



A Comprehensive Focus Group Analysis on the Extent that Staff at PSF Family Resource Centers Listen to and are Supportive of Patrons

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Contents

Focus Group Methods.....	2
Questions for Patron Feedback Groups	3
Are Patrons Listened to and Supported?.....	5
Theme One: Responsive Listening	7
Theme Two: Patron Empowerment	10
Theme Three: Praise and Affirmations.....	12
<i>General Praise and Affirmations Subtheme</i>	14
<i>Collaboration Supporting Child Development</i>	15
Theme Four: Relationship-Based Support.....	18
Theme Five: Aware and Respectful Staff.....	21
Summary	23
References.....	24

Focus Group Methods

As part of a broader evaluation effort, the utilization of focus groups of patrons receiving services and supports at each of the project family resource centers was proposed to help answer general questions related to fidelity of services and supports to the protective factor model, the reach of FRCs' efforts, and implementation drivers, solutions, and barriers. The FRCs include the Cone Park Library Resource Center (CPLRC), the Library Partnership Resource Center (LPRC), the SWAG Family Resource Center (SWAG FRC), and the NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC). Please note, although initially identified as "*focus groups*" within the evaluation plan, the phrase "*patron feedback groups*" was substituted for these efforts following consultation with evaluation team members and advisory groups (that included patrons) that suggested the revised group reference would be more engaging and inviting for prospective members¹.

Detailed information related to the methodology guiding the sample selection of patrons to participate and other procedures and limitations associated with the evaluation design can be found in a separate brief (see Perry et.al, 2024). Further, a separate guide was produced that highlighted in detail the processes and protocols utilized in forming and facilitating the patron feedback groups and the structure for the content analysis, results of which are detailed in this report (see Institute for Child and Family Services Research, 2023). In sum, patron participants were randomly sampled to participate from a sampling frame of patrons that consented to participate in the formal evaluation. The selection was stratified across PSF Family Resource Centers with two groups per FRC. Efforts were made to secure between 6 and 10 participants per group with 75% of participants serving as caregivers of children (an additional stratum for selection) given that one of the objectives (among others) of the evaluation is to assess the effect

¹ Methodological and planning considerations were still guided by theory, principles and protocols associated with the term "focus groups" and other qualitative/narrative approaches for planning, implementation/data collection, and content analyses found with the normative/professional literature.

of FRCs in their capacity to prevent maltreatment and family involvement with child welfare systems. Although focus groups are FRC specific (and analyses can be stratified by FRC), some commonalities of perspective across FRC focus groups were identified that permit an aggregation of findings (and identification of an aggregate content saturation level) in select analyses denoted in this and other reports.

Questions for Patron Feedback Groups

The generation and final selection of questions to be asked with each feedback group was multifaceted and involved a few iterations. First, draft questions were constructed in consultation and brainstorming with other project staff, project implementation team members, and select PSF and FRC administrators. Following refinements to these questions, feedback, edits, and question suggestions were solicited via survey methods from key stakeholders that have been a source of information and consultation for other process evaluation activities. These individuals included program managers at each FRC, and members of each FRC SFSA teams (which include patrons/community ambassadors, key program staff and volunteers, and collaborative partners from the community). Although the survey was made available in electronic format, it was also available in paper form, if requested. One group of respondents—members of the Cone Park Research Advisory Council—met in-person as a group to discuss each question and provide feedback on the content and structure of select questions. The responses from surveyed stakeholders were reviewed, tallied, and summarized. At least one question originally aligned with each protective factor was chosen for inclusion for feedback group procedures deemed to be of highest rated value to “...best understanding patrons' experiences at, and the impact of, each family resource center.”

The final set of questions (and associated sub-questions) included the following:

1. How does [FRC name] assist individuals and families with immediate needs?

2. What resources and supports do they provide?

Have they been helpful?

3. Were the activities and programs welcoming and inclusive? Did they make families feel comfortable interacting with others and participating in activities?

4. When interacting with staff, are you listened to and supported?

Do you think program staff are willing to work collaboratively with you to support your child(ren)'s development?

5. When thinking about yourself or other caregivers in the community, did the services and events at the resource center help manage stress?

Did these services help you to better deal with the demands of parenting during stressful times?

6. What additional services do you need as a caregiver to better cope with everyday stressors? What additional services do you need to cope with the stressors in your community?

7. Do program activities support your children's social and emotional development?

8. Do you think that [FRC name] resources have helped caregivers in the community from being involved with the child welfare system?

9. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences with [FRC name]?

This report highlights findings generated from discussions associated with the fourth question and its sub-question. Content and thematic analyses¹ focused on the aggregation of responses across both these questions. This occurred given processes that were manifested within the feedback groups. The fourth question (and its sub-question) was answered by participants considering their personal knowledge and experiences interacting with staff.

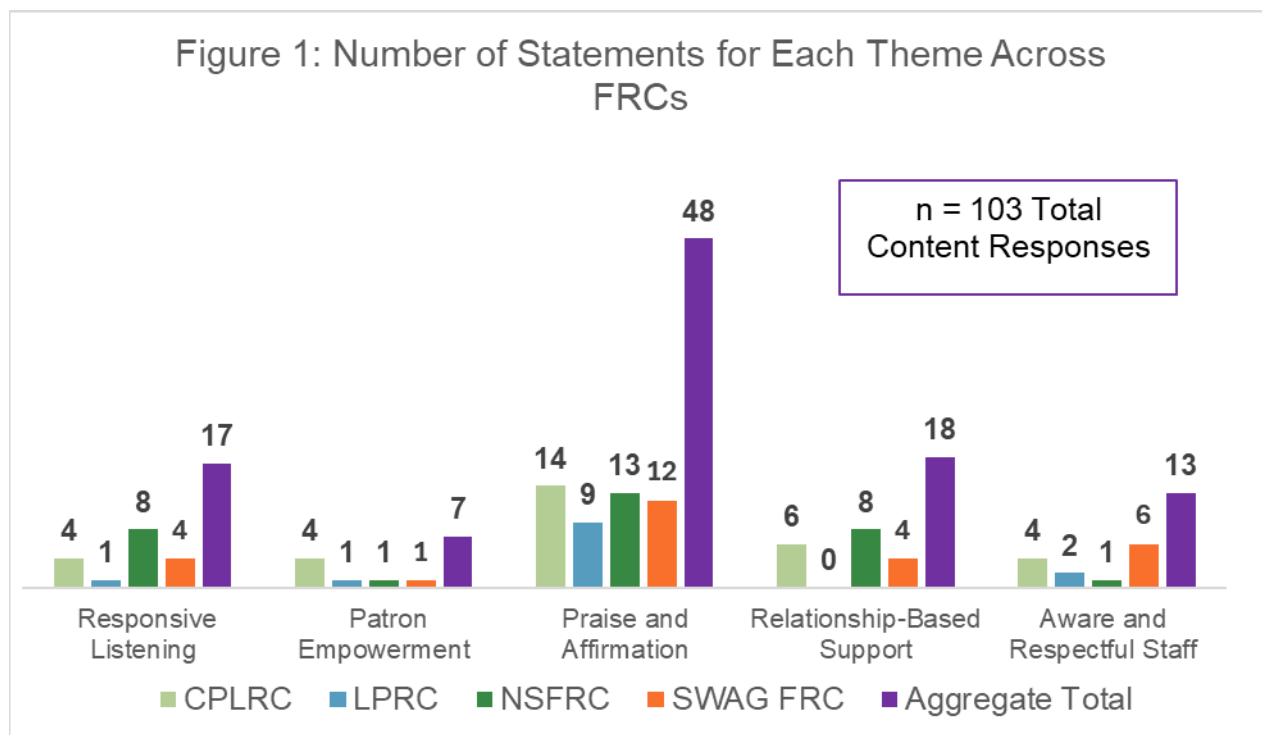
¹ See Perry et al, 2024 for more details on theory and methods guiding this process.

Are Patrons Listened to and Supported?

This report is an analysis of patron answers across all FRCs to the questions: *When interacting with staff, are you listened to and supported? Do you think program staff are willing to work collaboratively with you to support your child(ren)'s development?*

Responses to these questions were detailed and comprehensive. After the content analysis of recorded transcripts, five overall themes of responses were identified. These themes related to a characterization and identification of *Responsive Listening* skills of staff, a focus by staff on *Patron Empowerment*, general and strong *Praise and Affirmations* of staff for their attributes of listening and being supportive, the nature and quality of *Relationship-Based Support* received from staff, and acknowledgement by patrons that they engage with *Aware and Respectful Staff*.

Figure 1 itemizes the frequency count of each theme represented by statements of those who attended patron feedback groups across each FRC. Please note that a captured statement may be as short as a word or affirmative agreement (in response to another person's statement) or as long as a paragraph with multiple quotes. Select statements by individuals may contain content that reflects multiple themes. For example, although 66 unique statements were transcribed that reflect responses to these questions, content analyses identified 103 instances of established themes being represented by these statements. The total count of statements for each theme is stratified by FRC. Figure 1 provides the sum of content statements for each theme broken down by FRC along with the aggregate total of each theme. The count of statements demonstrates some level of commonality of importance/relevance of select themes across FRCs.



Among the 103 content responses to these questions, the theme most represented (using aggregate data) related to *Praise and Affirmation* statements (n = 48 or 46.6% of all thematic responses). There was mild variation in the distribution of aggregate number of statements representing each of the other themes, from a low of 7 (6.8%) for *Patron Empowerment* to a high of 18 (17.5%) statements representing the theme that spoke to the *Relationship-based Support* provided by staff at FRCs.

The theme of *Responsive Listening* is represented by content that highlighted specific interactions with staff where patrons denoted that they were reliably/consistently listened and actively responded to. The theme of *Patron Empowerment* is represented by content denoted by patrons that highlight interactions or perspectives reinforcing their sense of being valued as equal partners (with staff), in relationship roles with others (including family members), and as active participants in activities implemented at the FRCs.

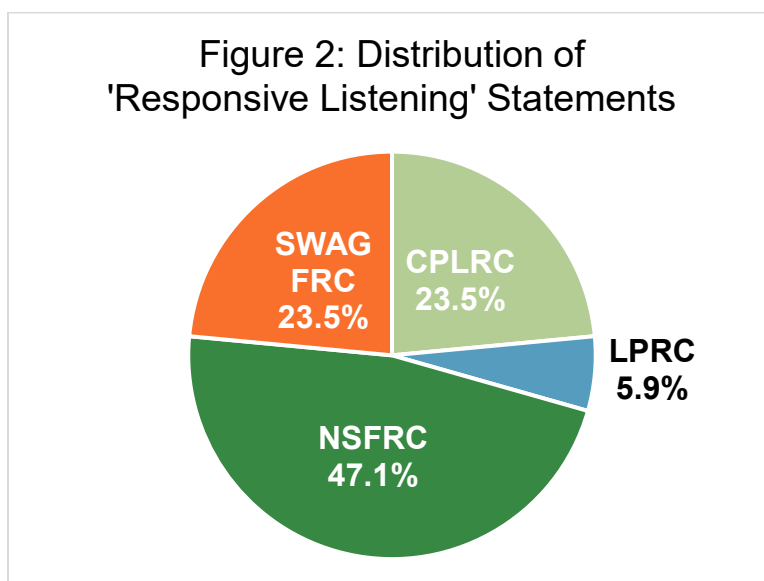
The theme of *Praise and Affirmations* includes a series of comments, some brief and others more elaborate that simply affirm or acknowledge that they are listened to and supported by staff. Some affirmations are accentuated with emphatic praise of the FRC staff and/or

operations, while others praise select staff and/or summarize positive experiences demonstrating the support parents have received that aids their child(ren)'s development. The theme of *Relationship-Based Support* focuses on content that highlights the perspective and experiences of patrons regarding the importance of meaningful relationships with FRC staff. These meaningful relationships are manifested through the attentive and responsive attitude of staff, a quality level of familiarity and rapport with staff, and consistency in interactions with staff that are perceived as caring.

Finally, the theme of *Aware and Respectful Staff* focuses on content from a collection of statements that mention select characteristics of staff that represent interactions between patrons and staff that are perceived as authentic, genuine, and respectful. Some statements highlight the experiential knowledge and empathy of staff as a foundation for their community awareness, including an understanding of real issues impacting families within the community served.

Theme One: Responsive Listening

The theme of *Responsive Listening* is represented by content that highlighted specific interactions with staff where patrons shared that they were reliably/consistently listened to and actively responded to. For example, a desired/meaningful action by staff in response to statements made by a patron. Here, said action corroborated the extent to which patrons felt listened to and represented some benefit to the patron. There were no subthemes identified for this theme, as the title of '*responsive listening*' aptly described the statements from patrons. These statements reflect the extent and manner by which they felt listened to and, when applicable, how staff responded to their interactions.



There was a total of 17 content statements that were associated with a theme of responsive listening for which 47.1% (n = 8) were generated from patron participants at the NSFRC, 23.5% (n = 4) at the CPLRC, 23.5% (n = 4) at the SWAG FRC, and 5.9% (n = 1) at the LPRC (see Figure 2). Comments were affiliated with three individual patron participants at the CPLRC), five patron participants at the NSFRC, one patron participant at the LPRC, and four at the SWAG FRC.

Linked to this theme, several patrons reinforced the fact that they felt heard/listened to in an active manner with staff being attentive, deferring judgement, and demonstrating (verbally and non-verbally) that they are listening and care to know and understand what the client is saying and/or requesting. These sentiments were manifested across all the FRCs and reflect experiences like one NSFRC patron who stated, *“I definitely think on a personal level that there's support and that you're heard and listen[ed] to ... it's just a nice thing to ... feel heard and connected.”* Another patron commented on the value of an attentive listening staff member when dealing with life stresses stating when *“... life dumps other things in your lap, ... it's good to have somewhere to come to [NSFRC] where somebody can offer you just [a] listening ear,”* later noting that *“you can come in here [and] ... unload. [laughing] ... you got somewhere to go, somebody to talk to [at the FRC].”* A SWAG FRC patron highlighted that staff are proactive in

engaging and listening to patrons: *“You know, the SWAG right here ... they come when you come in, they'll talk with you.”* These experiences were contrasted against other experiences select patrons had when seeking assistance or information from other resources within the community where there is *“no communication”* and interactions made them feel *“embarrassed,” “stupid,”* and they were looked at *“...like you had three heads when you asked a question [the answer] you didn't know.”* In contrast to other settings, at the FRCs patrons are reportedly tended and responded to, as one LPRC patron notes:

I've seen a lot of people come in and get help, I've never seen any of the staff people snub them or, you know, be in a hurry and shove them off or any of that ... that's huge, especially when you're trying to reach out for the first few times to get some help...

Patrons reinforced that staff who listened carefully and empathetically (and without judgement) were able to engage in efficient and effective problem solving with patrons. For example, one patron reflected on her hesitation and embarrassment with seeking resources (e.g., *“diapers and stuff”*) for her infant child from the CPLRC. She praised the responsiveness of the CPLRC Program Manager who listened and *“...made me feel like okay...”* for seeking and receiving requested help. Her request and associated conversation with the staff member led to the identification of other resources the patron and child could benefit from, all the while making the patron *“... feel kind of a little better knowing that I'm not the only one who is like this type of situation. So that really helped a lot ...”* A similar experience was noted by a SWAG FRC patron who reflected on the responsiveness of a staff member: *“Like ... I came in needing help and she helped me with way more than what I asked for.”* Additional comments highlighted the attentiveness of the CPLRC Program Manager in assisting patrons with securing concrete supports, as well as, listening and responding to new ideas (denoted as *“good ideas”* by the Program Manager). Patrons would have such ideas about services and supports that could be integrated into the FRC (which were considered and followed up on). This level of responsiveness to requests and conversations with staff across the FRCs related to needs

affiliated with a series of concrete supports (e.g., income and public benefit support, infant needs/diapers, utility assistance, etc.), child development issues and supports, and parental resilience.

The extent to which staff follow up with patrons on matters discussed and responded to, was highlighted by several patrons (most notably at the NSFRC) as an indicator that they were actively listened to, and staff authentically cared about their well-being:

... you know you can have a conversation with someone [other agency or community resource] and ... you feel like they didn't hear you, the next time you see them, nothing would ever come up. But I feel like when you interact with them [staff at NSFRC], they're always asking you. 'Hey, how did that work out?'

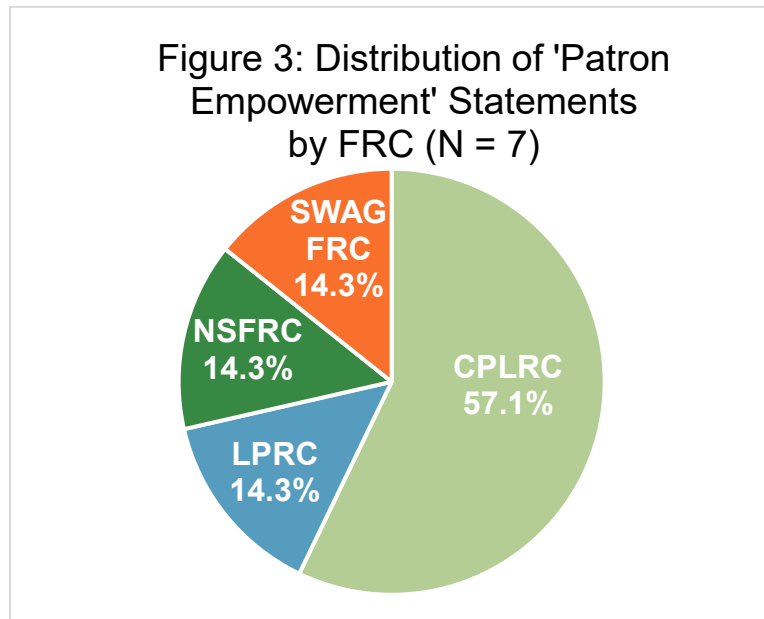
I feel like all of them [FRC staff] are really good on the follow up too. That's a ... big part of anything because I could present a problem to you all day and you could be working on it. But if there's no follow up, I have no confidence that knowing that there's going to be a resolution to it ... When I came here [NSFRC], ... I got a [follow-up] phone call. I think I got 2 phone calls ...

I got all of these follow-ups ... I feel like in terms of communicating, she's [NSFRC staff] like that ... There is nothing that goes across her desk that she couldn't tell you where it is or ... what you need to do ... she keeps track of all that stuff ... You're a part of communication ... So having ... the follow up ... I just think it's really good here ... They're really good at it.

Theme Two: Patron Empowerment

The theme of *Patron Empowerment* is represented by content shared by patrons that highlight interactions or perspectives reinforcing their sense of being valued as equal partners (with staff), in relationship roles with others (including family members), and as active participants in activities implemented at the FRCs. There were no subthemes identified for this theme, as the title of '*patron empowerment*' aptly described the statements from patrons within the context of answering questions regarding the extent and manner by which they felt listened and responded to by FRC staff. There was a total of 7 content statements that were associated with a theme of patron empowerment for which 57.1% (n = 4) were generated from patron participants at the CPLRC, 14.3% (n = 1) at the NSFRC, 14.3% (n = 4) at the SWAG FRC, and

14.3% (n = 1) at the LPRC (see Figure 3). Comments were affiliated with two individual patron participants at the CPLRC, and one patron at each of the other FRCs (NSFRC, LPRC, and SWAG FRC).



Four of the seven comments spoke about interactions with staff, who reportedly listened to what the patron disclosed. Listening became an impetus for an engaged dialog where the patron's thoughts and ideas were reinforced and served as a foundation for exploring, expanding, and/or considering the modification of service and support initiatives. At the CPLRC, a patron participant spoke at length of how the program manager sat down with her and listened intently to her ideas about helping low-income patrons become more economically self-sufficient through education and speaker/workshop initiatives, teaching patrons how to start their own business, and use social media in ways to get more income. These ideas were praised and reinforced by the program manager who promised to explore these ideas (and did):

About a couple of weeks ... I came up with ... this idea ... and when I brought it to her [the program manager] she said 'oh, [identifying information excluded] that is so great ... that could help some of the families that is on low income' ... [adding, that the program manager said] 'I didn't think of that ... thank you ... Thank you so much ... we'll get on it ... It would be kind of good for us, the neighborhood.'

The program manager at the CPLRC was described as someone that not only listens but encourages patrons to approach her if they “*come up with any ideas*” that “*people can benefit from*” with special note being made of ideas focused on helping those that need “*an increase in their income or something*” and those “*not working.*” These interactions with the program manager (and the general disposition of the program manager with all patrons) at the CPLRC were described by one participant to be “*self-confidence*” building, helping to aid patrons “*...to better themselves and not just stay in the same old rut.*” These sentiments were not isolated at the CPLRC. The patron comments at the three remaining FRCs reiterated that they “*always*” feel comfortable bringing forth ideas to FRC staff that were very resourceful or “*...woke with what’s going on...*” in the neighborhoods and community served. A patron at the LPRC commented on a staff member:

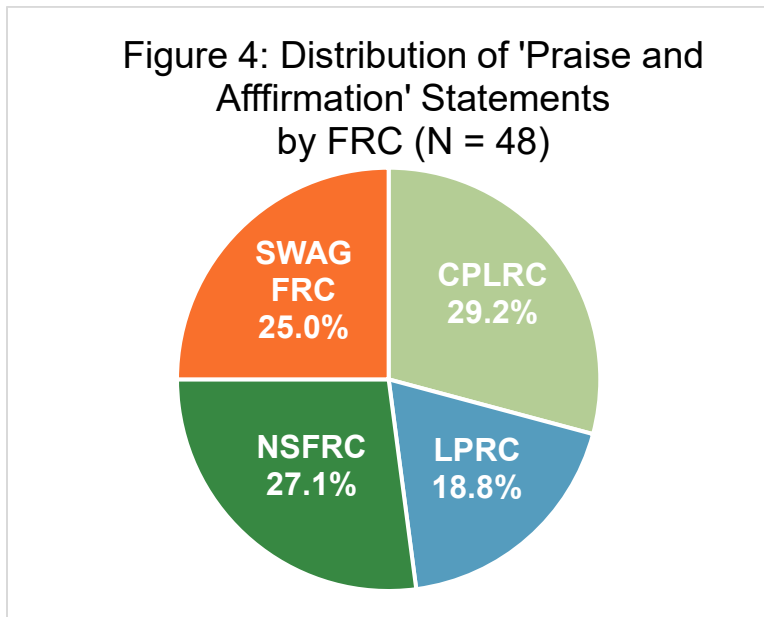
... she [staff member] was asking my feedback [on the clothing closet] ... she was asking me if I think that there was any need for a change. I said no. Everything is neat. Everything is in order. So, to just keep it like that ... she listened, and she told me thanks for my input, so yeah. She took the time to listen to me and what I have to say.

Finally, one patron from the CPLRC made note of how a staff member listened not only to them but the interactions between the patron, who is a mother, and her children. In interacting with the children, the staff made note of the importance to the children to listen to their mother; an interaction the patron appreciated and found reinforcing of her parental role with the children.

Theme Three: Praise and Affirmations

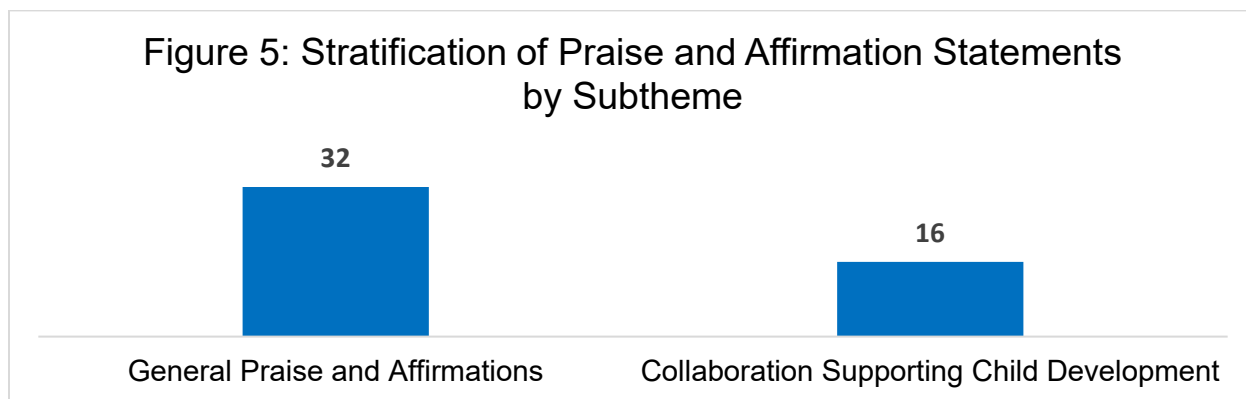
The theme of *Praise and Affirmations* includes a series of comments made by patron participants, some brief and others more elaborate, that affirm or acknowledge that they are listened to and supported by staff. Some affirmations are accentuated with emphatic praise of the FRC staff and/or operations. More detailed comments praise (with examples) select staff and/or summarize positive experiences demonstrating the support parents have received that aids their child(ren)’s development. There was a total of 48 content statements that were associated with a

theme of praise and affirmations of which 29.2% (n = 14) were generated from patron participants at the CPLRC, 27.1% (n = 13) at the NSFRC, 25.0% (n = 12) at the SWAG FRC, and 18.8% (n = 9) at the LPRC (see Figure 4).



Content related to this theme was manifested within every patron feedback group.

Overall, comments were affiliated with seven patron participants at the NSFRC, seven patron participants at the SWAG FRC, six individual patron participants at the CPLRC, and four patron participants at the LPRC. Thus, most of the patron participants expressed general affirmation and uniform praise of staff's ability and willingness to listen and respond to patrons, represented by one subtheme with 32 statements. Additionally, there was a focus on the quality of collaboration of staff with parents to support their child(ren's) development, represented by a second subtheme with 16 statements (see Figure 5).



General Praise and Affirmations Subtheme

There were a total of 32 statements that represented a general affirmation and praise that patrons are listened to and supported. Among these 32 statements were 22 statements that were simple affirmations, typically brief one to three word statements in response to the main question, such as (multiple similar responses existed): “yes,” “yeah,” “yes, *that’s right*,” “hell yeah,” “most definitely,” “they do,” “very much,” “oh, definitely,” “100%,” and “absolutely.” There were an additional 10 statements that provided a simple affirmation with an added comment that praised the FRC (and/or select staff members), examples of such praise (linked to affirmations that patrons are listened to and supported) include:

“... y’all sit and y’all listen, like, y’all sit down and help everybody, don’t change, keep it going ...”

I’ve had nothing but great times here. When I do come, you know I’m sitting and waiting for somebody else to get their services. Someone always asking. You telling me what’s going on or something is going on that day. So it’s wonderful, just keep keep it up.

“She [FRC staff member] took the time to listen to me and what I have to say.”

Well, you know, whenever I come in here, they, they’re always welcoming and courteous and you know, attendant to whatever need I have. And I’ve come here for a number of different kind of things ... I feel very comfortable coming here for anything that I need.

The reason I feel like these young ladies [FRC staff members] are the perfect people for this ..., they’re here ...to change things. They’re going to see something happen in some people’s lives They’re here to change things. They’re trying to make a change for us, for the women ... kids ... They welcome us. They want to change things for us. They want to help us. That’s what I see. They, they are great. I love [them].

Collaboration Supporting Child Development

The second subtheme focuses primarily on responses to the sub question that asked, *Do you think program staff are willing to work collaboratively with you to support your child(ren)'s development?* Here, a general affirmation was followed by a descriptive narrative with more details regarding circumstances or examples of how collaboration between the FRC (or a specific staff member), an FRC partner, and/or a parent/caregiver benefited their child(ren)'s development and made the FRC to be “...*just a wonderful place...*” With all the content and examples presented (16 statements in total), patrons reiterated that FRC staff actively listened to patron statements and responded efficiently and effectively to needs related to their child(ren)'s development.

Some examples focus on physical and concrete support needs for a child. These included aiding patrons directly with the provision of diapers, infant clothes, infant formula, food, and (as noted on two occasions) assisting/collaborating with the patron (new or expectant mother) to enroll and secure resources through the WIC (Women, Infant, and Children's)¹ program. A patron at the NSFRC highlighted the importance of concrete supports for her infant in the interim of receipt of WIC support: “*He [infant] needs pampers ... came right here, was able to get Pampers. We're able to get Ensure milk. Until we got his WIC thing going and stuff, everything right here [at NorthStar FRC], there's no problem.*” A patron from the CPLRC spoke at length and with great appreciation for the supports she received after she arrived at the FRC with her newborn child:

... he was like a month old, and I was running low on pampers and [staff member name excluded] [was] 'like, oh, you got the son now ...I didn't know you was pregnant,' ... we got a baby basket ... we get together the diapers and all type of stuff ... I'm like, OK, that that became very useful. At that moment ... I was ... not working ... So, that really helped me out a lot ...

¹ For more information regarding the administration of the federally supported WIC program in Florida, please see the Florida Department of Health website: <https://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/wic/index.html>

She went on to explain how the staff member assisted her in getting additional food to help support her, her newborn, and her three additional children and how valuable it was that she “... *could ... walk up here and get food.*” These resources have been of value for all infant and child caregivers. Another patron (a grandparent) described (with relief) how she was able to access resources to care for her grandchild who was unexpectedly left in her care: “... *my daughter had to go out of town to work and so she left her baby with me.*” Of note, were the supplemental comments describing how the collaboration and receipt of supports for their child(ren) were received without stigma but with care and respect:

Like you know, I'm saying like ... I feel bad. Like we low on food, I got four kids. Embarrassed, I didn't want to come up [to the FRC] because [of] ...my pride ... I kind of had to ... lower my standards down a little bit and come get stuff and like ... they welcome you and stuff. They made me feel like okay ... [the staff person said] ... like here we got all this type of stuff. Get your kids some sweets and stuff ... so my kids grabbed everything. So, it's like, okay I feel kind of a little better knowing that I'm not the only one who is like this type of situation.

I know a lot of places you can go and feel extremely uncomfortable asking or getting help, and I feel like in the past few years, just coming here ... I feel respected ... I feel like some [other] places you go, you ... feel like they're ...belittling you like [mimicking someone arguing] what do you want? (unintelligible) hurry up, get out of here ... You don't want to be talked to like a child when you're asking for help because you're still an adult.

The concrete supports provided to parents to assist with meeting their child(ren)’s needs made the LPRC a “... *big part ... [and] ... resource to others in the community that may not have other resources*” adding:

... if somebody has a full-time job and they make lots of money, they don't really care. But people who are struggling, who have kids, going through divorce, or, you know, have lost a job, or [are impacted by] COVID, or somebody sick or, you know, the average person needs resources, and they need to know that they're available, especially when children are involved ...

Additional collaborative efforts to assist patron’s children focused on supporting patrons in their roles as parents through the provision of helpful/supportive parenting advice, modelling appropriate adult-child interactions, and in supporting their child(ren)’s social and emotional

development. Patrons with children (across all FRCs), expressed gratitude for the “*very supportive*” direct services provided, along with staff efforts to coordinate/collaborate with partners to ensure their children received: “*tutoring,*” needed “*one-on-one to help better them with whatever they [children] lackin on,*” could participate in Girl Scouts, could go on “*camping trips,*” and receive outside assistance for behavioral health issues/problems a child was exhibiting and the parent(s) were struggling dealing with. On a few occasions, patrons made note of the skill set of select staff in interacting with and establishing a supportive relationship with children (to the benefit of the child and in modelling good communication skills for parents):

I know I expressed to [NSFRC manager] about my son when he has these little emotional outbursts ...he's ADHD...he [NSFRC manager] would counsel him ... put him to the side, you know, follow up and ask him 'how you doing today', you know ...get him talking...[My son is] ...comfortable with him [NSFRC Manager], so [now] he coming [and saying] ...where's [NSFRC manager] at?

“[LPRC staff] ... talk to him [child] if he has any kind of issues at school or anything. So, I feel like that's the good ... they're [staff] good about, you know, trying to solve it.”

Yes, ...they [SWAG FRC Staff] talking about your family. I come in for my bills and it's not only talking about my bills, they say 'hey how is the kid?, what are they doing?' ... most people, when they work, they don't really listen to the kids as much as they listen to the adults, but here they do.

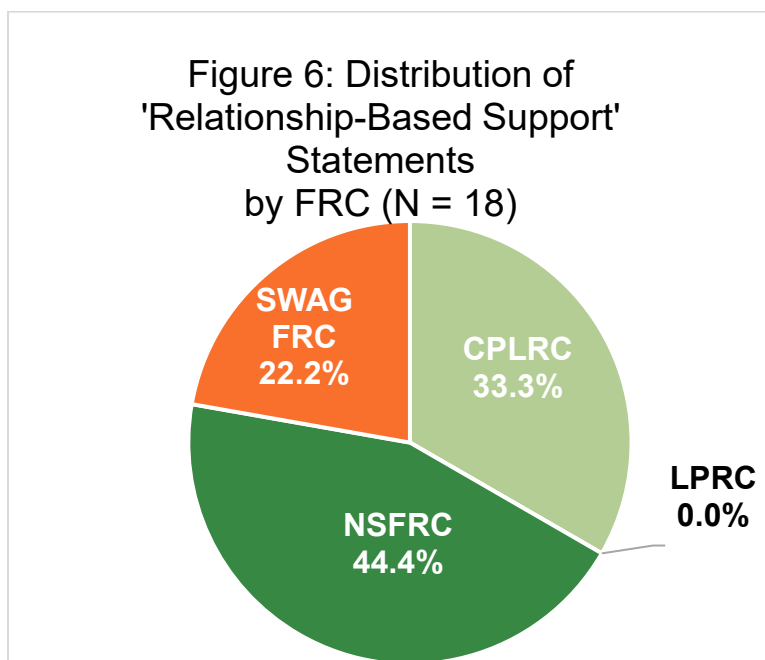
Finally, a note is made of two comments where patrons highlight examples of how FRC staff seem to genuinely care about parents and want to assist them in their role. A SWAG FRC patron highlighted how “*great*” staff were because they legitimately “*...want to change things*” for “*women*” and “*kids*” and “*...see something happen in ... people's lives*” for the better. One NSFRC patron highlighted a communication with the program manager that was much appreciated and kind:

... you know, [FRC manager] is so approachable and reachable. I live like, you know, 15 minutes from here and sometimes I'm running late to pick up my grandson from tutoring. I can call him, or I can call them and say, hey, could you stay there a few more minutes? I'm on my way, and he would say 'well, just take your time now. Don't rush and get into an accident. Because if you not here, I'm gonna take him to church'

[both attend the same church and service was that evening] ... *It's good to have this program.*

Theme Four: Relationship-Based Support

The theme of *Relationship-Based Support* focuses on content that highlights the perspective and experiences of patrons regarding the importance of meaningful relationships with FRC staff (within the context of being listened to and supported). These meaningful relationships are manifested through the attentive and responsive attitude of staff, a quality level of familiarity and rapport with staff, and consistency in interactions with staff that are perceived as caring. There were no subthemes identified for this theme, as the title of 'relationship-based support' aptly described the statements from patrons within the context of answering questions regarding the extent and manner by which they felt listened and responded to by FRC staff. There was a total of 18 content statements that were associated with this theme for which 44.4% (n = 8) were generated from patron participants at the NSFRC, 33.3% (n = 6) at the CPLRC, and 22.2% (n = 4) at the SWAG FRC. There were no theme affiliated statements observed with the LPRC content (see Figure 6). Comments were affiliated with six individual NSFRC patrons, four CPLRC patrons, and four SWAG FRC patrons.



Among the CPLRC feedback groups, one patron spoke admirably, highlighting how “wonderful” it was that there was “someone always asking” about her and other patrons’ day when they enter and are “sitting and waiting ... to get services.” Although such exchanges can be perceived as good service quality skills, this and other patrons reportedly perceive these efforts at engagement as authentic concern and interest in the patrons, a foundation for relationship building. The remaining five theme-based statements from CPLRC patrons highlighted more specifically the relationship each had with the program manager. The program manager was perceived as “non-judgmental” and caring, who had a legitimate interest in the well-being of patrons. Her responsiveness to patrons was acknowledged to have been very helpful, welcoming, and of assistance in aiding patrons in gaining “self-confidence” helping them do “better” for themselves. As patrons described circumstances by which they came to know and interact with the program manager, they provided examples that exemplified their trust and subsequent respect for the program manager’s concern and perspective and their desire to seek her advice and attention:

I feel like she [the program manager] would be honest with me. You know ... because she has a way of saying things to you ... I had been wrong about some things, you know, ... it was the way she came to me and presented the truth; had me to look at where I was wrong when I was in error, you know ...

“I can't really say I'm too close with any other staff members because really, I'll be coming back to see [the program manager] ...”

Another patron, of the same faith as the program manager, spoke affectionately of the program manager’s attention to the patron’s loss of a loved one and willingness to grieve and pray with the patron:

When my cousin died a few months ago, they prayed, they prayed you know for ... strength ... it was a sincere prayer out of the blue. It was like, alright, let's get together and pray. And I was just here to pick up food and I left feeling ... love ...

Among the eight theme-based statements made by NSFRC patrons, four focused on exchanges that suggested relationship-based support with the program manager, two focused on

exchanges and relationships with the NSFRC administrative assistant, and two spoke generally about staff. With respect to the program manager, he was described as “*approachable and reachable*” and someone that adults and children are “*comfortable*” talking to. He already had an established identity within the community (that patrons were aware of), through faith-based activities and a local church where the program manager (as a pastor) already had relationships with many within the community. Knowing the program manager (and his family) within the community reinforced one patron’s comfort level with seeking help from the FRC: “*I’ve known [the program manager’s] family all my life, so I feel very comfortable coming here [NSFRC] for anything that I need.*” Although faith-based connections may serve as a foundation for building helping relationships at the FRC, another patron highlights that “*... sometimes you don’t want all your business in the church.*” That said, it appears the program manager and other staff can compartmentalize and deal with dual relationships (faith-based and FRC-based) ethically and effectively. This same patron highlighted the (confidential) responsiveness of the NSFRC staff when she came to the FRC on one occasion “*in tears*” and staff listened and helped put her “*...in the right mindset*” adding “*it’s good to have somewhere to come to where somebody can offer you just listening ear.*” Another NSFRC patron highlighted the “*personal*” nature of communications with staff that do a “*wonderful job*” and help patrons feel “*connected*” with staff and others. Two additional patrons praised the communication and engagement skills of the NSFRC administrative assistant, whom, like the program manager, has a historical presence (in terms of public service and a local church/faith-based group) in the community served. Her behaviors and interactions are described to be friendly and caring, where she is attentive to the needs of patrons and follows-up and makes inquiries regarding their well-being and status of early efforts of support (e.g., outside referrals, application submissions, etc.). She is described as a “*...good community person*” by one patron, whereas another patron describes interacting with her as “*you’re a part of communication.*”

Among the four content statements by SWAG FRC patrons, two highlighted the quality and nature of relationships staff have with children and youth, their interest in asking parents about their children and their well-being, and staff's ability to model appropriate child-rearing behaviors/relationships with children by providing structure within a caring environment:

When you come in here, these volunteers and these women who work here, they're the ones doing the parenting ... giving them [children] direction ... telling them right from wrong ... when you come to the age you know right from wrong, you know better and your momma shouldn't even let you go off if you're a terrorizer and you got bad behavior problems ... these ladies don't play ... they show them [act] very professional, they show them love [that] ... most of them can't get at home.

The remaining two statements emphasized the positive benefits of having staff that listen, are “someone to talk to,” that help “clear your mind,” in a non-judgmental manner without “fear” of select personality attributes and communication styles of patrons:

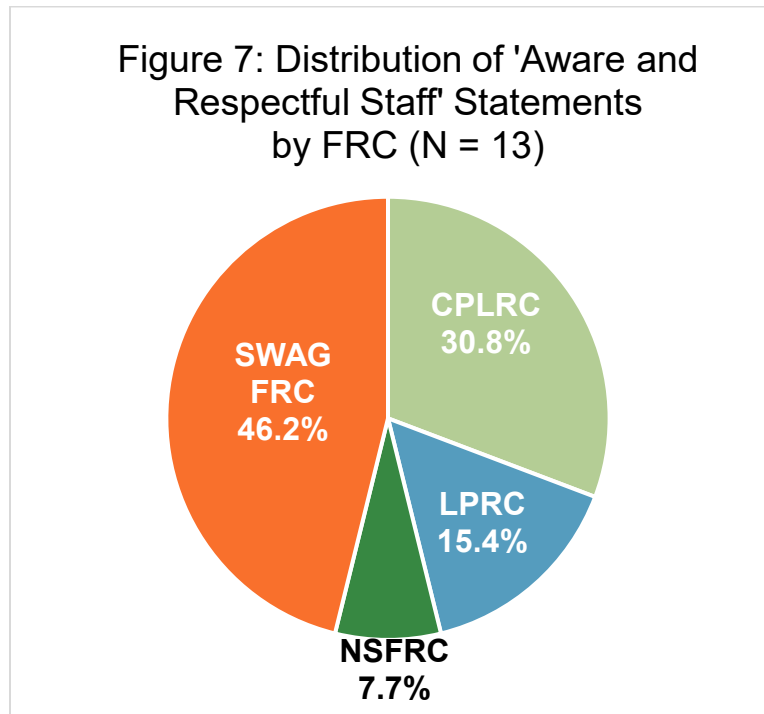
I can ... come across like I'm a loud talker, she [SWAG FRC staff] has experience like she's not afraid to hear my voice ... She's not fearful of that energy and so that's something good ... She's not fearful of me being passionate when I speak to her ... That's really good. She gets it before I get it.

These staff traits and communication skills seem important toward establishing meaningful working relationships where patrons feel respected when listened to and supported.

Theme Five: Aware and Respectful Staff

The final theme of *Aware and Respectful Staff* focuses on content from a collection of statements that mention select characteristics of staff that engage in active listening and are responsive to patron needs. These characteristics speak to or represent examples of interactions between patrons and staff that are perceived as authentic, genuine, and respectful. Some statements highlight the experiential knowledge and empathy of staff as a foundation for their community awareness including an understanding of the context (and history) of real issues impacting families within the community served. For the 13 content statements associated with this theme, six (46.2%) were attributed to patrons from the SWAG FRC, four (30.8%) were from the CPLRC, two (15.4%) and one (7.7%) from the LPRC and the NSFRC, respectively. The 13

comments were made by nine different patrons, with four patrons affiliated with the CPLRC, two from the LPRC, two from the SWAG FRC, and one patron from the NSFRC. There were no subthemes identified for this theme, as the title of ‘aware and respectful staff’ aptly described the statements for the small set of patrons across each FRC.



Six (of the 13) comments (across all FRCs) simply note that staff are respectful in their dealings with patrons. These comments accompany, or are correlated, with many of the more elaborative narratives affiliated with other themes denoted in this report. Three comments from CPLRC patrons note that they are respected, one patron emphasizing that “...*just coming here ... I feel respected,*” while others highlight how respect is manifested by staff that are “*nonjudgmental,*” accepting of the person as they are, “*honest*”, “*courteous,*” and not making any patron “...*feel stupid.*” One SWAG FRC patron described staff as “*peer-to-peer advocates.*” The remaining comments, some reflective pondering, by patrons, speak of the capacity of FRC staff to be empathetic and suggest this disposition extends from a knowledge and understanding of the community, the needs of families within the community, and a genuine desire to help. These sentiments are reflected by the two SWAG FRC patrons who note that “*people [staff] that*

are here, want to be here...” and are “*perfect people*” because they “...*want to change things....*” These same staff are described as “...*woke with what’s going on [in the community]*” suggesting one staff has “...*witnessed it through something*” and can empathize or “...*act like they’ve been there [same situation as the patron]*” even though (as one patron notes) “...*she hasn’t been through half the crap I’ve been through.*” These reflections are paralleled at the NSFRC where one patron described how staff seem to understand patron and family needs before the patrons do, stating “*They get it before we get it, they got it.*” This same patron provided an example of a staff member she’s known through church, describing her as a “...*good community person [who] goes to my church,*” someone connected to the community and personally familiar with families, including the patron’s own family.

Summary

Findings denoted in this report suggest that patrons hold in high regard the care and commitment of staff in their interactions, attention, and efforts to assist patrons in addressing their needs. Patrons uniformly, across all the FRCs, perceive staff (with some individuals— notably select program managers—receiving special recognition) as responsive listeners; individuals that are attentive, genuinely interested in understanding and hearing what patrons have to say, and actively (in a reliable and consistent manner) responding in a meaningful manner to patron statements and requests. These interactions with staff have a direct and indirect effect on empowering patrons who feel listened to, and report being valued as individuals, parents, equal partners (with staff), and active participants in meeting their needs and assisting with the enhancement of activities implemented at the FRCs. The inherent and instrumental value of staff engaged in active listening with an authentic interest in the well-being of patrons is manifested in an abundance of praise and affirmations denoted by patron participants. These interactions, along with other collaborative initiatives, have been positive in their efforts to assist parents/caregivers in addressing the developmental (whether physical, cognitive, and socio-

emotional) needs of their children. Further, reported interactions are described as a contributing factor in the development of meaningful relationships between patrons and FRC staff that are manifested through the attentive and responsive attitude of staff, a quality level of familiarity and rapport with staff, and consistency of quality interactions with staff. Staff are perceived as authentic, genuine, empathetic, and respectful, with an interest and knowledge base that serves as a foundation for a demonstrated community awareness and understanding of the real issues impacting families within the community served.

References

Perry, R., Lancaster, C., & Pegram, H. (2024). *Patron Feedback Group Methodology: Overview & Rationale*. Tallahassee, FL: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

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