



## **A Comprehensive Patron Feedback Group Analysis on Service Needs at PSF Family Resource Centers to Cope with Stressors**

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## 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 (FRC) 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 members<sup>1</sup>.

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

selection) given that one of the objectives (among others) of the evaluation is to assess the effect of FRCs in their capacity to prevent maltreatment and family involvement with child welfare systems. Although focus patron feedback groups are FRC specific (and analyses can be stratified by FRC), patrons at each were asked the same questions. 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, as well as members of each FRC Strengthening Family Self-Assessment (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, upon request. 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” (Perry, Lancaster, & Pegram, 2024).

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 [insert FRC name]?

## Caregiver and Community Resilience Needs

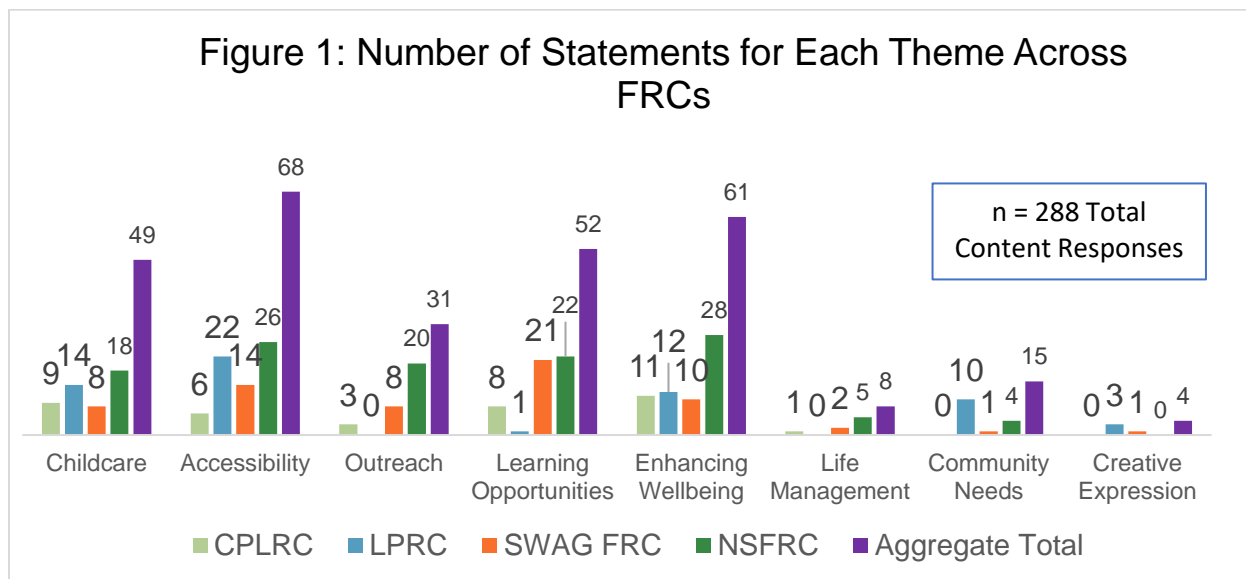
This report is an analysis of patron answers across all Family Resource Centers (FRCs) to the questions: *What additional services do you need as a caregiver to better cope with everyday stressors? What additional services do you need to cope with the stressors in your community?* Patrons provided a rich trove of advice, totaling 288 statements, offering valuable insights for anyone working with communities. After conducting a content analysis of the recorded transcripts, eight overall themes emerged, acting as categories for their suggestions. These themes include childcare, accessibility, outreach, learning opportunities, enhancing well-being, life management, community needs, and creative expression.

Each of the counts for themes represents the statements of those who attended one of the patron feedback groups. 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. The total count of statements for each theme is stratified by FRC. Each theme's content embodies subthemes listed and described at the beginning of each applicable themes section within this report. Figure 1 provides the sum of each statement for each theme broken down by FRC along with the aggregate total of each theme. The count of statements for each theme demonstrates a common level of importance across FRCs. It should be noted, however, that while some counts may be higher at one FRC compared to others, this could be a byproduct of the feedback group process and the variable participation from patrons across groups and centers.

Please note that some service suggestions mentioned are already being offered at FRCs, but the speakers were unaware of them. FRCs provide services based on evolving community needs. To learn about the current offerings, please contact the FRCs directly.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more about our FRCs here: [Resource Centers - Partnership for Strong Families \(pfsf.org\)](https://pfsf.org)



Among the 288 total content responses to this question, the theme of “*childcare*” was represented by 49 (17%) statements. Childcare was broken down into the two subthemes of respite care and needs for a community center. Caregivers, along with individuals who have caregivers in their lives, emphasized the perceived crucial need for childcare. This need was seen as particularly pronounced for those managing job responsibilities and balancing the dual roles of caring for both young and elderly family members. Childcare was seen by participants as having a substantial impact on reducing stress and enhancing overall well-being.

The theme of “*accessibility*” emerged prominently with 68 (23.6%) statements, representing the highest count among all subthemes. This may suggest that accessibility is a crucial factor in addressing caregiver and community resilience needs. Accessibility needs were identified in the following subthemes, including the need for free services, language considerations, transportation needs, and the expansion of the FRCs. Each of these accessibility needs addresses a barrier that induces stress for caregivers and/or community members.

The third theme of “*FRC outreach*” showcases the need for FRC outreach in the community with 31 (10.8%) statements, which are broken down into subthemes of advertisement and community connection. It's worth noting that in response to the question about caregiver and

community stress relief, some patrons mentioned the importance of expansion and outreach. These responses might suggest that FRCs are effectively promoting caregiver and community resilience, so expanding existing services and increasing awareness of available services is what's needed.

“*Learning opportunities*”, the theme with the third largest count of statements (n = 52 or 18.1%), suggests a need for educational classes for all ages. Subthemes were categorized by adult learning, youth learning, and those learning opportunities which allow for skill and passion exploration. Examples were provided of suggested opportunities that could meet patrons' needs and contribute to future self-improvement and self-actualization.

Alongside formal learning opportunities, patrons identified a need for services that focus on the “*enhancing well-being*” theme to relieve caregiver and community stress. This theme, represented by 61 statements (21.2%), was the second highest count, indicating the perceived importance of well-being enhancement services for caregiver and community resilience. These services were conceptualized as mental health supports, peer supports, and holistic services, which address a wide range of needs for the whole person.

The fifth theme, “*life management*”, is straightforward, with 8 (2.8%) statements indicating a need for more informed assistants, such as case managers. Though statements were few in number, there were statements from the CPLRC, the SWAG FRC, and the NSFRC that spoke to this need. No subthemes were identified for this theme due to its straightforward nature.

The following theme, “*community needs*,” speaks to those needs specific to the community which could reduce stress if addressed. Of the 15 (5.2%) statements, these needs were categorized in subthemes which include a need for infrastructure changes, increased access to food, solutions to gun violence, and employment opportunities.

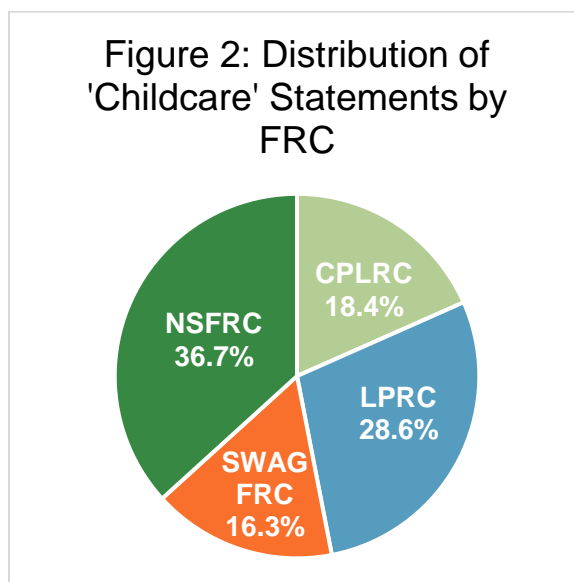
The final theme, centered on “*creative expression*”, highlights how the FRCs can serve as safe and fertile grounds for exploring activities such as music and open mic opportunities, which



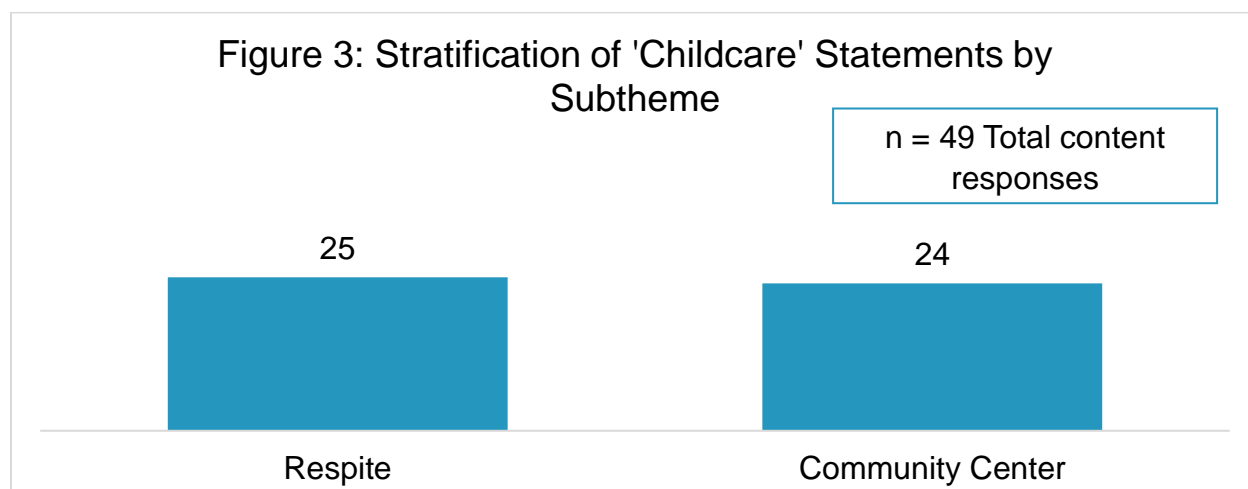
can be both relaxing and transformative. This theme had the fewest statements ( $n = 4$  or 1.4%) and has no subthemes due to its small number of responses.

### **Theme One: Childcare**

Patrons made 49 statements highlighting the need for childcare options for families, emphasizing both caregiver and child well-being. This theme underscores the perceived necessity of childcare to reduce stress and enhance overall well-being. The need is reportedly pronounced, especially for those juggling job responsibilities and balancing the dual roles of caring for both young and elderly family members. Patrons from each FRC generated statements on the need for childcare, with 9 (18.4%) from the CPLRC, 14 (28.6%) from the LPRC, 8 (16.3%) from the SWAG FRC, and 18 (36.7%) from the NSFRC (see Figure 2).



These 49 statements are categorized nearly equally between two subthemes including a need for respite services ( $n = 25$ ) and community centers ( $n = 24$ ). See Figure 3 for the stratification of childcare statements by subtheme.



### ***Respite***

Respite is a short period of rest or relief from something demanding, difficult or unpleasant. In caregiving contexts, it refers to temporary care provided to give the primary caregiver a break from their responsibilities, ensuring that the person in need of care continues to receive appropriate support. The statements advocating for respite as a form of childcare approach the need from three angles: the need for caregivers to have regular breaks, enable caregivers to access services or supports that would otherwise be inaccessible, and the importance of respite in facilitating caregiver interactions. The need for respite was mentioned in 25 statements by 13 patrons across the different FRCs: CPLRC (n = 3, with one instance of multiple speakers), LPRC (n = 4), NSFRC (n = 5), and SWAG FRC (n = 1). Respite services encompass activities that afford caregivers a brief break or relief from challenging or demanding responsibilities. Patron statements not only underscore the perceived necessity of such services but also offer valuable suggestions on how to improve service delivery.

Perhaps the most evident reason caregivers need regular breaks is that caregiving can be challenging. Children, as one patron expressed, offer "*no rest*" to the caregiver, which, as another patron pointed out, "*takes a toll*" on the overall well-being and functioning of the caregiver and ultimately the family. Some caregivers expressed a general need for time off, using phrases like

“I need help with my little chilrun<sup>1</sup>” or affirmatives such as "right, right, right" or multiple speakers saying "yeah" to indicate their desire for childcare to be offered for respite. Examples of statements that reflect a need for respite childcare include the following:

*“I would say something more with help with childcare... you give me an hour or two, I can breathe. But if I have my daughter all day, every day, there's no breath.”*

*There's no mommy time. Like we need our own time, and we can't get it. Like my daughter has seizures. So basically, all her seizures are when she sleep. So, there's been a time where I was sitting to the table eating, she laid down and she had a seizure. Then it was a time I'm in the shower not knowing she's out there on the couch having a seizure. So, it's basically if I don't do everything while she's up, when she sleep, I'm like this [speaker imitating staring at child] and I'm supposed to be sleeping. So, it's 4:00 o'clock in the morning and I'm rolling over 'is she okay, what's going on?' So, I never have a peace of mind for myself.*

*So, I have my mom full time and she's 95, dealing with the beginning stages of dementia and some days it's rough on me and I need somebody to take care of me because I take care of them, you know? So, you know, it would be nice to have extra help.*

*If they could come up with something whereby, you know, caregivers could get some form of relief in the sense that they could have somebody sent to the house for maybe an hour, half an hour, and that person could go out, maybe to shop, maybe to eat, maybe to do, you know, some to swim, to ride a bike, you know, just to relieve some of the stress.*

One patron, a grandmother and community provider, shared her experience working with a young mother who came into her office saying, “I just need five minutes, this is going on, that is going on, I can't breathe.” She empathized with that experience and recalled being a single mother of six herself and having to call her mother asking “can you please just sit here for 5 minutes? I can take a walk.” She recalled the value of respite as like “gold”:

*She [the speaker's mother] would come over and give me that break so that was that was like gold to me rather than I don't need you to buy sneakers. I mean, I just, take them out for a minute. Let me take a hot bath by myself so. Things like that. Getting some, just, some relief. Especially when you're doing everything, everything. You're taking the trash out, you're washing all the clothes, you're doing the dishes you're and then you have to be mommy too.*

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<sup>1</sup> This is a variant of the word "chirren." Read more here: [Urban Dictionary: chirren](#).

She goes on to share that through her life experiences, she tells her adult children “*Look, let’s just be proactive, I want to keep them for a couple of hours*” and encourages her children to “*go to the movies, or go take a walk or go out for the day and come back and get them, cause I understand.*” One father, in her feedback group, responded with an attitude of hopefulness, adding:

*Is it possible to do something like that? ... Maybe like a, a Friday night or Saturday night where just like this, the kids are kept in one room and someone's watching them and then maybe like here [FRC room] is transformed into like just a simple movie night. Nothing even special or anything like that. And it's just things laid out.*

Another patron, liking his idea added “*And let the kids go in the gym*” so that parents were able to socialize while the children were occupied. A third patron again strengthened the need for caregiver breaks even if its short lived:

*And just, you know... for an hour and a half or something that doesn't even have to be anything long. Don't even have to stay for the whole time, [the FRC could bring in someone who knows how to] talk about correct ways to breathe, to relax.*

The second important reason respite was needed in the form of childcare was so caregivers were able to access services and supports that they wouldn’t be able to access otherwise. One caregiver spoke of the patron feedback group itself, praising the evaluation team for offering childcare, “*I think it's good to start offering childcare for today for us to be here.*” She went on to add with a laugh that her granddaughter without that support would be sitting right next to her and “*if she didn't have something to do, I would be in trouble, I wouldn't be able to do this.*”

There were some suggestions at the LPRC regarding a need for support groups which meet as “*a regular thing*” and “*at least once a month*”. Two patrons provided suggestions for how respite may look:

*Food, you know, a cookout, something that, you know, community sponsors could help with, you know, with the food and stuff and with, you know, maybe paying some people to just watch the kids and play with them and engage them while the parents can come over here and have a little support meeting.*

*For kids and caregivers is maybe play dates. Like with the community or here but like maybe, say, Westside Park, you know, advertise to whatever... That you know on Saturday from 2:00 to 4:00, we're going to have people there to help take care of your kids. You know, the parents can go have a swim at the pool and come back, you know what I mean?*

Another patron shared that some caregivers may not be able to go out because they have young children and there may be other reasons which cause them to be homebound, so offering childcare could be a chance for them to come out and get to know what they like to do because caregivers “*don't really know their gifts and their talent you know, and if we [FRC] had some kind of workshop to try to figure out what, what do you like? What do you like to do?*”

The third identified need for respite includes its importance in facilitating caregiver interactions that caregivers may not otherwise have access too. This may be a huge benefit to families, as expressed by one patron:

*having the resources for children to be happy for a while and parents to be able to interact does reduce stress so that domestic violence goes down, communication, loving interaction between children and parents goes up. And so DCF is not involved in that respect at least.*

A patron at a different FRC suggests that families could help each other if they had the opportunity to get to know each other:

*Sometimes families are so hustled, you know, you go to work, you take your kids out after you go to aftercare. You get them home. You bathe them. ... Families that we're working with may not realize that they could use it as such a community to connect for the children to connect or for the mothers to connect, or fathers, you know, to the parents. Caregivers to be able to use that as a support system like, “Hey, we're in the same boat here, let's team up.” You know, “maybe I could pick the kids up one [day]” or, you know, if it's not even that, just being there for moral support to talk to each other...that could be a goal is for some of the families to try to get connected with each other. Sometimes you're coming, you're trying to get your service or your item that you need help with, and then you're trying to get back to your life and I think that that's some of the barriers that that we're trying to break.*

This patron, with work experience in the social service field, explains how childcare could help overcome barriers families face in accessing services. Barriers like financial constraints, work commitments, and health requirements may leave caregivers feeling like they don't have time.

They suggest that advertising childcare could remove these barriers and increase attendance in services.:

*We'll give you childcare during this time, the children will be over here doing this [child activity] while we're going to be right here doing this [requested service] ... And listening to them and what their needs are and addressing it doesn't have to be so structured as to "were on lesson 1.1 today on XYZ", you know. It could be what the parents are showing that they're having issues with, that we, you know, work with each other on that topic. Okay, let's look at the three-year old's behavior, what happened before? How many times does this happen? When does this happen? And getting down to what you can do.*

### ***Community Center***

Community Centers are public locations where members of a community tend to gather for group activities, social support, public information, and other purposes. Patrons identified the need for community centers as a way to provide childcare in 24 statements by 10 patrons across the different FRCs: CPLRC (n = 1), LPRC (n = 2), NSFRC (n = 4), and SWAG FRC (n = 3). In these statements, patrons provided critical insights into the vital role these centers could play in their communities, along with suggestions for the types of services and supports they could offer. This subtheme aligns with the broader theme of childcare, as providing supervised, safe care for children was deemed essential for community centers.

Two patrons at the NSFRC highlighted the need for community centers, one whom shared:

*Cause all these community centers here are closed. This [Richardson Community Center] the only one and they don't, they use it for different things, and that's a whole different fight in this community... but there are no community centers anywhere for our children to go. Children are supposed to be our future. And like she said, it's the gun violence... but that's the main thing is these children. Where is there for them to go?*

There were a few patrons which shared suggestions as to what sort of supports might be provided at those centers. At community centers, youth could “*expend some energy, be around other children, have fun, the parents can, we can sit and talk, and you know... get to know each other too.*” They could have “*games for the kids to play. You know sock hop, 3-legged race, you know*” or a “*Kick ball game.*”

Another patron spoke specifically to the needs of teens stating that community centers could offer them *“little workshops like cooking, sewing. Just regular activities of daily living, ‘ADL.’ Something for them to learn and to grow and to become effective adults in the community if they choose to stay here.”* A different attendee at the same FRC responded, stating: *“We’re probably talking teenage and youth at this point need those life skills of financial assistance and I’m going to say emotional.”* A third patron also offered their support for programs aimed at teens and youth.

In some cases, care for teens with developmental or mental health struggles might also be supported by community centers. A struggling caregiver offered suggestions for community center services:

*Somebody to talk to the kid or somebody else to look at those children to see what their strengths are but there's nothing, absolutely nothing like living with a challenged, mentally challenged kid. When you used to kids that [snaps her fingers] that can catch stuff like that. So, it has taught me a lot of patience. To learn how to deal with them and that goes back to the center too. Yeah, somewhere I can go to try to find help. And find resources where to go to find out how to put up this active VPKr in a class and what can I do if they're acting out in the class other than the school system, want[ing] to put them out and send them out to an alternative school.*

In addition to the need for community centers, discussions also highlighted potential barriers to accessing them, such as their operating hours, affordability, and age restrictions. Operating hours, both in terms of the months the centers are open and the specific hours of operation, were identified as crucial factors for youth access to these facilities. Some community centers reportedly operate only during the school year, leading caregivers to express concerns such as, *“since school is out, programs for these kids, this community... there’s nothing to do with the kids.”* Similarly, another patron shared:

*We can get more programs like not just summer, other programs, programs year-round. You know, to help most of the, the single mothers that... got these kids that need help. Like afternoons with this school studies, yeah... you know something to do to keep em from literally wanna just...and have thoughts because when you don’t have something to do your mind just wander everywhere. You know what I’m saying? You want to stay,*

*you want your kids to stay positive too so you find something, afterschool program, something... and that should be year around. It should not just be summer programs.*

Three patrons at the SWAG FRC expressed concern about children lacking supervision late at night. Extending the hours of community centers could be considered as a potential support for these youth.

The second concern regarding access to community centers specifically relates to the affordability of entry and services. Affordability is also crucial to caregivers, as a few patrons shared, *“If they're going to have all these programs. Where these kids can, can participate in, then they need to lower their prices.”* Another mentioned,

*So, they need to have some type of grants available for those who can't afford it [access to a community center]. So that that those children can enjoy the summer, like every other child, and the families are not stressed out.*

Additionally, another patron highlighted,

*I just think that that [community centers] would be a huge resource because like she said, a lot of us don't have the money to pay O2B kids to watch our kids for two hours. It would be great, but we don't have it. If it comes to you know you pay the utility bill, or you put your kid in ... O2B, you can't.*

Caregivers also emphasized age restrictions as a barrier to accessing services because their youth were either too young or too old to be eligible. In some situations when youths are unable to participate, caregivers find there are no options available for their age group.

One mother spoke of her difficulty accessing a program for her son saying, *“like a program for the kids that are 5 and under. I think that would be awesome too. Because, you know, I was trying to get my, my youngest in here and he's just too young right now.”*

She gave an example of speaking to her youngest son, who is confused about why he cannot enter the space where the older youth, including his older brother, are. She sees his desire and confusion, saying, *“hey, you're too young for their program,”* and he's not understanding, thinking,

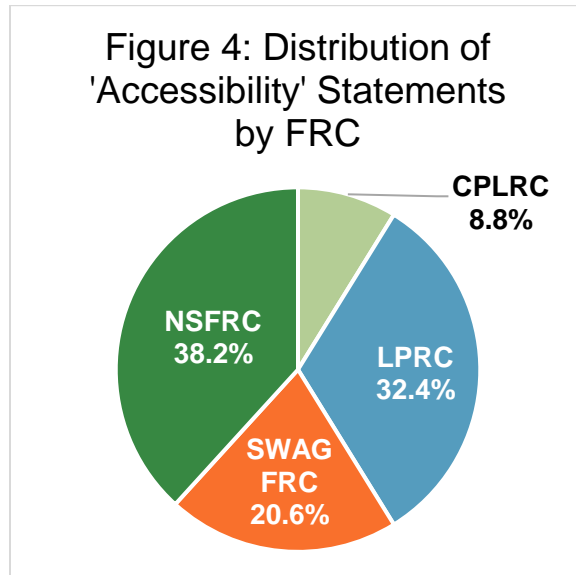


*but they have books that I can read in there that's age appropriate and my brother goes in there and watch movies, you know, we could watch a movie together. Or they might have an event for the kids and he's like, why can't I go?*

She goes on to share, *"I think it would be beneficial for those kids that's out here running around at four or five years old,"* and offers suggestions for this age group *"for the younger ones, even if it's just like story time or, you know, arts and crafts time."* On the other end of the spectrum caregivers offer concerns for the older children who no longer meet the age restrictions saying, *"after 12 years old. 13 and up. Then they've aged out of some of the program[s]. But we know 13, 14, 15, they need something to do to stay not in trouble."*

## **Theme Two: Accessibility**

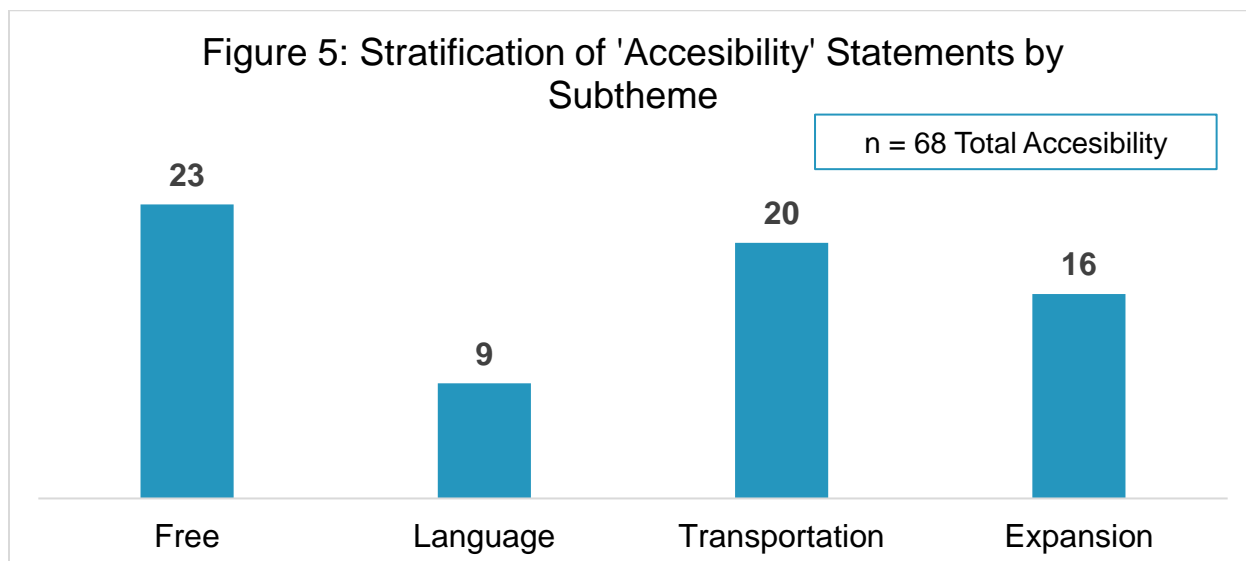
The accessibility theme delves into how patrons articulate their needs in relation to the barriers that hinder their access to services, with a focus on accessing the services and overcoming the barriers.



Patrons from each FRC generated statements on the need for accessible services with 6 (8.8%) from patron participants from the CPLRC, 22 (32.4%) from the LPRC, 26 (38.2%) from the NSFRC, and 14 (20.6%) from the SWAG FRC.

These 68 statements are categorized by subthemes which narrow in on accessibility needs including the need for free services (n = 23), overcoming language barriers (n = 9), accessing

transportation (n = 20), and a perceived need to expand existing FRC services (n = 16). See Figure 5 for the breakdown of these subthemes.



### *Free*

When participants discussed the needs for themselves and others in their community that could potentially reduce everyday stressors, the ability to access free services was of top interest. This was reflected in 23 statements from 10 patrons across different FRCs: CPLRC (n = 3), LPRC (n = 5) and NSFRC (n = 2).

Like the above identified need for community centers, caregivers spoke to the need for things to do with their children that are affordable or free. Patrons highlighted the barrier of pricing which prevents children from participating in programming and events for parents and kids within the broader community. One caregiver, referencing summer programming said, *“Everything comes with a price. Yeah, and not all families can pay that price. [murmurs of agreement] So they need to have some type of grants available for those who can't afford it.”* Another patron added, *“Obviously, it needs to be affordable or free.”*

Two caregivers at the LPRC highlighted their shared frustrations with their financial barriers. The first shared,

*a lot of us don't have the money to pay O2B kids<sup>1</sup> to watch our kids for two hours. It would be great, but we don't have it. If it comes to you know you pay the utility bill, or you put your kid in... O2B, you can't.*

Getting more personal she added, “*And it's stressful when you have a bunch of kids and there's nothing to do.*” The second patron agreed sharing, “*When you want to do something for your kid, and you can't do it.*” Wanting to be able to support their children, both caregivers agreed that the lack of resources can lead to feeling depressed when:

*You want them to have fun, you, you know, and your hands are tied kind of because you know, there's just not a whole lot out in the community at this point at least that is there for people that don't have the resources.*

Some of this conversation centered on the need for free pool services as a resource for families to reduce stressors. One patron highlighted the value of a pool by saying:

*They love to go to the park, you know. And going to the park is cool, but getting wet is even better when it's hot. I mean, it's Florida, you know, it's 90 degrees, 100% humidity. Let the kids get a good swim in, then when they get home, they're going to take a nice nap and get a good night's sleep and the parent can [speaker breathes deeply], ya know. And because kids, I mean, I have a four-month-old grandson, a six-year-old granddaughter and a nine-year-old grandson and they get bored.*

Even as topics progressed, these participants consistently emphasized the need for free pool services, as they are reportedly not currently free. Although costs may seem affordable by some measures, one caregiver detailed how cost can still be prohibitive:

*I mean, it doesn't sound like a lot of money, but when you're talking 10 bucks to go swimming one day and \$25.00 so you can catch the bus to get there. You know you're, you're talking 35 bucks right there, that you can't eat, that won't pay your electric bill...that won't buy the kid diapers or formula or whatever. And all that adds up. I mean it's, it's difficult.*

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<sup>1</sup> O2B Kids is a private company that operates six locations in Gainesville that offer a variety of enrichment and learning environment curricula and activities for preschool and school age. For more information regarding this organization and their programs and supports, see: <https://o2bkids.com/area/gainesville/>

There were 7 statements which spoke to the need for free food services which could include a need for free breakfast and lunches as well as food pantries. One LPRC patron shared that in addition to a pantry, food support could look like:

*Maybe they could just, you know, offer like 1 hot meal to people, maybe have a little breakfast. You know, people have coffee and doughnuts. You know, something like that. I'm just saying, I know it takes money and all of that, but I'm just saying, maybe in the future, something like that, you know? To just accommodate somebody you know, people, a person that might be hungry, they know they could run come and get a cup of coffee, a doughnut, you know, maybe that might make their day. You have something in your stomach.*

Another patron at the LPRC shared her attempt to access food at the FRC's food distribution events by signing up in advance, as is required at some FRCs. They explain that while there were filling out the information, they were kicked<sup>1</sup> out because the allotted slots were filled. The allotted slots are determined by the amount of food expected to be delivered from the distributor, usually Bread of the Mighty Foodbank or Second Harvest. Patrons who are not able to get into the allotted slots are informed that they can come at the end of the distribution time and anything remaining which was not picked up will be given away in a first come first serve fashion. Even so, this may create a barrier for some in need of free food services.

The last statement on this subtheme covers a suggestion provided by one patron at the CPLRC to use "Mommy Dollars" as a way to link the need for parent education on child development with the access of free services. She explains, "*When they watch that video and they earn their, let's say, oh, you get 5 Mommy Dollars with this. Then they can go and maybe purchase the diapers and the shampoos and the wipes and the clothing.*" These items would be obtained from a Family Resource Center (FRC) closet stocked with parent essentials, where

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<sup>1</sup> Being "kicked out" of a web platform when applying means that the application process is interrupted or terminated because the total number of people allowed for that event or activity has already been reached, and there is no more space available.

patrons can exchange their "Mommy Dollars" for "free" items. This approach allows patrons to access free services as an incentive for engaging in stronger parental education.

### ***Language***

There were nine statements from three patrons at the same SWAG FRC feedback group which spoke to a need for more language supports with services. This feedback group was the only one who had attendees who identified as Hispanic. Of the two Hispanic attendees, one was the patron participant who was invited to attend and the other was her 15-year-old son who attended as an assistant (e.g., translator/interpreter) to her. Most of the statements (8 of 9) were from these two participants. They suggest language translation services as a way to reduce stress and provide services because, *“many people, Spanish people can’t do anything like this because don’t have any program that have translation [services].”* Highlighting a need for translation services in the two FRCs they access most often, the mother added that individuals whose primarily language is Spanish don’t come to the FRCs *“because they are scared.”* Her son also provided insight saying, *“Yeah, because like pamphlets, even if they're in Spanish that, it don't, doesn't really answer questions that they have, because sometimes the pamphlet has limited information than someone that speaks Spanish and English could give to them.”*

The third speaker on this subtheme offered a suggestion for a wide array of languages to be covered because she has *“seen people come in here who speak Creole and you know, Haitian and you know different languages get services.”*

### ***Transportation***

The third accessibility subtheme includes the discussed need for transportation services. This subtheme’s 20 statements come from 11 patrons across the different FRCs: CPLRC (n = 1), LPRC (n = 3), NSFRC (n = 4, and one instance of multiple speakers) and SWAG FRC (n = 3). It’s worth noting that Lake City, FL, where the NSFRC is located, is approximately an hour north of Gainesville and lacks a public bus system.

There were nine statements which spoke to the general need for transportation assistance with patrons calling it a “*big need in this community*” and saying “*Transportation assistance, yes. That’s a big need. Yeah, have community bus transportation system.*”

The remaining statements highlight the need for transportation supports in accessing services. Two patrons spoke of transportation fees as being prohibitive in accessing services. Transportation was reported as being needed to access community centers (including the FRCs), services for veterans, employment, and summer food stops designed to help children have nourishment while school is out of session.

Working caregivers who “*can’t get out of work*” or don’t have transportation may not be able to get their children to programs like homework help at an FRC. As one patron shared, some families “*are not economically able to have a car*”. Noticing this shortly after the FRC’s opening, Dr. Philip Mobley, manager of the NSFRC, worked to make arrangements with families in need. Lacking a resource center van, he found the number for the school bus that stops at the nearby Richardson Community Center and shared this with caregivers so they could safely get their children to homework help.

The importance of transportation in accessing services was also highlighted by one patron as a possible incentive to accessing services. If transportation could be offered to them to and from, they may better be able to access the needed services.

### ***Expansion***

When asked *What additional services do you need as a caregiver to better cope with everyday stressors? and What additional services do you need to cope with the stressors in your community?* 16 statements were given that identify a need for expansion at the FRCs. These statements were collected from six patrons across the different FRCs: one from CPLRC, two from LPRC, and three from NSFRC. The statement from CPLRC called for expansion in the form of “*more programs like, not just summer, other programs, programs year-round. You*

*know, to help most of the, the single mothers that... got these kids that need help. Like afternoons with this school studies.”* An NSFRC patron shared frustration that since many community centers are closed and it is summer “*theres nothing to do with the kids*”. They suggested “*summer camps*” and that 12-year-old youth are aged out of some programming, lamenting “*we know 13, 14, 15 [year old children], they need something to do to stay out of trouble.*”

Patrons at the LPRC suggested an expansion of hours while school is out and an expansion of social media services like Facebook groups. Social media expansion was suggested as they remarked on the support they have felt from Facebook groups where they can all talk about their similar struggles and have access to relevant resources.

The remaining statements on expansion were from NSFRC patrons highlighting a need for more funding, staff, programming, and physical space. One patron remarked, “*if we can get the funding. If we can really put it out there, it can really... I can see a lot of things in the future for this program because it really is helping the community.*” They later added, “*So I think all we have to do is expand our program [a] little bit here. And it would just help in general.*” Another patron agreed saying, “*I just think, I'm glad that it's here. I just think we need; NorthStar needs more to help the community ...like I said, the space, the programs.*” Speaking to the need of more case management one patrons shared:

*We need more workers, obviously we know case management, things like that. Case workers are just so overloaded. But I do feel that the personal connection here makes it more realistic if we're going to be more likely to come and get help when they know there's someone that will sit with them rather than if they go in a group somewhere and they feel like they're left out or they don't understand how they use the computer or whatever the, the issues are that personal connection here really does [help].*

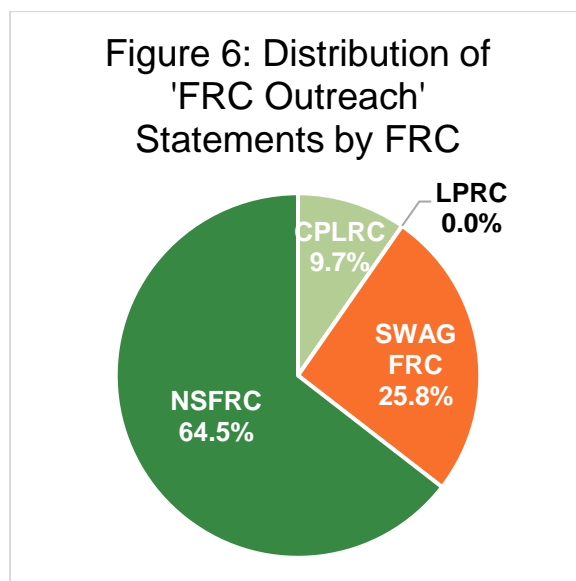
There was some discussion regarding the possibility of obtaining additional property to use for the NSFRC, as patrons suggested a local house believed to be vacant and a building behind Richardson Community Center which was hoped could be donated. More space was

suggested as a gateway to expansion as one patron put it, “*then NorthStar can come in, and maybe then we’ll have more volunteers, more funding coming in.*”

Lastly, expansion in the form of business hours widening was suggested by one patron. The reasoning behind wanting this expansion was related to youth who are competing in basketball not having a way to access the courts and being placed at a disadvantage to other youth whose courts are open longer. Though the NSFRC does not manage or maintain the courts, wider hours may still have been seen as an increased capacity towards keeping them open.

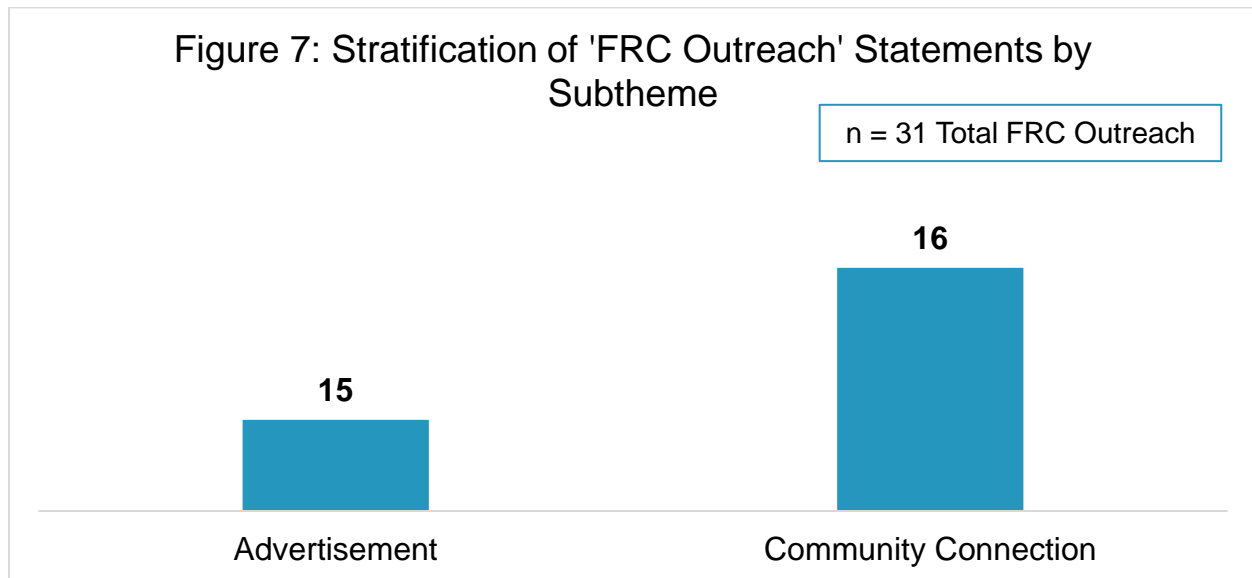
### **Theme Three: FRC Outreach**

This theme, like the previous expansion suggestions, encompassed statements from several patrons who felt that increased outreach efforts were needed so that caregivers and community members were aware of the services and able to utilize them to cope with everyday stress. Patrons from three of the FRCs generated statements related to FRC outreach with 3 (9.7%) from the CPLRC, 8 (25.8%) from the SWAG FRC and 20 (64.5%) from the NSFRC.



The 31 total statements for this theme are categorized nearly equally into two subthemes which include a need for more advertisement (n = 15) and a need for outreach through community connection (n = 16). See Figure 7 for the breakdown of these subthemes.





### *Advertisement*

When patrons spoke of advertisement there were 15 statements coming from nine patrons across the different FRCs: CPLRC (n = 1), NSFRC (n = 4) and SWAG FRC (n = 4). Patrons made general suggestions to increase advertisement and specific suggestions for increasing presence on social media platforms for Facebook (n = 4), Instagram (n = 1), and TikTok (n = 1). As one patron put it, *“I’d like to see more, like I wanna, I wanna see it flood my timeline.”*

A need to advertise through flyers was suggested by four patrons. These flyers may be advertising events or resources provided by the FRC. A SWAG FRC patron shared, *“I think they don’t have the flyers, so they don’t know about the community dinners. I think that’s the issue. If they knew about it, I believe they would call me.”* Another patron suggested advertising through classical means, *“go ahead and keep it every week and put it in the paper, you know, to let people know.”*

Patrons spoke about formal community outreach activities, such as *“canvas[ing]”* and *“go out and spread the word and encourage them to come.”* One patron shares the value of such canvassing:

*Spreading the word, a little more because when you spread the word, you do obviously two things. You’re getting the word out about what you guys do here, and then you’re also forming connections with other community agencies that offer other services and those*

*agencies can in turn refer people families here, but then you can in turn and have a place to refer your families for whatever services they offer.*

### **Community Connection**

Slightly more informal than canvassing there were 16 statements which spoke to the relational aspects outreach built from positive connections in the community. These statements came from six patrons across the different FRCs: NSFRC (n = 4) and SWAG FRC (n = 2). FRC outreach through community connections can take the form of word of mouth and bolstering relationships with local churches which may act as disseminators of information.

Word of mouth connections are all about relationship building with local providers and citizens. As one patron, who is also a community provider at the NSFRC explained:

*That getting out there really and just spreading the word a little more, making the circle just a little bit bigger, you know...and I think it, it takes time. It does take time to get families and communities, community centers and other agencies to really recognize [that you can get multiple types of services, not just the current need].” She goes on to say, “there's others in Columbia County that definitely could use the services that may not know about it... I do feel that the opportunities there” and suggests that surveys could be provided to parents to assess their needs asking, “What would keep you here? ... What would keep you from participating in this? Is it transportation? What if we offered transportation? Is it your schedule? What if we tried to work around your schedule?”*

One SWAG patron spoke of how word of mouth works through sharing of meaningful services saying, *“They wanted to know so they could tell somebody else, and that's, that's the only way that we're going to put the unity back in community if you can share something that's, that's beneficial, then it can spread more.”* She goes on to share her perspective on how to engage veterans in services:

*We have people come from well Partnership for Strong Families, that's for the kids. So Meridian is for mental health. Partnership is for the youth or families with youth. You have the phone... assistance, food pantry assistance... we do need a veteran advocate just once a month or so... because we got a lot of vets that live over here, and they feel like they're excluded, and they're not excluded because we will come take you in too. [Speaking to a veteran participant in the feedback group] We need you guys here.*

She goes on to share that she thinks those veterans that seemingly have nothing to do could, “*be surrogate grandpas*” or help with “*the community garden... its better in the early morning, it’s not hot.*”

Community engagement through community events may also be another way of creating connection as one patron stated:

*So for us to have a movie night, it could be set up at one of them centers and everybody could access it and you know, if were doing stuff in the community and SWAG is part of the community as a resource center, those other centers should be able to partner with SWAG too and do stuff also because their kids are benefiting from the SWAG center.*

The second key focus for community connection building oriented around connecting with local churches. All of these statements come from patrons at the NSFRC. Though the reason for this is unknown, the understanding of Dr. Mobley, the FRC manager, being a local pastor who has worked to strengthen relationships with local churches may have spurred some of this conversation.

One patron spoke of past efforts,

*we used to have a ministerial allowance where the, the pastors and most of these churches in this area would get together and they would do some planning, but we don't have that anymore. Everybody seemed to be doing their separate thing, additionally stating we could really pull that back together.*

She shared her belief that families in need would benefit from these increased connections with churches, as she recounted a story of a mother with five children adding,

*We could increase awareness of the programs and services by doing a little bit more announcements in the churches. In this general area, I mean I, I, I try to go to church every Sunday, but I haven't heard a whole lot of announcements about NorthStar and what they do and refer... an adult or whoever to the program.*

She also suggests that appeals can be made to churches for increased funding or property donation.

Perhaps churches can assist on a cultural/community level with African American support. As one patron put it,

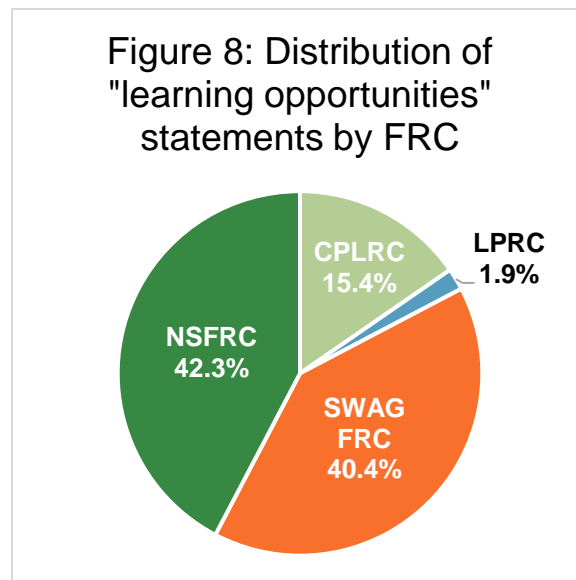
*churches are the hub in the Black community, they need to get more involved...If he [FRC Manager] can have a meeting with the preachers, the ministers in this community, and maybe they can come up with something and help out.*

In addition to one-on-one talks with pastors its suggested that FRCs be shared,

*“Announce every Sunday, but just put it on the bulletin board for others to know.”*

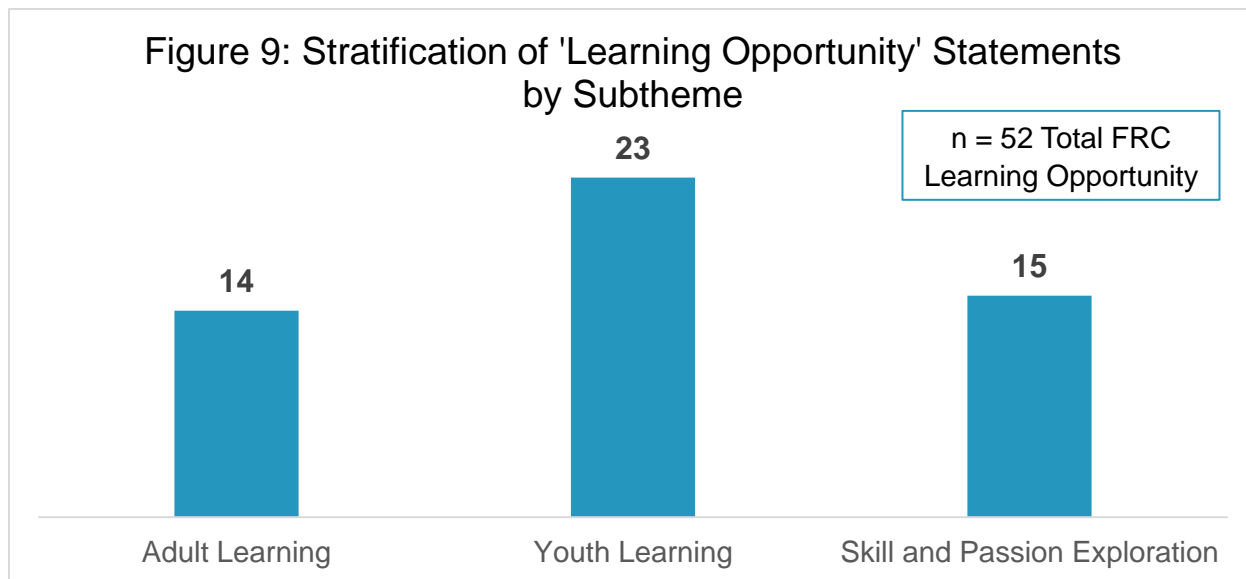
#### **Theme Four: Learning Opportunities**

The Learning Opportunities theme explores those statements which highlight various programming which may be helpful to parents and caregivers in the community to reduce stressors. Patrons from each FRC generated statements on the need for learning opportunities across different the FRCs: 8 from the CPLRC, 1 from the LPRC, 22 from the NSFRC, and 21 from the SWAG FRC. See Figure 8 for a distribution of learning opportunity statements by FRC.



These 52 statements are separated into three subthemes including those learning opportunities which were for adults (n = 14), youth centered learning activities (n = 23) and learning opportunities which allow for exploration into the patron’s skills and passions (n = 15).

See Figure 9 for the stratification of learning opportunity statements by subtheme. .



### ***Adult Learning***

The 14 statements which suggested different types of adult learning came from 8 patrons across different the FRCs: CPLRC (n = 2), NSFRC (n = 4), and SWAG FRC (n = 2). Adults were identified as needing anger management, practical and mental health learning opportunities. One patron spoke to the mental health skills of coping and practical skills of cooking:

*We have adults, we have parents running around that don't know how to emotionally stabilize their self, you know, cope... you know, they have three kids, a job and a home...maybe they feel so overwhelmed they don't know how to plan things for themselves or teaching for meal planning. You know, those kind of things help. Also, I would say just, you know, just really just spent having to spend some resources and time with the parents also and maybe it could be something that the teenagers and parents learn too... [because] There's women my age that I know that do not know how to cook.*

The remaining adult learning suggestions were oriented around needs of parents, some of which were reportedly dealing with “kids that’s outta control.” Caregivers, as said by one patron, need someone to “give them the instrument to control this kid.” One suggestion was a program called “Mommy Dollars” which involved having parents come in the center to watch parenting videos which are chosen based on the child’s developmental age. Once parents had collected enough of these “Mommy Dollars” they would have access to purchase from a resource room in which common needs were available to be purchased with these dollars. This suggestion would

also allow staff to check in with the parents needs and keep an eye out for donations which may fit their specific needs.

Suggestions on emotional and practical education for caregivers included:

*Teaching those parenting classes might not always just look like how to change a diaper or how to budget. It might look like your three-year old is flipping out. And what do I do? Because they don't hear, they're not comprehending what I'm telling them. They're constantly running around throwing everything, throwing tantrums. How do I deal with this when I'm just trying to pay the bills and cook dinner, you know and clean the house and actually teaching some of those strategies.*

Peer-to-peer learning strategies led by an educated moderator that offered practical knowledge were also suggested:

*"It would be nice to have a support group for you. We get to talk about, okay, what are you doing about this situation to help with what I'm going through."*

*You don't learn that at a doctor's office, you learn, "Hey, this is what he has." Figure out how you're going to deal with that. Where talking to a parent you can learn. And yeah, what works for my kid might not work for somebody else .... or what works for her kid might not work, but at least you, yeah, it gives you somebody else and you could voice your frustrations.*

*I know my parents struggled with my mental health a lot and they didn't know how to deal with anything that I was going through. And so, if they had a resource that they could go like talk to other people who had children who were struggling with their mental health, I think that would, probably life changing. Because like when, when I was going through the mental health issues, like, my parents just didn't know what to do. So like they were doing their best but like they had no idea what was going on with me and they didn't know how to talk to me, know how to approach the subject and hey didn't have anything and they were just kind of on their own and they had a couple of friends, but their friends didn't really understand. And there was just nothing that they could, no one that they could turn to really.*

Caregivers, it was believed, could use knowledgeable instructors who could speak to current struggles and are up to date with current strategies. A few parents spoke to their struggles with youth diagnosed with ADHD and how things have changed since their childhood. One caregiver who sees ADHD in themselves and their children spoke to the difference:

*Yeah, except they didn't give me medication. Got a butt whooping for that you know, but I think that having like maybe I don't know, professionals come in and talk about how to deal with balancing a child with ADHD and the work that's presented to them, they get it done because it is, it's a balance to do all of that.*

Another caregiver who lives with her parents while raising her son spoke to her frustration with her elderly parents who “*because of their age, they're like. No, it's a label. You put a label on him, you're giving him an excuse.*” She tries her best to educate them and herself but sees value in having a:

*professional come in, opening it up and saying look, we want to talk about ADHD, we're going to have somebody come in and talk about it. Let these parents, these people come in and ask questions and learn. Right, right, people from the community, parents, grandparents like, open it up. So maybe if people are informed. And understand it. It won't just get pushed to the side. Because I think it causes a lot of frustration because people don't know.*

### ***Youth Learning***

This subtheme includes 23 statements oriented around suggestions for youth learning offerings which could reduce stressors for families and community members. These statements were made by 6 patrons across the different FRCs: CPLRC (n = 1), NSFRC (n = 3), and SWAG FRC (n = 2). These suggestions for youth learning opportunities cover a concern for the youth social and emotional development and need for practical life skills. Some patrons spoke generally of youth and children needing to be taught life skills while others suggested financial literacy, cooking, nutrition, mental health, emotional education, and other specific learning opportunities.

One patron, stating that they didn't know if this was already happening, suggested peer-to-peer support for hypothetical children attending homework help:

*Social and emotional development... it encourages interaction between each other, you know, maybe teamwork or some type of or help or mentoring. But I don't know if you already have it... and maybe “Jonathan can help you out”, you know and then you might need help in reading, but you might be really good at math so let have you pair up with Alyssa over here so you can help her with that” and that builds a confidence. Kids, kids that get in trouble a lot actually want to help other[s] they, they're really good helpers sometimes because they want to feel needed. They want to feel like they have something to give because it builds a confidence up.*

Two patrons felt that youth were struggling and in need of anger management, mental health supports and helpful intervention *“Before it gets to a point where they’re suicidal, using guns, those kind of things.”*

One participant with experience working at Girls Inc. spoke to the importance of having peer supports on a bad day:

*When I was teaching school at Girls Incorporated, one of the things we talked about was physical attributes and how they can create mental illness for young girls. They're so concerned about how they look and how they present themselves. And to the point where they were committing suicide, a lot of suicide in that age group for middle school. So, we had support groups, we had mentoring, we had things going on to give them that place to go. A safe place to go and talk about how they feel and help them to work through that, some of that is just adolescent hormones. And then thinking that it's the end of the world and their gonna die. No, not necessarily. So sometimes it's just diverting that mindset and, and redirecting it as opposed to “let me give some pills” ... so sometimes it's just being patient and taking that time with someone.*

Some suggested youth learning activities included opportunities like *“little workshops like cooking, sewing just, regular activities of daily living, ‘ADL’.* Something for them to learn and to grow and to become effective adults in the community if they choose to stay here.” One patron reflected on their experience in the military, suggesting what she saw in teen centers which had *“different little centers for sewing, cooking and crafts and, and gardening.”* Others shared that it would be beneficial if there were activities for the younger children such as story time or arts and crafts activities in addition to teens. As one patron put it this could look like youth or children who could,

*Just knock on the door and say ‘hey, is it movie night today or is it book, story time or arts and crafts?’ I think it will get a lot of them from being outside, running around by themselves when they can be there doing something productive.*

Other patrons suggested music, computer skills, baking and *“just different programs for the kids would be excellent.”*

Life skills also covered suggestions for employability. As one caregiver put it:

*Because you see a lot of kids out here and you see a lot of adults that's not working. That's just standing out on the corner. I think it would be awesome for the kids to have,*



*like a how to get a job at a certain age. Yeah, like my son is 12. He'll be 14 and I'm pushing [a] job on him. So, he would know when you become an adult these are the things you have to do. It's not handed to you; you have to work for it. And I think if they had a program with kids that's motivating them to go out at a certain age and start working and maintaining grades you won't have so many kids just hanging out. You'll have more kids in here trying to better themselves than out there.*

They went on to say, and another patron agreed:

*I think we need to have a program. Teach them another route cause sometimes they don't get it at home Like I know a couple of kids whose parents is never home to even teach them the proper ways of what to do. But if they got the community helping them, you got some kids that don't want to live in that environment but is in that environment because they have no choice. But if they have some resource to help them with that, I feel like it'd benefit them.*

*And: Yeah, I feel like that too, because once they come to tutoring and get out of tutoring, you know they close, sometimes they close right after tutoring and they have tutoring two times out the week. Now if you add a couple more activities here throughout the week, they won't be out here running around. It'll be, "hey, I'm, you going to go to the SWAG because they have music back there today." "They got a program to help us find how to get a job" or, you know, just different activities for them.*

### ***Skill and Passion Exploration***

The final section of learning opportunities suggestions covers those ideas around building up patron's skills and passions. There were 15 statements on this subtheme which came from 8 patrons across the different FRCs: two from the CPLRC, one from the LPRC, two from the NSFRC, and three patrons from the SWAG FRC. Training to develop skills that patrons currently have was suggested as one thing an FRC could provide to patrons. This could be in the form of workshops, job training combined with possible job opportunities, activities of daily living, sewing, and cooking.

One SWAG patron shared how the FRC might be used to improve cooking and gardening skills by recalling services previously available,

*used to do... community cooking. If I'm not mistaken they used to do bake sales here. They used to have the community garden right outside where the kids used to come and pick vegetables, they had greens out there, spring beans, peppers.*

Another caregiver spoke to the need for practical life skills like meal planning and crafts. She shared a time when her granddaughter asked her to sew something up and she told her to

*“get some stitch witch... that's the easiest way for you, since you don't know how to use a needle. And young people these days don't know anything about that.”*

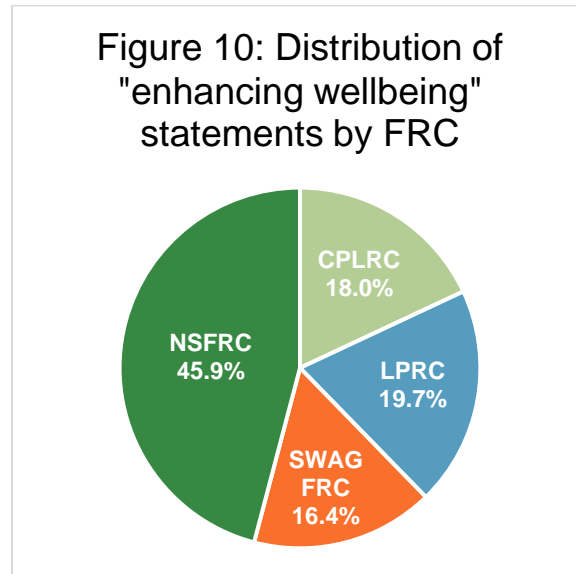
Additionally, the FRCs were seen as places that could offer learning opportunities which helped identify and strengthen their passions. One patron suggested that, because some people are not aware of their gifts and talents, the FRC can “*pull those gifts up out of them*” by offering a survey asking people what they like to do and then put together some opportunity based on their answers, “*like cooking, sewing, or whatever*”. She warns though that in some cases patrons will “*need to be built up more in their courage, their self-confidence*” and suggests a class on self-confidence as well.

Other patrons suggested adult or all ages music classes or classes on baking or crochet. Perhaps the FRC could help patrons explore these passions or serve as a meeting place for them to connect with each other. As one patron put it,

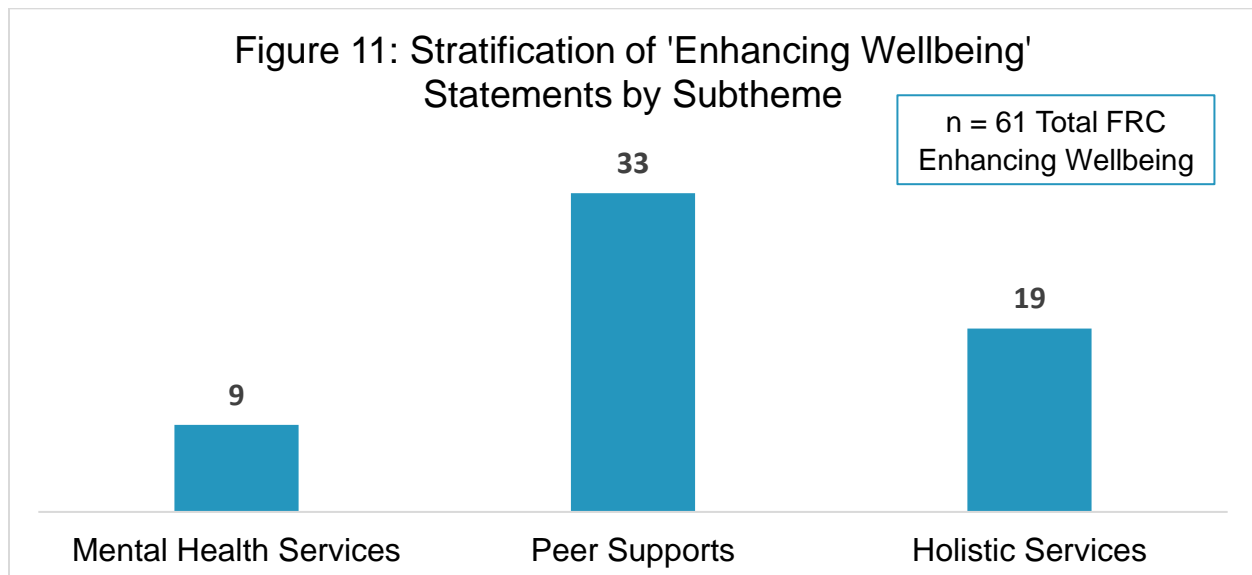
*everybody knows something that other people not know... [speaks in Spanish]; That they can do and see you have- you cook good? You maybe can bring here like your recipes.; You know, like something like that. And not only that, you can make something in here and show the kids and they can do it for later now.*

### **Theme Five: Enhancing Wellbeing**

The fifth theme suggests ways in which the FRCs may enhance wellbeing to reduce stress on caregivers and the community at large. Patrons from each FRC made statements which suggest ways to enhance wellbeing with 11 (18%) from the CPLRC, 12 (19.7%) from the LPRC, 10 (16.4%) from the SWAG FRC, and 28 (45.9%) from the NSFRC.



There were 61 total statements which spoke to these suggestions, distributed into three subthemes encompassing mental health (n = 9), peer support, (n = 33) and holistic services (n = 19) as shown in Figure 11.



### *Mental Health Services*

One way patrons thought stress could be reduced for families and community members was through mental health services which might over all enhance wellbeing. The nine statements related to this subtheme were provided by seven patrons across different the FRCs: CPLRC (n = 3), LPRC (n = 2), and NSFRC (n = 2).

The identified need for mental health support was thought to be moderated by the FRCs that could provide mental health supports such as mental health providers on site, mental health classes, workshops, and therapy groups. Supports such as these were thought to be needed, “before you hurt somebody”. Suggested topics could include self-control, daily struggles, obesity and health, self-confidence, self-discovery, homelessness, dealing with the effects of covid 19, coping with children, and a variety of other daily life topics. As one patron put it:

*mental health and dealing with daily life. And it doesn't always have to look like your typical mental health. It could be just...life skills on self-care, it could be helping them work on their schedule so that they don't feel overwhelmed with all that they have on their plate.*

Those experiencing homelessness spoken of by one patron as being vulnerable to mental health struggles:

*there are a lot of people out here that have suffered for quite a while, either due to their own maladies, their own issues, or due to the economy. But they're not mentally stable... Maybe some resources for mental wellness. I do know, like I said, that Meridian does come here, but some people aren't really... I don't think, even aware that they're not mentally well.*

Caregivers were also thought to be in need of mental health supports. One patron at the NSFRC spoke to the importance of mental health supports which de-stress the parents saying, “The parents are de-stressing. First of all, so they don't do any harmful thing to their child or to have DCF come in and with them de-stressing they're learning how to cope with their child.”

Similarly, a CPLRC patron spoke of the importance of providing mental health and other supports at the beginning of a child’s life:

*What happens and we probably won't understand is once that baby starts crying all the time, that resentment starts to build between the [parent and child]. That relationship starts to get and [murmuring of agreement] don't let the other stress be there too. But then there's always those deep seeded. Yeah, you know. And then I think in a lot of these, a lot of the communities are here.... We don't know the terms of postpartum depression and stuff. Those things are not talked about in the homes. You know that there is depression going on after a young mother has had maybe her third child and everything seemed normal.... So, it's the day one thing, day one. Because if you're not hitting them, day one. By day 365, let's do a little extra math. By the time you get to like 24 months, abuse may have already started.*

### *Peer Supports*

There were 33 statements which made suggestions about the FRCs providing space for peers to meet, thus supporting each other's wellbeing and ultimately reducing stressors. Eleven patrons spoke about the need for peer support across different FRCs: one at the CPLRC, two at the LPRC, four at the NSFRC (plus one additional unidentified speaker), and three at the SWAG FRC.

One patron discussed the importance of peer to peer supports such as “*Can we meet, let's go to the park?*” ... *have somebody to sound it off of, you know, ... say, 'Girl when they did that to me, this is what we did. Come on let's go get some coffee.'*” She also shared her feeling that youth shouldn't be on social media because “*that's not healthy either. You know, having physical interaction and learning to communicate with other people [is needed].*”

Peer supports in a counseling or group setting was thought by one patron to mitigate bad days, allowing the youth to support each other. Supportive groups were thought to mitigate some of the struggle's youth have, including “*adolescent hormones and then thinking that it's the end of the world and they're gonna die.*” Peer supports could be opportunities, as one patron put it, “*to be something*” through encouragement and helping them feel important. Another patron spoke to the ways youth could assist each other with their skill sets during homework help because the youth, “*they want to feel needed. They want to feel like they have something to give because it builds a confidence up.*”

Caregivers were also thought to receive much benefit from peer to peer supports. Some patrons simply called for support groups as something that would be helpful, while others offered more detail:

*you create a family within that system, so when you come in every week. They're like, hey, they get to know the baby, they watch the child grow. So, it becomes a family away from home. And again, you're not treated as though you're less than anybody else in the room because you need.*

*families that we're working with may not realize that they could use it as such a community to connect for the children to connect or for the mothers to connect, or fathers, you know, to the parents, caregivers to be able to use that as a support system like, 'hey, we're in the same boat here. Let's team up'. You know, maybe 'I could pick the kids up one' or, you know, if it's not even that just being there for moral support to talk to each other. So, I think that the opportunity is there*

*like a support group... and you can tend to meet people that are in your same situation and make connections and be able to help one another out. Like for me, being a single mom. If you have a group, not necessarily a single mom group, but just like a parenting group, and you could get together and communicate, and you could maybe help each other out. "Hey, your kid goes here too. Hey, how about on Mondays and Wednesdays? I'll pick them up then. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays." You, you know, like some kind of resource like that to connect people within the community. I would say all parents because it doesn't necessarily have to be a single parent. I mean, I could mean a set of parents and we could connect. I mean right. Like if you're involved in the same kind of stuff and, and you've learned from each other also and you learn of different resources.*

*"It would be nice to have a support group for you. We get to talk about, okay, what are you doing about this situation to help with what I'm going through."*

*Talking to a parent you can learn. And yeah, what works for my kid might not work for somebody else. It's good or what works for her kid might not. Work, but at least you, yeah, it gives you somebody else and you could voice. Your frustrations and get it on like.*

*"And bounce things off"*

*"Create more round table discussion stuff... just somebody just to help facilitate the conversation."*

*"Sit around the table and you know, well... what are your thoughts? What are you doing? How are you? The techniques that you use."*

*"But you might be at a round table and be like 'oh wow, I never even thought of trying that, I'm going to try that and it might help somebody to.'"*

*"I think it would help if there was a group for single parents."*

*Having the resources for children to be happy for a while and parents to be able to interact does reduce stress so that domestic violence goes down, communication, loving interaction between children and parents goes up, and so DCF is not involved in that respect at least.*

*"A women's group... that would be great to have the caregiver support group. That would be nice to implement that, you know."*

*It would be nice to have a meeting here. You know where people could come in and, and talk, but just right now [identifying information excluded] suggested just a support group and that would take care of the caregiver situation. You know, it also take care of, like I*

*said, alcoholics and addicts and people like that who need some support just to come in and talk with somebody else.*

*“We don't have the women's group yet here, so the women are not able to come here and speak. It's a couple of mothers that would definitely benefit from a group.”*

In addition to official groups there were a few comments which suggested the need for informal activities that could be accessed by peers so that they could make friends. Events like this were encouraged to be “*a regular thing*” and “*at least once a month*”.

*a cookout, something that, you know, community sponsors could help with, you know, with the food and stuff and with, you know, maybe paying some people to just watch the kids and play with them and engage them while the parents can come over here and have a little support meeting.*

*if there were play dates and you know, community supported events where parents could get to know other parents, you know somebody like [identifying information excluded] could find somebody else that also has the same issue and then not only is it a group you can talk to somebody. But you actually meet the person...[later adding] I just think that that would be a huge benefit to the community and here.*

*Yeah, I think they need groups. They need people they can reach out to, you know? Little gatherings, time, little time. Just like this, just to be able to talk and get, you know, just to be able to talk with someone that you know, to listen to you...[later adding] I think everybody needs some group, you know, gathering, you fellowship, you know. Whatever kind of fellowship with others that have been there, you know?*

### ***Holistic Services***

There were nineteen statements from patrons discussing a variety of holistic services to enhance wellbeing. Aside from Mental Health services and providing opportunities for peer-to-peer support, these are additional suggestions that patrons felt could help the whole person, whole family, or whole community to have greater wellbeing and ultimately reduce stressors in the community. There were ten patrons who made these statements across different FRCs: CPLRC (n = 2), LPRC (n = 1), NSFRC (n = 5), and SWAG FRC (n = 2).

Suggestions included a Zumba class, Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) groups, grief support groups, life skills groups, financial assistance workshops, emotional regulation sessions, entrepreneurial workshops on sales and advertising, self-discovery or career discovery programs, nutrition education, cooking classes, money

management including credit awareness and bill-paying skills, youth activities, and any other activities identified by patrons as needed. There can be benefit to the community from a variety of services and activities, even supporting youth drawing was thought by one patron to be opportunities to,

*Start looking at some of their artwork, cause a kid- A kid artwork can tell you a whole lot about that child you know. Is it drawing a lot about guns? Why they're drawing guns, you know? Is it something in the home? Is it something they're looking at on television or something? How can I redirect this child to something more positive, you know?*

Opportunities to develop mentorship relationships was also seen as something the FRCs might be capable of offering. Especially in situations where the mentor can speak to similar life experiences. One patron who provides mentoring shared her experience saying:

*I know... how it feels to have to be responsible for everything and everyone and you don't have anybody by your side so it can be lonely sometimes, but there are ways. We can take care of ourselves so that we can take care of our family. So that's one of the things that I teach. So having other group or having some people to talk to or someone to call and say, "hey, I'm, I'm really having a rough day. Can we chat?"*

Responding, another patron shared, “kind of like that Big Brothers program but for adults,” to which they replied with a laugh, “right, absolutely”.

Another caregiver spoke to her need for support saying:

*I can use a caregiver and I'm a caregiver. [she and other patrons laugh] I could use a caregiver, you know. Because I take care of my, my granddaughter's in there. So, I have her after school and this is summer now so I'm probably going to have her in the summer. And because of my situation, I had to stop working. So, I had my mom full time and she's 95, dealing with the beginning stages of dementia and some days it's rough on me and I need somebody to take care of me because I take care of them, you know? So, you know, it would be nice to have extra help.*

*Mentoring. I know at work I have this woman. She mentors me and tells me, you know, if I go to her and be like “my son is doing this and my daughter's doing this, she's like ‘Oh, you know, you probably do this and do that’ so I feel like she, we have a strong you know bond of her mentoring me and telling me ‘Yeah, you need to do this and do that... fills the void of what my mom was*



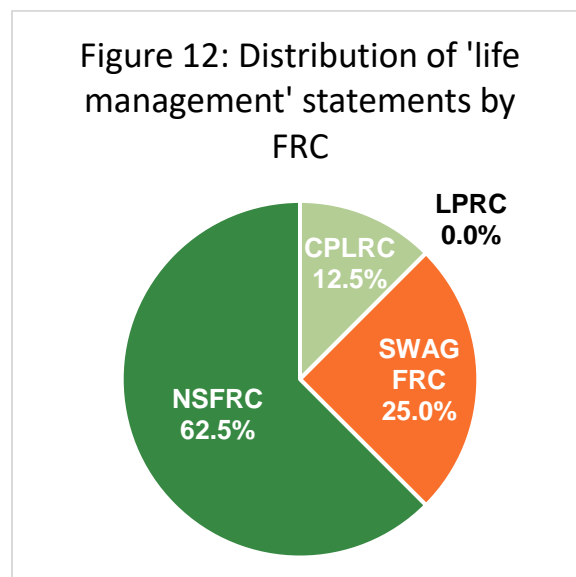
Lastly, there was a suggestion that the FRCs could have family support specialists who also serve as mentors. Much like a new teacher that is provided a mentor in the early stages of their career, parents can have someone who could check in on their progress to say things like:

*Did you make it to that anger management meeting that's scheduled for next week? I'm just checking on you to make sure that you have your. You know your you're remembering that” or, or “Hey, you know that parenting class... you're going to do good, you know, you're going to take it right? Because you know you, you can do this.*

Having such a mentor focused support specialist could help parents who have trouble managing life, procrastinating, or are experiencing depression and feeling hopeless. She goes on to add “*they might need somebody to just say hey. You could, you could do this.*”

### **Theme Six: Life Management**

There were eight statements speaking to a need for the FRC staff to provide life management supports. Patrons from three of the four FRCs generated statements on the need for life management services with one from the CPLRC, five from the NSFRC (plus one instance of multiple speakers), and two from the SWAG FRC. No subthemes were identified for this theme due to the straightforward nature of the statements, which were made by a total of six patrons.

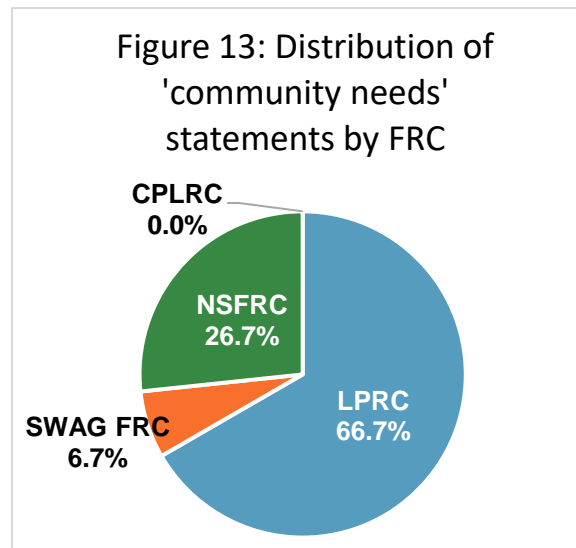


Outside of the mentorship relationship discussed above, patrons suggested life management services such as coaching and advocacy, providing accountability, managing

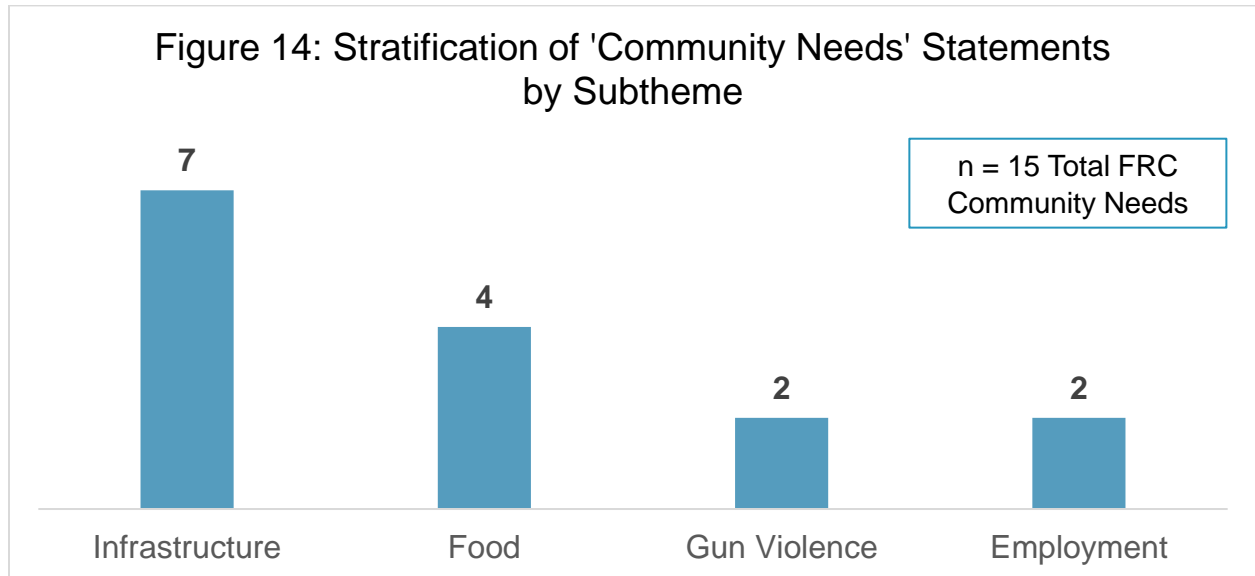
personal legal requirements, and following up. This may look like, “*is there anything else we can help you with*” or *follow up letter or call or some sort to them to see whether they're experiencing any other needs that maybe NorthStar could help with or refer them?*” It also may look like lightening the load by providing care to overworked caregivers with many responsibilities.

### **Theme Seven: Community Needs**

Perhaps due to the FRCs central location within communities, there were 15 statements from patrons on what needs existed in the community. These statements come from patrons across the different FRCs: ten (66.7%) from the LPRC, one (6.7%) from the SWAG FRC, and four (26.7%) from the NSFRC.



As seen in Figure 14, there were four subthemes the statements fell into including seven statements on local infrastructure, four statements on food insecurity and accessibility, two statements on gun violence in the community and two statements on employment.



### ***Infrastructure***

There were five patrons who made seven statements with infrastructure suggestions across the different FRCs: two from the LPRC, two from the NSFRC, and one from the SWAG FRC. Three of the seven statements spoke to a need for additional community centers or club houses. In addition to providing spaces for children to go, they could be a place to host free community events. As one patron shared,

*there are no community centers anywhere for our children to go. Children are supposed to be our future. And like she said, it's the gun violence... But that's the main thing is these children. Where is there for them to go?*

The remaining three statements were from two patrons at the LPRC who spoke to the need for free access to a community pool, especially in the summer.

### ***Food***

One patron at the LPRC highlighted a need for additional food access by providing four statements throughout the course of the feedback group. Additional food access might include a pantry or hot meal at any time of day to accommodate those who are homeless or otherwise struggling with food insecurity. They provided an example, *“a person that might be hungry they*

*know they could run- come and get a cup of coffee, a doughnut, you know, maybe that might make their day. You have something in your stomach.”*

### ***Gun Violence***

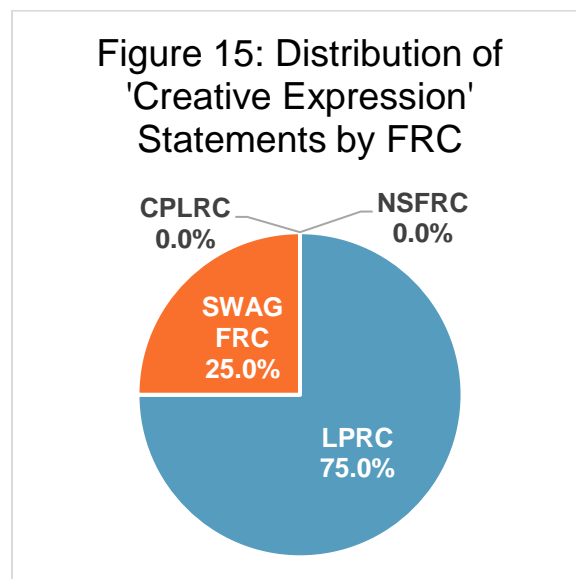
A need for a reduction in gun violence was underscored by NSFRC patrons where gun violence was seen by one patron as *“one of the biggest stresses in this community.”* There was discussion that the FRC could pull together a workgroup of local city council and commissioners to implement *“those programs for the safety, and that would take a lot of stress off for the parents too, because you're so concerned about your child, your grandchild out there in the community.”*

### ***Employment***

There was one patron at the LPRC who made two comments speaking to the need for employment supports including job training and creation because *“a lot of people are unemployed.”*

## **Theme Eight: Creative Expression**

Patrons from the LPRC and the SWAG FRC generated four statements on creative expression with three from the LPRC and one from the SWAG FRC. There were no subthemes identified for this theme as the statements are straight forward.



These identified needs spoke to how the FRCs could be used as a place for sharing the ways in which patrons are creative. This could include open mic events where patrons could “*go to like in the evening time you go and you could read your poems, you know, express yourself, things like that.*” Karaoke and music exploration were also suggested as preventative measures for “*doing many bad things.*”

## **Summary**

This report analyzes feedback from patrons across all the Family Resource Centers (FRCs) regarding additional services needed to cope with everyday stressors and community stressors. The analysis of 288 recorded statements revealed eight key themes: childcare, accessibility, outreach, learning opportunities, enhancing well-being, life management, community needs, and creative expression. These themes provide valuable insights into the services that could support caregivers and community members. In some cases, the services suggested by select speakers are already being offered at FRCs, but the speakers were unaware of them. Although there are a variety of services offered at FRCs — that may vary over time to be responsive to the community's needs—this may highlight a need for greater awareness among (and dissemination of information to) patrons about the services currently available.

The theme of childcare emerged prominently, with 49 statements (17%) highlighting the critical need for respite care and community centers. Caregivers, particularly those juggling job responsibilities and dual roles of caring for both young and elderly family members, emphasized the importance of effective childcare services in reducing stress and enhancing overall well-being.

Accessibility, with 68 statements (23.6%), was the most frequently mentioned theme, underscoring its crucial role in addressing caregiver and community resilience needs. The identified subthemes included the need for free services, language considerations, transportation,

and the expansion of the FRCs, all of which address significant barriers that induce stress for caregivers and community members.

FRC outreach was represented by 31 statements (10.8%), emphasizing the necessity for better advertising and community connection. Patrons suggested that expanding existing services and increasing awareness of available services would significantly enhance caregiver and community resilience, indicating that while the FRCs are effectively promoting resilience, there is a need for greater outreach.

Learning opportunities, with 52 statements (18%), highlighted the need for educational classes for all ages. Subthemes within this category included adult learning, youth learning, and opportunities for skill and passion exploration. These educational opportunities were seen as vital for self-improvement and self-actualization.

The theme of enhancing well-being, represented by 61 statements (21.2%), was the second most frequent, indicating its perceived importance. This theme encompassed mental health supports, peer supports, and holistic services, addressing a wide range of needs for the whole person and significantly contributing to stress relief for caregivers and the community.

Life management, although mentioned by only 8 statements (0.03%), identified a need for more informed assistants, such as case managers. Despite the low number of responses, the presence of this theme across several FRCs underscores its relevance.

Community needs, represented by 15 statements (0.05%), addressed specific requirements that could reduce stress if met. Subthemes included infrastructure changes, increased access to food, solutions to gun violence, and employment opportunities, indicating the diverse needs of the community.

Lastly, the theme of creative expression, with only 4 statements (0.01%), highlighted the potential of activities such as music and open mic opportunities. These activities were seen as

both relaxing and transformative, providing a safe space for individuals to reach a more holistic or self-actualized state.

The distribution of statements across themes varied by each FRC, reflecting differences in participation and feedback processes. Notably, some services mentioned are already offered by the FRCs, but patrons were unaware of them, pointing to a need for better communication about existing services. The report emphasizes the evolving nature of FRC services and the importance of contacting the FRCs directly to learn about current offerings.

## **References**

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