact the fidelity score using the a priori scoring criteria.

The Cone Park Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As shared earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, CPLRC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the CPLRC in accordance with the CSSP's protective factors framework. The biographies of these team members are detailed below.



Celia George has been a patron at CPLRC since 2015. She is a Florida native and has spent much of her life living in Gainesville, FL. She graduated from the Santa Fe College Police Academy and went on to work with the University of Florida Police Department. During her time as a police officer, she moved near Morningside Nature Center which is only a few miles from the present location of CPLRC. She has raised two daughters who have gone on to be college graduates, building upon her successes. When Celia retired, she turned her attention to her grandchildren and began using the Fred Cone Park Facilities with them. She has made sure they are included in CPLRC summer camps, family events and activities like Homework Help and Girl Scouts. One of her granddaughters currently participates in the Girl Scouts program at CPLRC. She frequently uses the track behind the Cone Park library and attends the food distribution programs. She has been an encouragement to her twin grandchildren who have started using the track as well. She wanted to be a part of this SFSA Team because "I want to help make a difference". Celia loves Cone Park because "it serves so many different purposes and meets the needs for so many families in the community".

Ruth Goodman has been a patron at the CPLRC since 2019. During that time, she also utilized services at the SWAG Family Resource Center and the Library Partnership Library Resource Center. She was born and raised in the French West Indies but after visiting the United States as a young woman she decided to stay and make a life for herself in the US. She married at age 19 and has raised 4 children with her husband. After retiring as a lead teacher for 20 years, Ruth now focuses on assisting with her 10 grandchildren. One of the ways she does this is by reaching out to the Resource Centers. She is happy to be a part of the Cone Park Library Resource Center because "it's very helpful and informative for children and families and the community". Ruth wanted to be a member of our Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team because she wants to be a part of any work that could potentially help keep families together.





Lovell Haughton has been a patron of the CPLRC since August 2020. She is a native of New York but has been in this community for 30 years. Lovell has experience working with community organizations, resources, and support services for those diagnosed with HIV. Her drive to care for others pushes her forward in everything that she does. She strives to maintain and build partnerships with families and be a support and liaison for them. She also acts as a support for her family and 7 grandchildren. Lovell has enjoyed working with the CPLRC because it's community and family oriented.



Lashon Antonia Jenkins first became involved with the CPLRC 10 years ago, as a patron to the CPL. Lashon is a Gainesville native, residing on the eastside of town, where the CPLRC is located. For the past 10 years, she has been an employee with Partnership for Strong Families in the adoptions department. She has worked directly with CPLRC as an intern this last year to satisfy requirements for her Master of Social Work degree. Currently, Lashon holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Human Services degree. Her parents also live in the community, and she makes time to visit them regularly between school, work, and an occasional rest. Lashon likes the way patrons are treated by the staff as they seek services that they do not have access to, like computer use or emergency food and clothing. She is glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because "when we know how to grow, it will make it that much better."

Diane Holt Johnson was born in Newark, New Jersey and has worked in Gainesville, FL for six years. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in Sociology and the University of South Florida with a master's degree in Library & Information Science. Diane has a lifetime of experience volunteering in churches, non-profit and social service organizations (i.e., United Way, Take Stock in Children, Boys & Girls Club, Reading Pals, American Cancer Society, local Community Development Corporations, and grassroots neighborhood associations.) She and her husband of 42 years, Derryl, have raised six children, who are their proudest accomplishments. She loves the CPLRC because it values families and works to preserve them; emphasizes preventing and protecting families from disasters rather than correcting after the problem has festered; and provides programs to "help families help themselves" as much as possible. Diane has been glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because it gives voice to the patrons, who historically have not been asked to have input into the programs and services designed for them.





Artie McMillan has been a patron at CPLRC since 2014. She has been a part of the local community for 14 years and frequented the Cone Park Library before the Resource Center opened. Artie has dedicated her life to serving others and has compassion for people who have fallen on hard times and are experiencing homelessness. She knows what it's like to struggle and wants to help people in need. Artie also has an entrepreneurial spirit and has managed her own restaurant, daycare, and prayer ministry in the past. Her dream would be to work on a Tiny House community that could serve as a one-stop center for people experiencing homelessness, offering practical help to stabilize them. She lives with her son and her two grandchildren that she has legal custody of through Partnership for Strong Families. In 2014, she began seeking regular services at CPLRC when the children came to live with her. Artie loves the care and compassion that is displayed at CPLRC and says, "you can feel the good energy". She joined the SFSA Team because she trusted Erica's advice that she would be a good fit and because she wants to make a difference and have her voice heard, "not as a victim but as the victor".



Erica Reed has been the Resource Center Manager of the CPLRC since 2016. She has been in this community her entire life and many of her family members live in the community. Erica graduated from the University of Florida with a B.S. degree in Family, Youth and Community Sciences with minors in nonprofit organization, leadership, and human services. In addition to her education, she has experience working as a Guardian Ad-Litem, a case manager for high-risk cases and in licensing foster homes. Erica has been married for 23 years and lives at home with her husband, two boys and two girls. She has a genuine compassion for people and loves the CPLRC because it gives her the opportunity to help individuals and families in need. Erica is pleased with the SFSA Team process because it brought together a team with a common goal of wanting to make things better and because she wasn't alone in the process.

Stephanie Seawright has been a member of the Gainesville community since 1987 and has been working with the CPLRC since 2017. She helped develop the local A. Quinn Jones Museum and Cultural Center in Gainesville and works with her church and sorority to be of service to mankind. With a lifetime of experience serving others, Stephanie chooses to collaborate with CPLRC because she loves that the staff are helpful and care about the community they serve. As the Chief Operations Officer of the Central Florida Community Action Agency, she works to bring services like the "Fight for your Money" class to patrons of the Resource Center. Stephanie chooses to be a part of the Strengthening Family's Self-Assessment team because she is impressed with the work that the Resource Center does and wants to be a part of its success in any way.



Although not formally members of the CPLRC SFSA Team, **Robin Perry** (Lead Evaluator) and **Christen Lancaster** (Community Research Coordinator for the CP Library Resource Center) attended each of the CP SFSA Team meetings, they, and **Toni Spoliansky** (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended the majority of the meetings served as key supports for Team processes. Robin Perry provided initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and

recommendations by the Team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying Team members' views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the CP Library Resource Center. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the CPLRC, and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Lancaster maintained regular contact with Team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. Robin Perry and Christen Lancaster took the lead on report writing summarizing findings generated from the SFSA process. Toni Spoliansky served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual Team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the CPLRC.

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Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience at Cone Park Library Resource Center

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Institute for Child and Family Services Research



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Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Cone Park (CP) Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the CP Library Resource Center (CPLRC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on CPLRC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting parental resilience.

Cone Park Library Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In collaboration with the Alachua County Library District (ACLD), the Cone Park Library Resource Center opened part-time in December 2013, and with early indicators of high service utilization, the Resource Center began operating full-time in May 2014. Cone Park Library Resource Center is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy, community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of services to meet the needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Cone Park Library Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Lancaster, C., George, C., Goodman, R., Haughton, L., Jenkins, L., Johnson, D., McMillan, A., Reed, E., Seawright, S., & Spoliansky, T. (2021). *The Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the CPLRC SFSA Team.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Celia George – Community Ambassador
Ruth Goodman – Community Ambassador
Lovell Haughton – Community Ambassador
Lashon Jenkins – Cone Park RC Volunteer
Diane Johnson – Cone Park Branch Library
Artie McMillan – Community Ambassador
Erica Reed – Cone Park Library Resource Center Manager
Stephanie Seawright – Community Action Agency

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on Parental Resilience there are 25 topics with 97 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors framework, its relationship to the CP Library Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members complete their scores, these data were shared via

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>. Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). *Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors*. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the CPLRC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. Meetings that involved the discussion of Parental Resilience items took place on August 18 and September 22.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with promoting Parental Resilience. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Demonstrate that Parents are Valued?

There are 32 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Family Resource Center demonstrates that parents are valued. There were no SFSA questions for which the majority of team members thought were not applicable. Findings highlight a Team consensus of agreement with 18 of the 32 questions on demonstrating that parents are valued, with 14 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of CPLRC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Demonstrate that Parents are Valued

Staff strive to recognize and affirm the central role of parents in their children's lives through every interaction with families including policies, practices, and informal communication.

The program has multiple avenues for regular communication with families:

- The program provides an orientation for families about the program philosophy, goals, and objectives.
- Staff use a variety of methods (e.g., new family orientations, small group meetings, individual conversations, and written questionnaires) to provide information and gather input from families about activities throughout the year.
- Staff regularly ask parents about their observations of their child.

All family members are made to feel welcome:

- Someone is available to greet families when they come in.
- Staff are respectful even when family visits are unexpected.

Staff develop mutually respectful relationships with all family members by:

- Taking time to get to know family members individually, by name.
- Listening and learning about their interests, current activities, hopes and expectations for themselves and their children.

- Regularly inquiring about what is happening in their lives.
- Providing emotional support and encouragement.
- Sharing appropriate information about themselves.

As a part of staff orientation and ongoing staff development, program staff regularly have opportunities to develop skills and knowledge to work effectively with diverse families. Staff development may include:

- Inviting partner organizations to provide workshops for staff on working with diverse families.
- Facilitating discussions to help staff members understand and appreciate their culturally different communication styles.

The program seeks to reflect the community and families it serves by:

- Building a staff that reflects the community and families served.
- Intentionally recruiting and employing staff members who are skilled at working with the diversity of the families in the program.
- Connecting with elders and other trusted messengers of the diverse cultural groups represented in the community served.
- Seeking to hire staff members that provide families and children with connections to the diversity that exists in society - even if the program's community is mono-lingual, mono-ethnic or mono-cultural.

CP Library Resource Center and its staff... recognize and affirm the central role of parents in their children's lives; provide multiple avenues/means for regular communication with family members and make all family members feel welcome.

Taken together, ratings and discussion on the above questions reinforced the overall positive impact and meaningful practices that the CP Library Resource Center and its staff (including volunteers and interns) engage in that recognize and affirm the central role of parents in their children's lives; provide multiple avenues for regular communication and make all family members feel welcome. Members spoke highly of staff and their efforts, especially given that it is a small program with one full-time employee that relies heavily on volunteers and interns for support. It appears there is equal praise for the staff of the Cone Park Library who collaborate closely with the CP Library RC staff in providing and/or seeking supports and resources for families in the surrounding neighborhood(s). Efforts made to welcome and show respect for family members regardless of the context for which services and supports are requested from the CP Library RC (herein referred to as CPLRC) and the CP Library received equal praise and appreciation. Again, the collaboration between the resource center and library was seen as a valued asset in the community. Community Ambassadors noted (and staff and partners agreed) that the CPLRC and the Cone Park library "...feel like one and the same..." and that the cohesiveness of this relationship is manifested in the "equity" in the level of "welcoming" to all patrons/community members. Collectively, resources offered through both entities can aid families

(examples were provided) in getting the resources and supports they need. Some team members indicated that ratings provided as part of the SFSA Tool may reflect joint efforts of library and the CPLRC given the nature of the working relationship/collaboration between both entities/organizations.

The collaboration between the resource center and library was seen as a valued asset in the community.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Demonstrate that Parents are Valued

Although individual member ratings/scores may have been impacted by a lack of knowledge or limited utilization of services and supports applicable to select questions, there were nine that focused on the value of fathers and their unique needs for which the consensus was a rating of Neither Agree nor Disagree for eight of these items by the team. These included:

Staff show that they value fathers and are sensitive to their unique needs by:

- Taking part in periodic training on understanding and appreciating fathers' needs and parenting.
- Providing information specific to fathers/male family members in a special area such as a lounge, bulletin board, or bookshelf.
- Providing a diaper changing table in the men's room or other area accessible to men.
- Providing peer activities or services that are man-to-man, father-to-father.
- Engaging male participants to greet other men at program activities.
- Sharing responsibility for inviting fathers to attend programs and working to engage them in activities.
- Being aware of barriers that limit father involvement, such as a difficult relationship with the child's mother, lack of information or a non- custodial relationship with child.
- Encouraging fathers and male family members to engage in all aspects of the program, not only activities for fathers, including leadership roles.

All the scores associated with this cluster of questions were low. There was a detailed and involved discussion regarding each of the items that resulted in the following Action Items:

Action Item #1: Explore options/possibilities to provide more father-focused programming at CPLRC; perhaps in collaboration with CP Library.

Action Item #2: Create a joint marketing strategy between CPLRC and other resource centers to market services and supports directly to fathers.

Feedback and engagement with fathers/male caregivers were acknowledged... as very important and desired/needed activities to enhance the impact of community services and supports on child and family well-being.

It is important to note that discussion regarding connecting with fathers/male caregivers, include a variety of local and personal conditions that impact the level, nature, and means of involving fathers/men in households across a variety of settings (not just at the CP Library or CPLRC). Feedback and engagement with fathers/male caregivers were acknowledged (by the all-female CPLRC SFSA Team) as very important and desired/needed activities to enhance the impact of community services and supports on child and family well-being. Toward this end, direct input, participation, and feedback from men to better respond to SFSA items/questions and develop more meaningful and targeted action items was recommended. The team was not aware of a significant refugee or immigrant population within the community/service area for the CPLRC (East Gainesville and Hawthorne areas) and thus unable to collectively agree with the following statements that the program and services support immigrant and refugee families by:

- Ensuring that staff are knowledgeable about immigrant and refugee families' unique challenges and can help address them in a respectful manner.
- Maintaining up-to-date information on supports and services most relevant to immigrant and refugee families.

It was thought that the population within the service catchment area was primarily African American; however, some members highlighted an awareness of community members from Nigeria, Haiti, with an additional (minority number of) groups of Hispanic and/or Latino and White families/households. The team identified the need for more information regarding the community as such relates to distribution of immigrant, refugee, and diverse groups that speak other languages and services/supports within the community (that can be partnered with) tailored to their specific needs. The Action Item generated from this discussion is:

Action Item #3: Explore options for connecting immigrant and refugee families to services in their own language.

How Does CP Library Resource Center honor each family's race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting?

There are 8 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Family Resource Center honors each family's race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting. Findings highlight a team

assessment (consensus) of agreement with 4 of these 8 questions, and 4 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. No questions had a consensus of disagreement.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well that Honors Each Family's Race, Language, Culture, History, and Approach to Parenting

Program staff ensure that all families, regardless of family structure; socioeconomic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds; sexual orientation; abilities; or preferred language are included in all aspects of the program, including volunteer opportunities.

- Staff are trained to be knowledgeable about the parenting practices and approaches to family decision-making of different cultural and ethnic groups.
- Staff engage grandparents, elders, and extended family members in discussions on parenting and the transmission of cultural beliefs.
- The program displays diverse families and family structures in books, posters and program materials.

An effort is made to ensure program information and outreach materials are linguistically and culturally appropriate. Materials are:

- Designed or selected to reflect the culture(s) of the community served.

Discussion regarding these items highlighted the respectfulness and responsiveness of program staff (at CPLRC and CP Library) to all patrons regardless of race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Honors Each Family's Race, Language, Culture, History, and Approach to Parenting

There were four items for which the consensus was a rating of Neither Agree nor Disagree by the team; these include:

Program staff ensure that all families, regardless of family structure; socioeconomic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds; sexual orientation; abilities; or preferred language are included in all aspects of the program, including volunteer opportunities.

- The program regularly gathers information about family interests, beliefs, and expectations, including those relating to the child's culture and language development, and seeks to partner with families in incorporating those features into program activities and structure.
- Parents have opportunities to share skills, talents and cultural traditions with children and other parents.

An effort is made to ensure program information and outreach materials are linguistically and culturally appropriate. Materials are:

- Translated, whenever possible, into the language(s) spoken by all families in the community served.
- Reviewed by a Parent Advisory Committee to ensure that they are culturally relevant and linguistically accessible to all families in the program.

It was noted that progress is being made at PSF to have CPLRC flyers and other outreach materials to be translated into Spanish, as well as, securing translation services/supports that can be utilized by CPLRC staff. Cone Park Library's award-winning programs that can help teach English online, in addition to other in person supports for those whose primary language is not English. Unfortunately, these services typically go underutilized but are a potential resource for community members/patrons be linked to. Community Ambassadors spoke very favorably (and other team members agreed such would be "tremendously helpful") to develop a parent advisory council/committee as a benefit to address the above items, including program development/prioritizing to benefit the CPLRC and CP Library. Support was provided for the idea of collaboration between the Library and the CPLRC in developing a Parent Advisory Committee/Council, resulting in the following Action Item:

Action Item #4: Explore and consider a formal collaboration between Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC) and the Cone Park Library (CPL) to establish a parent advisory council/committee.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Encourage Parents to Manage Stress Effectively?

There are 13 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Library Resource Center encourages parents to manage stress effectively. Of these, the team scores signaled agreement with nine items (69.2%).

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well that Helps Parents Manage Stress Effectively.

Program staff are perceived as proactively responsive and supportive when parents/patrons demonstrate common signs of stress. Further, team members reached consensus in their agreement with respect to staff knowledge on how to respond appropriately to families in crisis.

Staff know how to respond appropriately to family crises that come to their attention. Staff receive training and support from other staff members on:

- Understanding the impact of family crises and/or loss on all family members – especially children -- and how to respond appropriately.
- Supporting families' immediate and long-term plans.
- Talking to families about difficult issues and helping them access additional help.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Recognizing domestic violence, depression, developmental delays, mental illness, chronic health problems, substance abuse and other signs of imminent crisis and knowing how to respond appropriately.
- Understanding trauma and its impact on children and how staff can help.
- Other community agencies providing specialized services to families and children.

Consensus agreement on all the above items corroborates findings shared elsewhere in the report that suggest a quality level of support, concern, respectfulness, and affirming attitude of CPLRC and CP Library staff toward parents and all patrons. Staff are seen as competent in their ability to be responsive

to families in stress. These are encouraging thoughts that suggest staff and the supports provided at the CPLRC and CP Library are potential stabilizing resources for enhancing parental resilience.

Findings shared...in the report...suggest a quality level of support, concern, respectfulness, and affirming attitude of CPLRC and CP Library staff toward parents and all patrons. Staff are seen as competent in their ability to be responsive to families in stress...and...are potential stabilizing resources for enhancing parental resilience.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Help Parents Manage Stress Effectively

Although the staff affiliated with CPLRC are seen as responsive to families in crisis, there was less agreement in terms of the extent to which regular opportunities are provided to relieve parental stress through:

- Setting aside space and time for parents to gather, talk and participate in informal activities.
- Organizing spa days, exercise classes or other parent-only social activities.
- Making staff or consultants available for parents to talk to individually about issues that are troubling them.
- Providing occasional childcare so parents can take a “night out,” go shopping or participate in other parent-only activities.

All the above items received a consensus score of Neither Agree nor Disagree rating by the team, although there was agreement that opportunities are provided for parents to relieve stress through links/referrals to support groups. The team scores for select items reflect a desire, especially among Community Ambassadors and patrons for opportunities for more parent-only activities at the CPLRC, resources permitting. Many team members identified that the COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on families within their communities with parents managing multiple responsibilities and an increase in stress levels. Concern and isolation have contributed to mental health struggles. Providing activities/events like those noted in the above items, it was thought, may help relieve parental stress. Subsequently, expansion of such activities was seen as an area of value/importance in promoting parental and community resilience. The implementation of parent-only activities may be a way of engaging parents and subsequently lead to knowledge and utilization of additional programs and supports offered by the CPLRC. These involved discussions led to the following recommended Action Item:

Action Item #5: Efforts should be made (perhaps in consultation with a newly formed Parent Advisory Council/Committee) to explore the collaborative development and implementation of possible parent-focused activities/events aimed at stress relief.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Support Parents as Decision-makers and Help Build Decision-making and Leadership Skills?

The team scores signaled agreement with 35 of the 41 (85.4%) questions associated with how the CP Library Resource Center support parents as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well that Support Parents as Decision-makers and Help Build Decision-making and Leadership Skills?

Responses/team scores and feedback highlight a level of respect and understanding afforded parents by staff in actions that reinforce parental authority in dealings and interactions with their children. There was strong agreement that the following items and actions take place:

Staff receive program support when working with families under stress through:

- Acknowledgement and support for their efforts from supervisors and administrators.
- Opportunities to process their own emotional reactions with appropriate support.
- Access to a mental health consultant.
- Time off if needed.

Staff reinforce parental authority by:

- Respecting parents' directions and/or decisions about their children.
- Learning about parents' expectations and limits for their children.
- Talking respectfully with parents about how to handle differences in expectations regarding children's behavior and development.
- Understanding the parenting and child behavior norms of the parent's culture.
- Being careful not to contradict a parent in front of his or her child or other children.

Parents are engaged as partners in developmental screenings or assessments of their child:

- All staff are trained in the program's confidentiality policy regarding screening and results.
- Parents are informed about the confidentiality policy and what it means to them.
- The program consults with parents immediately when child health, behavior or developmental problems are suspected or identified.
- Parents work with staff to develop plans and accommodations for their children based on the screening.
- All plans for the child that result from assessments are fully discussed with parents and documented in the children's files, and parents are provided copies of the plan.

- The program assists parents in finding and connecting to specialists (e.g., a physician, physical therapist, or child study team) for further evaluation when their children are identified in the screening process as having possible special needs.

Parents and staff develop family plans together that:

- Identify the family's assets, interests, skills, needs and goals for themselves and their children.
- Identify services and opportunities within the program that may help parents achieve their goals and effectively use their skills and talents.
- Identify other community resources and opportunities that may help families achieve their goals, continue their learning and/or provide other avenues for involvement and leadership.
- Are updated regularly.

Select questions above relate to applicable parents/families when activities, supports, and (mostly) referrals to community partners are made where screenings, assessments, and service plans are completed. Collectively, these findings reinforce a perceived perspective that CPLRC staff interactions and efforts are perceived as informed, responsive, respectful, and in the best interests of strengthening families through supportive engagement and promotion of parental authority/role as decision makers. The quality and level of support for parents is clearly where the team agreed that CPLRC staff and resources (across all activities associated with each item) clearly support a parent's personal education and career goals.

Collectively, these findings reinforce a perceived perspective that CPLRC staff interactions and efforts are perceived as informed, responsive, respectful, and in the best interests of strengthening families through supportive engagement and promotion of parental authority/role as decision makers. The quality and level of support for parents is clearly manifested... CPLRC staff and resources...clearly support a parent's personal education and career goals.

Outreach resources may be limited; however, key staff at both the CPLRC and CP Library were seen as important assets for forming connections. Regardless, the need for a better engagement and dissemination strategy that includes/builds upon parent advice and feedback is needed. Toward this end, it was thought that a parenting advisory council could be invaluable in helping both the CPLRC and the CP Library in designing programming for the community and enhancing "buy-in" of patrons not within walking distance. There is some hesitancy to venture to both the CPLRC and the CP Library since it's "...out of the way" for many. Subsequently, the following Action Item was recommended:

Action Item #6: Develop a coordinated and collaborative strategy for engagement and dissemination of program/service/activity information that is relatable to local families with the goal of creating buy-in and enhancing the utilization of the CPLRC and CPL.

Additional consensus agreement existed that the following items and actions take place at CPLRC:

The program provides opportunities and support for families to serve as leaders and decision makers by:

- Providing opportunities for families to volunteer and contribute to the program.
- Encouraging and supporting parents in becoming active members of the program's governing/advisory groups and in taking on leadership roles
- Asking families for regular input on programmatic decisions.
- Providing families with roles in evaluating the program (e.g., parent questionnaires, group evaluation meetings).

The program promotes participation in activities by:

- Addressing topics, issues, and skills that families identify as important to them.
- Providing childcare during trainings or workshops.
- Conducting face-to-face or telephone outreach to families who might not otherwise participate.

The program helps to support the continued development of parent leaders by supporting:

- Personal growth -- such as attending conferences or special events and collecting and sharing information of interest to other parents.
- Leadership development trainings and mentoring activities.

The program helps to support parents' opportunities for leadership in community change by:

- Hosting or linking parents to community events that help raise awareness of emerging community needs and assets.
- Connecting parents to advocacy groups that work on issues related to child, family and community needs.

Collectively, the above ratings suggest that CP Library Resource Center adopts a perspective and practices that reinforce the value of parents as decision makers and potential leaders for building resilience within households within the community.

CP Library Resource Center adopts a perspective and practices that reinforce the value of parents as decision makers and potential leaders for building resilience within households within the community.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Support Parents as Decision-makers and Help Build Decision-making and Leadership Skills?

Consensus agreement did not exist for the following statements, instead consensus suggested a Neither Agree nor Disagree rating:

- Asking families for input into staff hiring and training.
- Designing activities to address interests of different family members (e.g., fathers, mothers, other family members).
- Training opportunities for advocacy and civics (e.g., how local and state government works, how to foster change).
- Ensuring that local, state, and federal policy information is discussed at staff meetings/advisory council meetings and relevant information is shared with families.
- Connecting parents to groups that inform and shape policy at the local, state, or national level.

The team thought more should be done at the CPLRC to engage with fathers and grandparents and/or provide supports for other caregivers. The majority of Community Ambassadors felt that many kids don't have father role models or male mentors and/or there are limited opportunities/activities structured for father-child interaction/engagement within the community served. These comments build upon an early focus and concerns associated with Action Item #2. It was suggested that the outside recreational space could be better used for engagement and community-based activities (sports, family-health activities, etc.) and serve as a link to other CPLRC and CP Library services and supports. There was agreement regarding a need to engage parent leaders, get meaningful feedback, and reinforce those parents and community members that assist with program and activity development. These thoughts are represented in the following recommended Action Item:

Action Item #7: Explore how outdoor resources can be utilized for individual and health-based activities targeted towards caregivers. Consider (for example) the development of a regular program such as a formal or informal track league.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Help Parents Understand How to Buffer their Child During Stressful Times?

There were three questions associated with a measure of how the CP Library Resource Center helps parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times for which the team scores signaled agreement with all (100%). CPLRC was seen as implementing well the following:

- Staff receive training on talking with parents about helping children in times of family crisis.

- Parents and staff receive ongoing training and up-to-date information on dealing with stress and trauma including:
 - How stress impacts the child's brain, behavior, and development
 - Recognizing the signs of stress in children
 - How stress may impact the child's behavior and how to shape adult responses to the child's behavior accordingly
 - The important role that parents and caring adults play in buffering children during stressful times
- Parents and staff have access to a mental health consultant who can help them proactively address the needs of children and other family members during stressful times.

No action items were suggested for this area of functioning as it was thought efforts highlighted by the Partnership for Strong Families to provide continued and targeted training on these topic areas were sufficient for the future. In any regard, the importance of all staff to receive training and support to enhance their ability to help parents meet the needs of their children during stressful time was reinforced.

The importance of all staff to receive training and support to enhance their ability to help parents meet the needs of their children during stressful time was reinforced.

Fidelity of Parental Resilience Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

The SFSA Team identified the weighted average team score as the consensus measure for each question associated with the Parental Resilience assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)³ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Parental Resilience Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. **The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 71 (of a possible score of 97) or 73%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Parental Resilience Factor were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families' Protective Factor Framework.** The series of action items recommended by the

³ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Tarr, J., Harnar, M. A., & Ahsan, N. (2014). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Unpublished whitepaper presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children's annual conference in Dallas, TX.

CPLRC SFSA Team are appropriately targeted to enhance the fidelity score of provided supports and services addressing parental resilience.

The Cone Park Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As shared earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, CPLRC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the CPLRC in accordance with the CSSP's protective factors framework. The biographies of these team members are detailed below.



Celia George has been a patron at CPLRC since 2015. She is a Florida native and has spent much of her life living in Gainesville, FL. She graduated from the Santa Fe College Police Academy and went on to work with the University of Florida Police Department. During her time as a police officer, she moved near Morningside Nature Center which is only a few miles from the present location of CPLRC. She has raised two daughters who have gone on to be college graduates, building upon her successes. When Celia retired, she turned her attention to her grandchildren and began using the Fred Cone Park Facilities with them. She has made sure they are included in CPLRC summer camps, family events and activities like Homework Help and Girl Scouts. One of her granddaughters currently participates in the Girl Scouts program at CPLRC. She frequently uses the track behind the Cone Park library and attends the food distribution programs. She has been an encouragement to her twin grandchildren who have started using the track as well. She wanted to be a part of this SFSA Team because "I want to help make a

difference". Celia loves Cone Park because "it serves so many different purposes and meets the needs for so many families in the community".

Ruth Goodman has been a patron at the CPLRC since 2019. During that time, she also utilized services at the SWAG Family Resource Center and the Library Partnership Library Resource Center. She was born and raised in the French West Indies but after visiting the United States as a young woman she decided to stay and make a life for herself in the US. She married at age 19 and has raised 4 children with her husband. After retiring as a lead teacher for 20 years, Ruth now focuses on assisting with her 10 grandchildren. One of the ways she does this is by reaching out to the Resource Centers. She is happy to be a part of the Cone Park Library Resource Center because "it's very helpful and informative for children and families and the community". Ruth wanted to be a member of our Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team because she wants to be a part of any work that could potentially help keep families together.





Lovell Haughton has been a patron of the CPLRC since August 2020. She is a native of New York but has been in this community for 30 years. Lovell has experience working with community organizations, resources, and support services for those diagnosed with HIV. Her drive to care for others pushes her forward in everything that she does. She strives to maintain and build partnerships with families and be a support and liaison for them. She also acts as a support for her family and 7 grandchildren. Lovell has enjoyed working with the CPLRC because it's community and family oriented.



Lashon Antonia Jenkins first became involved with the CPLRC 10 years ago, as a patron to the CPL. Lashon is a Gainesville native, residing on the eastside of town, where the CPLRC is located. For the past 10 years, she has been an employee with Partnership for Strong Families in the adoptions department. She has worked directly with CPLRC as an intern this last year to satisfy requirements for her Master of Social Work degree. Currently, Lashon holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Human Services degree. Her parents also live in the community, and she makes time to visit them regularly between school, work, and an occasional rest. Lashon likes the way patrons are treated by the staff as they seek services that they do not have access to, like computer use or emergency food and clothing. She is glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because "when we know how to grow, it will make it that much better."

Diane Holt Johnson was born in Newark, New Jersey and has worked in Gainesville, FL for six years. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in Sociology and the University of South Florida with a master's degree in Library & Information Science. Diane has a lifetime of experience volunteering in churches, non-profit and social service organizations (i.e., United Way, Take Stock in Children, Boys & Girls Club, Reading Pals, American Cancer Society, local Community Development Corporations, and grassroots neighborhood associations.) She and her husband of 42 years, Derryl, have raised six children, who are their proudest accomplishments. She loves the CPLRC because it values families and works to preserve them; emphasizes preventing and protecting families from disasters rather than correcting after the problem has festered; and provides programs to "help families help themselves" as much as possible. Diane has been glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because it gives voice to the patrons, who historically have not been asked to have input into the programs and services designed for them.





Artie McMillan has been a patron at CPLRC since 2014. She has been a part of the local community for 14 years and frequented the Cone Park Library before the Resource Center opened. Artie has dedicated her life to serving others and has compassion for people who have fallen on hard times and are experiencing homelessness. She knows what it's like to struggle and wants to help people in need. Artie also has an entrepreneurial spirit and has managed her own restaurant, daycare, and prayer ministry in the past. Her dream would be to work on a Tiny House community that could serve as a one-stop center for people experiencing homelessness, offering practical help to stabilize them. She lives with her son and her two grandchildren that she has legal custody of through Partnership for Strong Families. In 2014, she began seeking regular services at CPLRC when the children came to live with her. Artie loves the care and compassion that is displayed at CPLRC and says, "you can feel the good energy". She joined the SFSA Team because she trusted Erica's advice that she would be a good fit and because she wants to make a difference and have her voice heard, "not as a victim but as the victor".



Erica Reed has been the Resource Center Manager of the CPLRC since 2016. She has been in this community her entire life and many of her family members live in the community. Erica graduated from the University of Florida with a B.S. degree in Family, Youth and Community Sciences with minors in nonprofit organization, leadership, and human services. In addition to her education, she has experience working as a Guardian Ad-Litem, a case manager for high-risk cases and in licensing foster homes. Erica has been married for 23 years and lives at home with her husband, two boys and two girls. She has a genuine compassion for people and loves the CPLRC because it gives her the opportunity to help individuals and families in need. Erica is pleased with the SFSA Team process because it brought together a team with a common goal of wanting to make things better and because she wasn't alone in the process.

Stephanie Seawright has been a member of the Gainesville community since 1987 and has been working with the CPLRC since 2017. She helped develop the local A. Quinn Jones Museum and Cultural Center in Gainesville and works with her church and sorority to be of service to mankind. With a lifetime of experience serving others, Stephanie chooses to collaborate with CPLRC because she loves that the staff are helpful and care about the community they serve. As the Chief Operations Officer of the Central Florida Community Action Agency, she works to bring services like the "Fight for your Money" class to patrons of the Resource Center. Stephanie chooses to be a part of the Strengthening Family's Self-Assessment team because she is impressed with the work that the Resource Center does and wants to be a part of its success in any way.



Although not formally members of the CPLRC SFSA Team, **Robin Perry** (Lead Evaluator) and **Christen Lancaster** (Community Research Coordinator for the CP Library Resource Center) attended each of the CP SFSA Team meetings, they, and **Toni Spoliansky** (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended the majority of the meetings served as key supports for Team processes. Robin

Perry provided initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and recommendations by the Team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying Team members' views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the CP Library Resource Center. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the CPLRC, and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Lancaster maintained regular contact with Team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. Robin Perry and Christen Lancaster took the lead on report writing summarizing findings generated from the SFSA process. Toni Spoliansky served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual Team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the CPLRC.

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Supporting Families by
Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children
at Cone Park Library Resource Center

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Institute for Child and Family Services Research



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Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Cone Park (CP) Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the CP Library Resource Center (CPLRC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on CPLRC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting social and emotional competence of children.

Cone Park Library Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In collaboration with the Alachua County Library District (ACLD), the Cone Park Library Resource Center opened part-time in December 2013, and with early indicators of high service utilization, the Resource Center began operating full-time in May 2014. Cone Park Library Resource Center is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy, community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Cone Park Library Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Lancaster, C., Perry, R., George, C., Goodman, R., Haughton, L., Jenkins, L., Johnson, D., McMillan, A., Reed, E., Seawright, S., & Spoliansky, T. (2022). *The Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

services to meet the needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the CPLRC SFSA Team.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Celia George – Community Ambassador
Ruth Goodman – Community Ambassador
Lovell Haughton – Community Ambassador
Lashon Jenkins – Cone Park RC Volunteer
Diane Johnson – Cone Park Branch Library
Artie McMillan – Community Ambassador
Erica Reed – Cone Park Library Resource Center Manager
Stephanie Seawright – Community Action Agency

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on social and emotional competence of children there are 16 topics with 48 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors framework, its relationship to the CP

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>. Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). *Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors*. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Library Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members complete their scores, these data were shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the CPLRC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. The team meeting that involved the discussion of Social and emotional competence of children items took place on November 17th. A follow up discussion with the CPLRC and CPL managers took place on December 15th.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with promoting social and emotional competence of children. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

Many of the items in this protective factor are addressed on an individual level and are never shared with the larger group. Comments related to the service and support model (and associated actions of Ms. Reed, volunteers, and interns) denoted for Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, it was asserted, apply to items affiliated with this protective factor (Social and Emotional Competence of Children).

It is important to note, that although discussion and findings summarized in this report are informative and provide insights with respect to how CPLRC is responsive to the social and emotional competence of children, no specific action items were generated specific to any specific self-assessment item or collection of items associated with this specific factor. There was only one action item that was established following the discussion of SFSA findings associated with three protective factors (Concrete Supports, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, and Social and Emotional Competence of Children):

Action Item #1: Explore the possibilities of enhancing/expanding staff and space resources so that CPLRC can ensure a maximization of potential service and support- benefits linked to protective factors.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Help Parents Foster Their Child's Social Emotional Development?

There are seven questions in the assessment that measure how the CP Library Resource Center helps parents foster their child's social emotional development. There were no SFSA questions for which the majority of team members thought were not applicable. Findings highlight a team consensus of

agreement with 4 of the 7 questions, with 3 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of CPLRC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Help Parents Foster Their Child's Social Emotional Development.

The Community Ambassadors praised Ms. Reed for her commitment and manner by which she engages and deals with children at the RC; it was noted "she's always been good with kids" and engages with children generally in a "...gentle, calm, peaceful, reinforcing" manner. Collectively, the SFSA Team were in agreement with the following:

The program introduces family members to social and emotional development by:

- Helping parents understand age-appropriate social and emotional skills and behaviors.
- Providing opportunities to discuss social and emotional issues within a racial and cultural context.
- Offering parents ideas on how to foster a child's social and emotional learning at home.
- Asking about parents' observations of their child's social and emotional development.

Currently, the CPLRC has several programs that strengthen the child's social and emotional competence. Homework Help, Girl Scouts, and Science Club all offer opportunities to build up a child's confidence and knowledge while modeling nurturing care.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Help Parents Foster Their Child's Social Emotional Development.

The individual member ratings/scores reportedly may have been impacted by varied levels of knowledge of the types of one-on-one meetings between staff and patrons related to the social emotional competence of children. This resulted in average team scores within the neither agree nor disagree range for the following:

The program introduces family members to social and emotional development by:

- Providing parents with information on the importance of supporting children's healthy social and emotional development— and its connection to success in school and life.

Program activities provide opportunities to strengthen bonds between parents and their children (e.g., parent-child playgroups, playing together in cooperative games or make believe, cooking, making an art project together).

Staff respect families' knowledge and expertise about their children's unique strengths and challenges as they share information about social and emotional competence.

Community providers who teach a range of classes for children's social and emotional well-being are wanted and welcomed at the CPLRC

Although consensus agreement may not have been assessed on the above item, the attributes of Ms. Reed (the CPLRC), volunteers, and interns and their genuine sense of commitment and concern for the well-being of children and families was acknowledged by the team. Further, Ms. Reed reports she "...relies on the professionals [within PSF and collaborative partners] to get tips, advice, and consultation..." when needed to assist select families and those children with specific or special needs. Community providers who teach a range of classes for children's social and emotional well-being are wanted and welcomed at the CPLRC (some of which are collaborative partners), however low staffing prohibits CPLRC and its staff from establishing curriculum or leading such groups. The CPLRC and CPL managers are working collaboratively on reconnecting the Alachua County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)³ with the library, as well as a program entitled "Help Me Help My Child!" that specializes in Florida developmental learning and teaching children with disabilities.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Model Nurturing Care to Children?

There are 16 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Library Resource Center models nurturing care to children. Findings highlight a team assessment (consensus) of agreement with 12 of these 16 questions (75%), and 4 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. No questions had a consensus of disagreement.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Model Nurturing Care to Children.

Staff nurture children and model nurturing for parents by:

- Responding consistently to children in a warm, supportive manner.
- Creating an environment in which children feel safe to comfortably express their emotions without fear of judgment.
- Showing warmth through appropriate physical contact.
- Demonstrating mutual respect between children and adults (e.g., listening attentively, making eye contact, treating children fairly).
- Responding sympathetically to help children who are upset, hurt or angry.
- Encouraging children to express their feelings through words, artwork and expressive play.
- Modeling empathy and appropriate emotional responsiveness.

Staff receive training, consultation, and ongoing coaching to support their skills in supporting children's social emotional development, including:

- Understanding the impact of loss or trauma on children and how to respond appropriately.
- Recognizing the role of sensory awareness and integration in social emotional development and understanding how to promote it.
- Promoting positive relationships among children living in the same household.

³ For more information regarding the Alachua County Council PTA please see: <https://accpta.org/about/our-mission/> This organization serves as a branch of Florida PTA, supporting and providing the county voice for local PTA school units.

- Understanding how mental health and wellness affects family relationships and the developmental process of young children.
- Recognizing and responding to the impact of child or parental trauma on parent-child relationships.

There is a clearly identified peer support mechanism between the CPL and CPLRC managers who consult with one another regarding identified (either through direct observation and/or communications with children, parents/caregivers) social and emotional needs of select children that access services and supports at the CPL and CPLRC. Proactive engagement in a supporting manner with a child, parent/patron is valued by both managers. As an example, it was noted that Ms. Johnson (the CPL Manager) recently observed a young man struggling with reading while at the library. She consulted privately with Ms. Reed and the child's mother, whom both managers have worked with and supported extensively in the past on other service/support matters. Because of the rapport that has already been built with this mother, when advice to put her child in the Homework Help program (a CPLRC service) was given, the mother was open to the idea and did so. These proactive (non-stigmatizing) efforts help establish and build upon existing trust with parents, subsequently enhancing the likelihood of children and families utilizing existing services and supports that can aid in meeting the social and emotional needs of their children. The development of meaningful, trusting, and authentic professional relationships between staff and parents is an important component for the CPLRC and CPL service model.

The development of meaningful, trusting, and authentic professional relationships between staff and parents is an important component for the CPLRC and CPL service model.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Model Nurturing Care to Children.

The collective score of neither agree nor disagree on these questions may have been in part, impacted by a lack of awareness of select members of what trainings are provided to staff:

Staff receive training, consultation and ongoing coaching to support their skills in supporting children's social emotional development, including:

- Fostering children's social and emotional development in the context of their culture and language.
- Recognizing behavioral/emotional problems or developmental delays.
- Understanding gender differences in child rearing and its impact on social and emotional development.

Families are invited to observe their children interacting with other children and/or staff in the program.

Though CPLRC staff receive training in Mental Health First Aid⁴ and other peer reviewed trainings, it is not standard practice to post this information in the RC where space and time are focused on providing resources to community members. Some support exists within the team for posting or making it known to the community as well as to patrons, the scope and nature of training that CPLRC staff receive.

Community Ambassadors, whom have all been long time patrons of the CPLRC all strongly agreed that Ms. Reed is “like family to us” and “she knows who we really are”.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Include Children’s Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming?

There are 7 questions associated with a measure of how the CP Library Resource Center includes children’s social and emotional development activities in programming. Of these, the team scores signaled agreement with 2 questions and a score of neither agree nor disagree with the remaining 5 questions.

What CP Library Resource Center *Does Well* to include Children’s Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming.

The program supports children’s social and emotional development with intentional practices that include:

- Encouraging and reinforcing social skills such as sharing, taking turns and cooperative play.
- Setting clear expectations and limits for behavior.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to include Children’s Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming.

Low participation rates have been a struggle for maintaining select programs at the CPLRC and CPL. Ms. Reed and Ms. Johnson shared their frustration in seeing the parking lot filled with parents and kids for sporting programs using the fields behind the Cone Park Library (CPL) while helpful programs for parents and children (including those focused on social and emotional development) go unattended. A previous tutoring program designed for these sports students failed when the kids started doing better in school and quit coming. Ms. Johnson remarked: “For some parents it wouldn’t matter if you knocked on their door and offered to read to their child in their home, they still wouldn’t be interested.” Reported

⁴ For more information regarding Mental Health First Aid trainings please see: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/> These trainings are an initiative of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing (see: <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/> for more information). Staff at CPLRC have access to all professional development trainings offered or contracted by the Partnership for Strong Families. For a list of existing training provided by the Partnership, please see: <https://www.pfsf.org/training/professional-development/>

variation of parental interest and motivation (or different prioritization) in participation in targeted supports and programs structured around this protective factor was identified as a challenge for both program managers. Subsequently, limited programming options and family participation in past activities contributed to a lack of consensus agreement (average team scores reflect a neither agree nor disagree rating) for the following items:

The program supports children's social and emotional development with intentional practices that include:

- Encouraging children to express their feelings in ways that are the most comfortable for them.
- Actively involving children in solving their conflicts and problems (e.g., helping children talk out problems and think of solutions; sensitizing children to feelings of others).
- Helping children separate emotions from actions (e.g., not reacting by hitting even when angry).

The team highlighted that these ratings are not meant to imply that the CPLRC and CPL managers and staff are not sensitive and/or responsive to the social and emotional needs of children served. In fact, manager and staff efforts of engagement and attentiveness to these needs were praised. It was noted that children sometimes arrive at Cone Park aggravated and experiencing stress that may be influenced by things happening at home. Staff at the CPLRC and CPL model an open and calm means of interaction. Community Ambassadors agree that they have witnessed their children and the children of other people being comforted by staff who are perceived in a supportive capacity. Community Ambassadors, whom have all been long time patrons of the CPLRC all strongly agreed that Ms. Reed is "like family to us" and "she knows who we really are".

How Does CP Library Resource Center Help Children Develop a Positive Cultural Identity and Learn to Interact in a Diverse Society?

The team scores signaled agreement with 5 of the 12 questions associated with how the CPLRC helps children develop a positive cultural identity and learn to interact in a diverse society; with the remaining 7 scoring as neither agree nor disagree.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Help Children Develop a Positive Cultural Identity and Learn to Interact in a Diverse Society.

Because the patrons can be so diverse in their orientations and needs, often services and referrals need to be made, unique to their situation and followed up on. The Community Ambassadors strongly agreed and have seen, and experienced follow-ups being made. The team made general assessments and agreed that the CPLRC staff go "...out of their way..." to accommodate the social and emotional needs, working directly with partners to identify plans for service delivery. Sensitivity to one-on-one individualized needs was seen as an element of planning CPLRC and CPL activities. The SFSA Team were in consensus agreement that the following is done well at CPLRC:

Staff receive training on how cultural differences affect social and emotional development, especially differences in:

- How the sense of identity is fostered as an individual and/or as part of a family or clan in different cultures.

Staff are encouraged to enhance their own understanding and appreciation for different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, languages and cultural expressions through:

- Being provided with professional development opportunities that allow them to learn more about the history and experiences of different racial and cultural groups.
- Being trained in how to sensitively ask questions about each family's specific experience and cultural perspectives.

Program policies and practices support the preservation of home languages by building upon the home languages and dialects of the children and families they serve.

The program's mental health consultant offers consultation that is respectful of differences in parenting behaviors and child behaviors that stem from traditions and cultural roots.

CPLRC staff go "...out of their way..." to accommodate the social and emotional needs, working directly with partners to identify plans for service delivery

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to help children develop a positive cultural identity and learn to interact in a diverse society.

Some of the scores to these questions may be affected by individual member's lack of awareness of staff training resulting in a score of neither agree nor disagree:

The program welcomes and affirms the cultures of families it serves by:

- Implementing meaningful and relevant activities, stories and discussions regarding cultural and linguistic differences.
- Inviting families to define and express their ethnicity or culture, including the experiences and values they hold to be most important.
- Including appropriate instructional resources such as books and toys that expose children to role models from their own and other cultural backgrounds.

Staff receive training on how cultural differences affect social and emotional development, especially differences in:

- The extent to which nonverbal communication is predominant across cultures.

- Diverse cultural views success and appropriate child development.

Staff are encouraged to enhance their own understanding and appreciation for different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, languages and cultural expressions through:

- Being encouraged to share and reflect on their own cultural background, including self-awareness of biases they may hold.

Staff are trained in how to address children exhibiting verbal or nonverbal indicators of racism or intolerance.

Efforts are continually being made to make use of community/collaborative partners' expertise (i.e., seeking professional consultation) in planning events that are accessible to all patrons. If the needs of the patron are too high to be accommodated at the center, they are referred and connected with someone who can help.

While the CPL has many books for all developmental groups on cultural identity and diversity, Ms. Johnson is clear that this resource is not being utilized and many CPLRC patrons are not "funneling back" into the library to check out books/resources. Possibilities of half sheet book resources that Ms. Reed could give out and incorporating "mini field trips" to the library for the children participating in afterschool programs at CPLRC were suggested as possible solutions.

How Does CP Library Resource Center Respond Proactively When Social or Emotional Development Needs Extra Support?

The team scores signaled agreement with 5 of the 6 questions (83%) associated with how the CPLRC responds proactively when social or emotional development needs extra support; with the remaining question scoring as neither agree nor disagree.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well to Respond Proactively when Social or Emotional Development Needs Extra Support.

When staff are concerned about a child's social and emotional development, they respond by:

- Discussing concerns (including objective descriptions of behaviors) with the child's parents without casting blame on the parents.
- Connecting the family to resources that can support the child's social and emotional development (e.g., play therapy, mental health services, parenting classes).
- Helping parents develop strategies for addressing the issue at home.

Staff have access to a mental health consultant to help them:

- Identify and receive additional resources and/or training to work effectively with individual children and parents.
- Talk respectfully with parents about the child's development, needs or challenges.

Observation and collaboration continue to be the primary means utilized by the Managers to respond proactively when children need extra support. When they suspect or know a child needs support, they work with the parent—respecting their special role in the child’s life—to determine what supports and referrals need to be made. For example, a new young participant in Homework Help showed confidence in math, however he was distracted and disinterested with his English homework. With keen observation Ms. Reed said, “You really get upset when it’s time to read but I guarantee you if you continue to come here and continue to work on your words and let us help you, you will go to school and be confident when the teachers ask you to read aloud”. Through praise CLPRC staff began to build up his confidence and his reading began to improve. After her son began doing good in Homework Help, the mother opened up and disclosed that her son has ASD which allowed staff to be even more targeted in their support to the family. The child continues to use the library where he has been spotted reading.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Respond Proactively when Social or Emotional Development Needs Extra Support.

When staff are concerned about a child’s social and emotional development, they respond by:

- Arranging for appropriate screenings and assessments.

Although there wasn’t consensus agreement on the above item, overall, the team felt the CPLRC staff are doing their best with the resources and supports they have. The team identified a heavy dependency on Ms. Reed for all operational and support needs at the CPLRC. Ms. Reed is making the best use of the volunteers and interns that are affiliated and recruited for CPLRC; however, the need for additional paid staff was evident and made known.

Observation and collaboration continue to be the primary means utilized by the Managers to respond proactively when children need extra support

Fidelity of Parental Resilience Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

As denoted earlier, the SFSA Team identified the weighted average Team score as the consensus measure for each item associated with the Social and Emotional Competence of Children assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)⁵ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Social and Emotional

⁵ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Tarr, J., Harnar, M. A., & Ahsan, N. (2014). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Unpublished whitepaper presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s annual conference in Dallas, TX.

Competence of Children Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. **The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 28 (of a possible score of 48) or 58%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Social and Emotional Competence of Children were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families' Protective Factor Framework.**

The Cone Park Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As shared earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, CPLRC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the CPLRC in accordance with the CSSP's protective factors framework. The biographies of these team members are detailed below.



Celia George has been a patron at CPLRC since 2015. She is a Florida native and has spent much of her life living in Gainesville, FL. She graduated from the Santa Fe College Police Academy and went on to work with the University of Florida Police Department. During her time as a police officer, she moved near Morningside Nature Center which is only a few miles from the present location of CPLRC. She has raised two daughters who have gone on to be college graduates, building upon her successes. When Celia retired, she turned her attention to her grandchildren and began using the Fred Cone Park Facilities with them. She has made sure they are included in CPLRC summer camps, family events and activities like Homework Help and Girl Scouts. One of her granddaughters currently participates in the Girl Scouts program at CPLRC. She frequently uses the track behind the Cone Park library and attends the food distribution programs. She has been an encouragement to her twin grandchildren who have started using the track as well. She wanted to be a part of this SFSA Team because "I want to help make a

difference". Celia loves Cone Park because "it serves so many different purposes and meets the needs for so many families in the community".

Ruth Goodman has been a patron at the CPLRC since 2019. During that time, she also utilized services at the SWAG Family Resource Center and the Library Partnership Library Resource Center. She was born and raised in the French West Indies but after visiting the United States as a young woman she decided to stay and make a life for herself in the US. She married at age 19 and has raised 4 children with her husband. After retiring as a lead teacher for 20 years, Ruth now focuses on assisting with her 10 grandchildren. One of the ways she does this is by reaching out to the Resource Centers. She is happy to be a part of the Cone Park Library Resource Center because "it's very helpful and informative for children and families and the community". Ruth wanted to be a member of our Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team because she wants to be a part of any work that could potentially help keep families together.



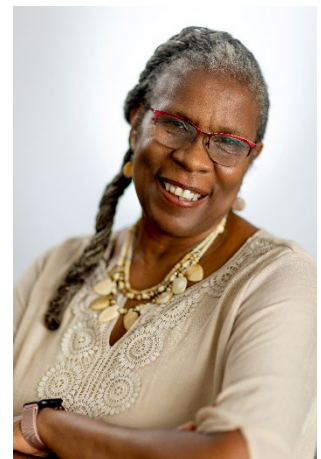


Lovell Haughton has been a patron of the CPLRC since August 2020. She is a native of New York but has been in this community for 30 years. Lovell has experience working with community organizations, resources, and support services for those diagnosed with HIV. Her drive to care for others pushes her forward in everything that she does. She strives to maintain and build partnerships with families and be a support and liaison for them. She also acts as a support for her family and 7 grandchildren. Lovell has enjoyed working with the CPLRC because it's community and family oriented.

Lashon Antonia Jenkins first became involved with the CPLRC 10 years ago, as a patron to the CPL. Lashon is a Gainesville native, residing on the eastside of town, where the CPLRC is located. For the past 10 years, she has been an employee with Partnership for Strong Families in the adoptions department. She has worked directly with CPLRC as an intern this last year to satisfy requirements for her Master of Social Work degree. Currently, Lashon holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Human Services degree. Her parents also live in the community, and she makes time to visit them regularly between school, work, and an occasional rest. Lashon likes the way patrons are treated by the staff as they seek services that they do not have access to, like computer use or emergency food and clothing. She is glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because "when we know how to grow, it will make it that much better."



Diane Holt Johnson was born in Newark, New Jersey and has worked in Gainesville, FL for six years. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in Sociology and the University of South Florida with a master's degree in Library & Information Science. Diane has a lifetime of experience volunteering in churches, non-profit and social service organizations (i.e., United Way, Take Stock in Children, Boys & Girls Club, Reading Pals, American Cancer Society, local Community Development Corporations, and grassroots neighborhood associations.) She and her husband of 42 years, Derryl, have raised six children, who are their proudest accomplishments. She loves the CPLRC because it values families and works to preserve them; emphasizes preventing and protecting families from disasters rather than correcting after the problem has festered; and provides programs to "help families help themselves" as much as possible. Diane has been glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because it gives voice to the patrons, who historically have not been asked to have input into the programs and services designed for them.





Artie McMillan has been a patron at CPLRC since 2014. She has been a part of the local community for 14 years and frequented the Cone Park Library before the Resource Center opened. Artie has dedicated her life to serving others and has compassion for people who have fallen on hard times and are experiencing homelessness. She knows what it's like to struggle and wants to help people in need. Artie also has an entrepreneurial spirit and has managed her own restaurant, daycare, and prayer ministry in the past. Her dream would be to work on a Tiny House community that could serve as a one-stop center for people experiencing homelessness, offering practical help to stabilize them. She lives with her son and her two grandchildren that she has legal custody of through Partnership for Strong Families. In 2014, she began seeking regular services at CPLRC when the children came to live with her. Artie loves the care and compassion that is displayed at CPLRC and says, "you can feel the good energy". She joined the SFSA Team because she trusted Erica's advice that she would be a good fit and because she wants to make a difference and have her voice heard, "not as a victim but as the victor".

Erica Reed has been the Resource Center Manager of the CPLRC since 2016. She has been in this community her entire life and many of her family members live in the community. Erica graduated from the University of Florida with a B.S. degree in Family, Youth and Community Sciences with minors in nonprofit organization, leadership, and human services. In addition to her education, she has experience working as a Guardian Ad-Litem, a case manager for high-risk cases and in licensing foster homes. Erica has been married for 23 years and lives at home with her husband, two boys and two girls. She has a genuine compassion for people and loves the CPLRC because it gives her the opportunity to help individuals and families in need. Erica is pleased with the SFSA Team process because it brought together a team with a common goal of wanting to make things better and because she wasn't alone in the process.



Stephanie Seawright has been a member of the Gainesville community since 1987 and has been working with the CPLRC since 2017. She helped develop the local A. Quinn Jones Museum and Cultural Center in Gainesville and works with her church and sorority to be of service to mankind. With a lifetime of experience serving others, Stephanie chooses to collaborate with CPLRC because she loves that the staff are helpful and care about the community they serve. As the Chief Operations Officer of the Central Florida Community Action Agency, she works to bring services like the "Fight for your Money" class to patrons of the Resource Center. Stephanie chooses to be a part of the Strengthening Family's Self-Assessment team because she is impressed with the work that the Resource Center does and wants to be a part of its success in any way.

Although not formally members of the CPLRC SFSA Team, **Robin Perry** (Lead Evaluator) and **Christen Lancaster** (Community Research Coordinator for the CP Library Resource Center) attended each of the CP SFSA Team meetings, they, and **Toni Spoliansky** (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended the majority of the meetings served as key supports for Team processes. Robin Perry provided initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and

recommendations by the Team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying Team members' views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the CP Library Resource Center. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the CPLRC, and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Lancaster maintained regular contact with Team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. Robin Perry and Christen Lancaster took the lead on report writing summarizing findings generated from the SFSA process. Toni Spoliansky served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual Team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the CPLRC.

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Supporting Families by
Promoting Social Connections at
Cone Park Library Resource Center

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Institute for Child and Family Services Research



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Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Cone Park (CP) Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the CP Library Resource Center (CPLRC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on CPLRC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting social connections.

Cone Park Library Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In collaboration with the Alachua County Library District (ACLD), the Cone Park Library Resource Center opened part-time in December 2013, and with early indicators of high service utilization, the Resource Center began operating full-time in May 2014. Cone Park Library Resource Center is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy, community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of services to meet the needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Cone Park Library Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Lancaster, C., George, C., Goodman, R., Haughton, L., Jenkins, L., Johnson, D., McMillan, A., Reed, E., Seawright, S., & Spoliansky, T. (2021). *The Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social Connections*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the CPLRC SFSA Team.

The CPLRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Celia George – Community Ambassador
Ruth Goodman – Community Ambassador
Lovell Haughton – Community Ambassador
Lashon Jenkins – Cone Park RC Volunteer
Diane Johnson – Cone Park Branch Library
Artie McMillan – Community Ambassador
Erica Reed – Cone Park Library Resource Center Manager
Stephanie Seawright – Community Action Agency

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on Social Connections there are 18 topics with 43 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors framework, its relationship to the CP Library Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members complete their scores, these data were shared via

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>. Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). *Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors*. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each topic and question (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the CPLRC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. Meetings that involved the discussion of Social Connections items took place on September 22 and October 20.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social Connections

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with promoting Social Connections. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

How Does Cone Park Library Resource Center Help Families Value, Build, Sustain and Use Social Connections?

There are 21 questions associated with how CP Library Resource Center helps families value, build, sustain, and use social connections. Findings suggest a team consensus of agreement with 11 of the 21 questions, 10 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of CPLRC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What CP Library Resource Center *Does Well* that *Helps Families Value, Build, Sustain and Use Social Connections*.

Families have access to a comfortable space where they can meet informally.

The program provides opportunities for families with similar interests, children's ages and/or circumstances (such as those with twins, parents of infants, parents with special-needs children or parents who speak the same language) to connect with one another:

- Formally, through parent support groups (including those with both broad and narrow focuses).
- Through parent mentoring and matching for one-on-one support.
- Informally, by introducing parents to one another.

The program provides opportunities for families to socialize and foster a sense of community by organizing/hosting:

- Field trips and community events.
- Affordable family activities.
- Special programs for dads, grandparents, teen moms, teen dads and other caregivers who would enjoy activities directed at their unique needs and interests.

The program encourages positive relationships between families and staff members by planning informal social events where staff can interact with families.

The program offers or connects families to resources to strengthen relationships between adults (e.g., healthy marriage skills, communication skills, conflict resolution, co-parenting).

Program staff encourage newcomers and isolated or marginalized families to participate in program activities by:

- Connecting them with resources (including mental health consultation) that can help them explore difficulties with forming social connections.
- Matching families with staff or other families who can help them feel welcome and valued in program activities.

The collaborative relationship between CPLRC and the CP Library was identified as a major strength by team members. Although there are unique contributions by each agency/organization, both are valued and sometimes perceived within the community as a unified/aggregate support for families.

These findings support a uniform consensus regarding opportunities and environments that reinforce informal connections among families and parents at the CPLRC and the CP Library. The collaborative relationship between CPLRC and the CP Library was identified as a major strength by team members. Although there are unique contributions by each agency/organization, both are valued and sometimes perceived within the community as a unified/aggregate support for families. The number of full-time staff (there is one person) and physical space at the CPLRC may be limited in size; however, the CPLRC has use of, and collaborates with, the CP Library in the utilization of their space and supports. This space is comfortable and welcoming. Staff at both the CPLRC and CP Library are perceived as very friendly and effective in engaging one-on-one with parents (there is no formal parenting mentoring program/model) and providing opportunities for parents to interact with one another (and with staff, volunteers, and interns) in supportive ways. Staff report that they are cautious about any formal introductions of parents to one another with respect to specific issues that may be deemed confidential; however, informally there may be events and activities when parents are afforded the opportunity (more so pre-COVID-19) to informally get to know one another and develop personal connections. In any regard, the informal efforts of program staff to engage with families in a friendly, supportive, and helpful manner—including personally networking families to an array of collaborative partners and supports that can help strengthen family relationships—were well acknowledged.

Staff at both the CPLRC and CP Library are perceived as very friendly and effective in engaging one-on-one with parents...and providing opportunities for parents to interact with one another (and with staff, volunteers, and interns) in supportive ways.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Help Families Value, Build, Sustain and Use Social Connections.

There were several questions for which the consensus assessment/rating was neither agree nor disagree as there may have been isolated examples of these opportunities in the past (pre-COVID); however, they may not be a standard element of the service and support system. These include the following:

The program provides opportunities for families to socialize and foster a sense of community by organizing/hosting:

- Regularly scheduled parent-child activities such as Play and Learn groups.
- Periodic events like coffee breaks and breakfasts.
- Celebrations, graduations, and holidays.
- Events celebrating cultural customs, potlucks, and other opportunities for parents to share and learn about each other's home lives and cultural backgrounds.
- Social media groups or web pages where parents can get program information and interact with one another.

Program staff encourage newcomers and isolated or marginalized families to participate in program activities by:

- Calling, sending notes, or making home visits inviting them to program activities.
- Connecting with them on social media platforms through program pages or groups.
- Offering support with transportation, childcare or other barriers to participation.
- Making special efforts to connect them with other families who share similar interests.

Staff receive training on how isolation or reluctance to participate can be the result of social exclusion due to differences in race, language, culture, appearance, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc.

The team agreed that all the above opportunities (resources permitting) for families to socialize would benefit families, especially those events/activities that focus on parent-child engagement; some of which could be led by a professional and be developmentally (for the child) specific/focused. CPLRC and CP Library staff highlighted an interest in exploring the possible development and start (or re-start in some instances) of some of the above listed items/supports/activities. With respect to parent-child activities and engagement, team members reiterated the value of a past program at the CP Library that engaged fathers with their children while promoting literacy called "FRED" (Fathers Reading Every Day). This program focused on dads reading with their children. The team reiterated comments and points denoted in their discussion on promoting Parental Resilience that resulted in an action item that

demanding the exploration of options/possibilities to provide more father-focused programming at CPLRC; perhaps in collaboration with CP Library³.

Although there is an interest and motivation of program staff to reach out to and engage with marginalized families (the “...passion is here, the commitment is here...” noted staff), these activities are impacted by the availability of staff and resources. The CPLRC is smaller than other RCs in Gainesville and heavily reliant on the use of volunteers and interns. Volunteers are helpful, but not always a reliable source to be used for some program or outreach activities. The team agreed that it is important to have a presence and be able to connect and promote supportive connections with and between patrons using social media. The CP Library (CPL) has used eBranch software to monitor the use of the eLibrary that integrates with the patron’s social media account. The CPL currently utilizes Instagram and Facebook as social media platforms, although expansion to include the use of platforms such as Tik Tok and Snapchat (more targeted toward younger audiences) may be considered, along with the integration and sharing of these resources across/between CPLRC and CPL. The value of having weekly posts on social media regarding events and activities related to the CPLRC and CP Library was reinforced. The team recommended the following Action Item:

Action Item #1: Explore social media utilization strategies for CPLRC (perhaps in collaboration with CPL) as a means of engaging/connecting with patrons and their families (including marginalized groups) and disseminating information regarding program and resource supports/opportunities.

Resources (especially staff) at the CPLRC are too limited at this time to engage in any additional supports or select special efforts denoted above to encourage and engage with isolated and marginalized families to participate in programs; however, staff are sensitive to these matters and personally reach out as best they can to any family in need of support. The team agreed that there should be some attention given to these items, but no action item was or would be recommended until more opportunities and resources (including staff) are available at CPLRC.

The lack of a consensus agreement on the question dealing with specific training received by staff resulted from uncertainty among team members regarding what training was available and provided to program staff (including volunteers and interns). Although staff do receive mental health training and additional trainings on topics highlighted in the question, other training would be welcomed. Subsequently, the following Action Item was recommended:

³ Please see the following report for more information on this discussion and associated Action Item: Perry, R., Lancaster, C., George, C., Goodman, R., Haughton, L., Jenkins, L., Johnson, D., McMillan, A., Reed, E., Seawright, S., & Spoliansky, T. (2021). *The Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team’s Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

Action Item #2: Determine which trainings associated with diversity and other issues (including, but not limited to, mental health issues/topics) that staff receive and those that might have relevance for an expanded group of participants (including Community Ambassadors, other patrons, etc.).

How Does Cone Park Library Resource Center Create an Inclusive Environment?

There were 13 questions associated with three broad indicators that attempted to gauge the extent to which CPLRC has created an inclusive environment. There was consensus agreement on nine (69%) that CPLRC's programs and staff model positive social skills and community building, as well as help staff learn how to reduce stereotyping and bias. There were four questions where team consensus was within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range.

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well that Creates an Inclusive Environment.

The program and its staff model positive social skills and community building by:

- Welcoming all families.
- Inviting all families to program parties or social events.
- Encouraging newcomers and reluctant families to participate through special outreach efforts.
- Helping to resolve conflicts among participants.
- Promoting families' understandings of different cultures and backgrounds.
- Working with participating parents to establish ground rules for programs and activities that ensure inclusiveness.

The program helps staff learn how to reduce stereotyping and bias by:

- Providing professional development opportunities on intentionally countering stereotypes and biases (including both explicit and implicit forms of biased behaviors).
- Intervening appropriately to counteract prejudicial or discriminatory statements from children or other adults (e.g., discussing similarities and differences, establishing rules for fair treatment of others).
- Ensuring that any instances of prejudice are quickly and explicitly addressed, and that staff use any such incidents as opportunities to demonstrate program values of inclusion and respect.

These findings reinforce other findings discussed by the team with respect to other protective factors (see Parental Resilience report) regarding "...the overall positive impact and meaningful practices (through multiple formal, informal, and regular communication methods) that the CP Library Resource Center and its staff (including volunteers and interns) engage in that recognize and affirm the central role of parents in their children's lives; provide multiple avenues/means for regular communication with family members, and make all family members feel welcome" (Perry et al., 2021, p.7). Team members reiterated these sentiments and see staff as positive role models with good communication skills who authentically care about patrons and families.

Team members...see staff as positive role models with good communication skills who authentically care about patrons and families.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Create an Inclusive Environment.

The program helps staff learn how to reduce stereotyping and bias by:

- Modeling inclusive behavior among the staff.
- Providing training and support for helping families and children resolve conflicts effectively.
- Regularly reviewing policies, forms, and documents to ensure that all content discourages beliefs and practices that stereotype, marginalize or discriminate against families.

Families are encouraged to reach out and engage other families, including newcomers and more isolated members, in the program community.

Although there were three questions (relating to helping staff reduce stereotyping and bias) for which there was not consensus agreement, differences in individual ratings were reportedly a function of limited knowledge select team members had about internal trainings and interactions between CPLRC staff.

Considerable conversation was held regarding the value and need of enhancing connections within the community and between/amongst individuals and families within the service area of CPLRC. It was thought that enhancing connections may lead to the development of “trusting” relationships between patrons that subsequently may enhance the likelihood of community services and peer/patron-based supports. For example, there was agreement that a valuable resource for parents/caregivers would be trustworthy babysitters. Within the community, limited meaningful connections (between families) can adversely impact the likelihood of developing trusting relationships that could address fears and “safety concerns” that responsible parents have prior to selecting a babysitter. When it comes to the safety of children, responsible parents are cautious about who they trust, and trust doesn’t come “...easily.” The lack of connection that results from limited trusting relationships/connection among/between parents and families, it was held, can further the feeling of isolation among many patrons and families in the community. It is important to note that these comments were made within a context of positive feedback regarding the trusting relationship that patrons have with the CPLRC Manager given her willingness to listen and provide helpful advice and supports. Although the CPLRC Manager and staff have been able to develop meaningful, supportive relationships with parents and families that are trustworthy in nature, the same quality/level of trust is not easily afforded/built between families, although it is ideally desired (if feasible). Brainstorming, the team identified several ways that patrons and families can get to “...know each other” better. Some of the ideas included the following:

- Informal community events as a possible “steppingstone to further connections.” Ms. McMillian underlined the importance of meeting people more than once or twice as a necessity to building trust.
- Ms. George shared her experience meeting with the gardening group for the Cone Park Library community garden. People would show an interest in this activity and start up conversations. After a long break due to COVID-19 they recently reunited and resumed activities. Ms. George spent hours weeding the area in advance (a commitment to the group) so that when they all came together, they could get started with planting right away. Here, a shared interest/purpose served as an opportunity for “...relationships to start.”
- Ms. Reed shared that she has seen people connect at the food distribution activities (a Concrete Supports activity); an informal opportunity to connect and build support networks. Patrons who didn’t know each other in advance would find each other and strike up a conversation in the parking lot, get to know each other and share phone numbers and contact information. These opportunities were seen as occasions for connections to “...happen naturally.” Increasing opportunities for informal connections between patrons and households may reinforce these “natural” connection processes.
- Opportunities may already exist as a starting point for engagements that can be built upon. Ms. Johnson suggested building in intentional time during scheduled events, providing opportunities for people to connect. Ms. Seawright shared that she has icebreaker sessions during her “Fight for your Money” (financial literacy) classes for this reason. The follow up meeting to the “Fight for your Money” class was very successful, and participants were able to rekindle the connections they had created in the first class. It was highlighted that for relationships to develop there needs to be some “patience” as comfort and trust development takes time. Further, it was noted that opportunities for engagement and connection (whether formal or informal) should be “respectful” of people’s “...preferences for engagement...” with some importance tied to “...face-to-face opportunities”

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The CPLRC Manager would like to see CPLRC be more sensitive to adding/expanding opportunities for patrons to connect while respecting their privacy and autonomy. Many of the team members thought it to be very important to have events and to communicate face-to-face when building trust and friendships and that repeated opportunities need to exist for building and “fostering a continuum of relationships”. During COVID-19, limitations have been placed on organizing face-to-face events. Ms. Lancaster suggested having small thematic social media groups on platforms like Facebook or Google + that allow for more one-on-one connections. This would be a group created based on shared hobbies or attending a group of common interests. Ms. Reed explained that CPLRC does not have its own social

media page and there is no one who could manage a page like that to keep toxic people from disrupting processes and connections (a potential liability). These considerations led to the following Action Item:

Action Item #3: Explore how (structure and feasibility given benefits and concerns) social media groups can supplement existing CPLRC and CPL structured (face-to-face) activities and help foster meaningful connections among participants.

How Does Cone Park Library Resource Center Facilitate Mutual Support?

What CP Library Resource Center Does Well that Facilitates Mutual Support.

There was consensus agreement with a series of five statements examining the means and mechanisms by which the CPLRC helps facilitate mutual support among parents and patrons. These items include:

Administrators and staff seek opportunities to build good relations within the immediate neighborhood or local community (e.g., inviting neighbors to open houses, using neighborhood resources for special projects, building relationships with local schools).

The program encourages staff and families to participate together in community improvement or advocacy projects.

Staff are visibly engaged with issues of concern to the community and are actively involved with other community organizations.

The program provides and receives support from the local community (e.g., financial support, donated services, volunteer service, tangible gifts, discounted services, letters of support).

The program connects parents to local opportunities that promote family enrichment (e.g., reading hours at the library, parent-child book groups, cultural heritage events).

Discussions and points highlighted earlier in this report and other SFSA team reports, it was thought, reinforced the agreement that these are actions/activities where engagement exists. These agreements highlight important strengths of the CPLRC leadership, staff and volunteers and feature, in part, behaviors and practices that have contributed to the perspective that "...people generally do trust the resource center to be [there] for them."

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for CP Library Resource Center to Facilitate Mutual Support.

There were four questions for which there was a consensus rating of Neither Agree nor Disagree:

The program encourages parents to set up mutual support mechanisms (e.g., phone trees, carpools, babysitting co-ops, play groups, social media groups or pages where parents can communicate with one another).

There is time built into program activities for parents to network and share with each other.

Parent-organized social/educational events and activities are encouraged and supported by:

- Providing information on outside activities for parents to attend together (for example, gathering at playgrounds, fun fairs or libraries).
- Providing supports such as gathering space, childcare and food so that parents can organize and participate in activities together.

There was notable discussion (but no recommended action item) related to questions associated with parent-organized social/educational events and activities being encouraged and supported. Although select members supported the facilitation of some of these activities, the team sought information from Ms. Reed as to whether parents/patrons have approached her suggesting an interest (i.e., if there was an expressed need) in activities identified by these fidelity items/questions. Ms. Reed indicated that parents and patrons usually initiate contact with her for assistance with “...personal issues”, not connection resources or supports highlighted by these items. However, CP Library staff have, on occasion, been approached by community members/groups about using their space for select activities (e.g., a breast-feeding group; tutoring groups, etc.). The Cone Park Library has more space than CPLRC and can accommodate select groups; these requests have been honored. Staff and administrators from CP Library and CPLRC asserted their willingness to collaborate with one another to help facilitate any supports for community groups wanting to use their facilities (especially the CP Library) for meetings and events. Ms. Reed shared that many of the events they have done in the past were an initial response to situations that occurred in the community. The fall festival was initially created because patrons expressed fears of clowns (the Pennywise monster clown on social media scare some years ago) and fears about human trafficking. The fears about human trafficking (giving news/social media reports of concern about a white van associated with abductions in Gainesville in the past) led to the implementation of a self-defense class. The fall festival was structured as a celebratory and safe community event. Another example is the gun safety event, planned in response to recent shootings near the SWAG Family Resource Center. These planned events were responsive to community fears and anxieties and were meant to promote awareness, enhance communication, and disseminate knowledge about timely issues impacting the community. These types of events are likely to continue, along with a receptiveness to encourage and respond to the need for more parent-organized social/educational events and activities.

Fidelity of Social Connections Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

As denoted earlier, the SFSA Team identified the weighted average team score as the consensus measure for each item associated with the Social Connections assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)⁴ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores

⁴ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Social Connections Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 25 (of a possible score of 43) or 58%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Social Connections were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families' Protective Factor Framework.

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The Cone Park Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As shared earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, CPLRC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the CPLRC in accordance with the CSSP's protective factors framework. The biographies of these team members are detailed below.



Celia George has been a patron at CPLRC since 2015. She is a Florida native and has spent much of her life living in Gainesville, FL. She graduated from the Santa Fe College Police Academy and went on to work with the University of Florida Police Department. During her time as a police officer, she moved near Morningside Nature Center which is only a few miles from the present location of CPLRC. She has raised two daughters who have gone on to be college graduates, building upon her successes. When Celia retired, she turned her attention to her grandchildren and began using the Fred Cone Park Facilities with them. She has made sure they are included in CPLRC summer camps, family events and activities like Homework Help and Girl Scouts. One of her granddaughters currently participates in the Girl Scouts program at CPLRC. She frequently uses the track behind the Cone Park library and attends the food distribution programs. She has been an encouragement to her twin grandchildren who have started using the track as well. She wanted to be a part of this SFSA Team because "I want to help make a difference". Celia loves Cone Park because "it serves so many different purposes and meets the needs for so many families in the community".

Ruth Goodman has been a patron at the CPLRC since 2019. During that time, she also utilized services at the SWAG Family Resource Center and the Library Partnership Library Resource Center. She was born and raised in the French West Indies but after visiting the United States as a young woman she decided to stay and make a life for herself in the US. She married at age 19 and has raised 4 children with her husband. After retiring as a lead teacher for 20 years, Ruth now focuses on assisting with her 10 grandchildren. One of the ways she does this is by reaching out to the Resource Centers. She is happy to be a part of the Cone Park Library Resource Center because “it's very helpful and informative for children and families and the community”. Ruth wanted to be a member of our Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team because she wants to be a part of any work that could potentially help keep families together.



Lovell Haughton has been a patron of the CPLRC since August 2020. She is a native of New York but has been in this community for 30 years. Lovell has experience working with community organizations, resources, and support services for those diagnosed with HIV. Her drive to care for others pushes her forward in everything that she does. She strives to maintain and build partnerships with families and be a support and liaison for them. She also acts as a support for her family and 7 grandchildren. Lovell has enjoyed working with the CPLRC because it's community and family oriented.

Lashon Antonia Jenkins first became involved with the CPLRC 10 years ago, as a patron to the CPL. Lashon is a Gainesville native, residing on the eastside of town, where the CPLRC is located. For the past 10 years, she has been an employee with Partnership for Strong Families in the adoptions department. She has worked directly with CPLRC as an intern this last year to satisfy requirements for her Master of Social Work degree. Currently, Lashon holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Human Services degree. Her parents also live in the community, and she makes time to visit them regularly between school, work, and an occasional rest. Lashon likes the way patrons are treated by the staff as they seek services that they do not have access to, like computer use or emergency food and clothing. She is glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because “when we know how to grow, it will make it that much better.”



Diane Holt Johnson was born in Newark, New Jersey and has worked in Gainesville, FL for six years. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in Sociology and the University of South Florida with a master's degree in Library & Information Science. Diane has a lifetime of experience volunteering in churches, non-profit and social service organizations (i.e., United Way, Take Stock in Children, Boys & Girls Club, Reading Pals, American Cancer Society, local Community Development Corporations, and grassroots neighborhood associations.) She and her husband of 42 years, Derryl, have raised six children, who are their proudest accomplishments. She loves the CPLRC because it values families and works to preserve them; emphasizes preventing and protecting families from disasters rather than correcting after the problem has festered; and provides programs to "help families help themselves" as much as possible. Diane has been glad to be a part of the SFSA Team because it gives voice to the patrons, who historically have not been asked to have input into the programs and services designed for them.



Artie McMillan has been a patron at CPLRC since 2014. She has been a part of the local community for 14 years and frequented the Cone Park Library before the Resource Center opened. Artie has dedicated her life to serving others and has compassion for people who have fallen on hard times and are experiencing homelessness. She knows what it's like to struggle and wants to help people in need. Artie also has an entrepreneurial spirit and has managed her own restaurant, daycare, and prayer ministry in the past. Her dream would be to work on a Tiny House community that could serve as a one-stop center for people experiencing homelessness, offering practical help to stabilize them. She lives with her son and her two grandchildren that she has legal custody of through Partnership for Strong Families. In 2014, she began seeking regular services at CPLRC when the children came to live with her. Artie loves the care and compassion that is displayed at CPLRC and says, "you can feel the good energy". She joined the SFSA Team because she trusted Erica's advice that she would be a good fit and because she wants to make a difference and have her voice heard, "not as a victim but as the victor".



Erica Reed has been the Resource Center Manager of the CPLRC since 2016. She has been in this community her entire life and many of her family members live in the community. Erica graduated from the University of Florida with a B.S. degree in Family, Youth and Community Sciences with minors in nonprofit organization, leadership, and human services. In addition to her education, she has experience working as a Guardian Ad-Litem, a case manager for high-risk cases and in licensing foster homes. Erica has been married for 23 years and lives at home with her husband, two boys and two girls. She has a genuine compassion for people and loves the CPLRC because it gives her the opportunity to help individuals and families in need. Erica is pleased with the SFSA Team process because it brought together a team with a common goal of wanting to make things better and because she wasn't alone in the process.



Stephanie Seawright has been a member of the Gainesville community since 1987 and has been working with the CPLRC since 2017. She helped develop the local A. Quinn Jones Museum and Cultural Center in Gainesville and works with her church and sorority to be of service to mankind. With a lifetime of experience serving others, Stephanie chooses to collaborate with CPLRC because she loves that the staff are helpful and care about the community they serve. As the Chief Operations Officer of the Central Florida Community Action Agency, she works to bring services like the “Fight for your Money” class to patrons of the Resource Center. Stephanie chooses to be a part of the Strengthening Family’s Self-Assessment team because she is impressed with the work that the Resource Center does and wants to be a part of its success in any way.

Although not formally members of the CPLRC SFSA Team, **Robin Perry** (Lead Evaluator) and **Christen Lancaster** (Community Research Coordinator for the CP Library Resource Center) attended each of the CP SFSA Team meetings, they, and **Toni Spoliansky** (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended the majority of the meetings served as key supports for Team processes. Robin Perry provided initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and recommendations by the Team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying Team members’ views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the CP Library Resource Center. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the CPLRC, and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Lancaster maintained regular contact with Team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. Robin Perry and Christen Lancaster took the lead on report writing summarizing findings generated from the SFSA process. Toni Spoliansky served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual Team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the CPLRC.

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