

# FOCUSING ON ACTION: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES SELF-ASSESSMENT NORTHSTAR FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

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## The Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Process

The purpose of the SFSA process was to evaluate the NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) practices, programs, and services based on the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Framework. The NSFRC's SFSA team consisted of three direct service staff members, two community collaborators from partner organizations, and three community ambassadors who utilize services and programs at the NSFRC. Team members individually completed a survey related to the implementation of each protective factor at the NSFRC. Subsequently, team members convened for critical discussions to assess survey results and develop action items to address any gaps in programs, services, or Family Resource Center practices. Updates for implementing action items will be provided on a semi-annual basis, covering their respective six-month reporting period. This report covers the time between July and December of 2023. Plans have been categorized into four key themes and are summarized in this report. The key themes are:



- **Theme One:** Develop new NSFRC programs to provide additional services to patrons.
- **Theme Two:** Expand and strengthen community relationships to address community issues and access helpers for the FRC.
- **Theme Three:** Increase engagement with, and supports for, caregivers, with a targeted focus on fathers, single mothers, and youth experiencing difficulties.
- **Theme Four:** Build capacity to connect with non-English speaking and marginalized groups through accessing local resources, staff training, and connecting with local churches.

Action items were developed while discussing the team's Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool results and are listed in this report with their associated protective factor. However, action items may overlap with another protective factor or theme. Some action items may also rely on the completion of other action items, such as the need to establish a Parent and Community Advisory Council before the involvement of council members can be addressed. NSFRC staff, community partners, and community ambassadors will work collaboratively to make the best use of available resources to complete action items and improve services and programs at the NSFRC.

## Core Meanings of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Protective Factors

### 1. Concrete Support in Times of Need

Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.

### 2. Social Connections

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, and spiritual support.

### 3. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, and establish and maintain relationships.

### 4. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development.

### 5. Parental Resilience

Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.

1 Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2015). Core Meanings of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors.

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# NSFRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEMES



## THEME ONE: DEVELOP NEW PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SERVICES TO PATRONS.

**Concrete Supports Action Item:** The NSFRC will explore, in collaboration with the Columbia County Public Library and other partner agencies, the possibility of implementing on-site computer and technology classes.

**Concrete Supports Action Item:** Continue efforts at securing an on-site food pantry at the NSFRC and explore the feasibility of facilitating regular food distribution to families while ensuring there is support (community, food, volunteers, etc.) to implement food distribution in an efficient manner.

**Action Item Update:** NSFRC is collaborating with the Columbia County Public Library and is currently in discussions with both the library and Florida Gateway College to develop computer and technology classes scheduled for the second quarter of 2024.

**Action Item Update:** The NSFRC continues to receive regular bread donations from Panera Bakery every Tuesday and now has an on-site emergency food pantry. To bolster this pantry, the NSFRC Manager has created an application with Catholic Charities and continues to strategize with Farm Share to access more items for the pantry. On August 9, 2023, Lifestyle Enrichment Center staff distributed vouchers for produce at the farmers' market.



## THEME TWO: EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY ISSUES AND ACCESS HELPERS FOR THE FRC.

**Parental Resilience Action Item:** The NSFRC will work on establishing co-located services, as determined appropriate, with DCF/Hope Florida to be provided at the Family Resource Center.

**Parental Resilience Action Item:** The NSFRC will continue to pursue efforts and expand collaborations with higher learning institutions to solidify relationships that lead to interns and volunteers serving a functional role at the Family Resource Center.

**Action Item Update:** Two agencies, DCF Hope Florida and Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, continue to offer co-located services at the NSFRC. DCF Hope Florida staff are present on Tuesdays from 9 am to 1 pm to share about their program and enroll families, as needed. Meridian Behavioral Healthcare conducts on-site outreach on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 9 am to 12 pm. The NSFRC is always open to exploring new co-located opportunities.

**Action Item Update:** Ongoing collaboration with the local college remains robust. Florida Gateway College has recently contributed two interns to support the Homework Help initiative. This program is enhanced by staff funded through United Way resources and the dedication of an independent volunteer.

# NSFRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEMES



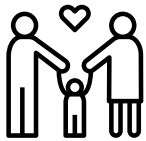
## THEME TWO: EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY ISSUES AND ACCESS HELPERS FOR THE FRC.

**Concrete Supports Action Item:** The NSFRC will be more proactive at a community level; perhaps sponsoring/coordinating an event to bring partners together (in a positive and constructive manner) to address the unmet needs of individuals and families adversely impacted by the lack of affordable housing and homelessness issues.

**Concrete Supports Action Item:** The NSFRC will explore a possible collaboration with the United Way Homeless Coalition and the Florida Department of Children and Families to develop a formal strategy (including short- and long-term plans) for addressing the lack of affordable housing and homelessness issues impacting families in Columbia County.

**Action Item Update:** The Resource Center Advisory Council joined forces with the Columbia Children's Partnership Council, giving rise to the Columbia Family Resource Council for enhanced community collaboration. NSFRC also provided a Health fair to the community in October, and a healthy "Resolution Run" in December. A network fair is being planned for the spring of 2024, and the NSFRC participated in the Housing Authorities Family Fun Day on February 24, 2024.

**Action Item Update:** The NSFRC Manager, who is actively involved with the United Way's Homeless Coalition Board, aims to enhance interconnectivity through training. The NSFRC plays a supportive role in formal community strategies addressing affordable housing and homelessness. The Columbia County government has invited NSFRC to submit a grant proposal addressing the local opioid crisis, particularly impacting those who are housing insecure.



## THEME THREE: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT WITH, AND SUPPORTS FOR, CAREGIVERS, WITH A TARGETED FOCUS ON FATHERS, SINGLE MOTHERS, AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES.

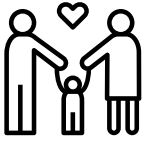
**Social Connections Action Item:** The NSFRC will work on developing an annual summit focused on reclaiming the community's youth and males that will include workshops targeted towards parents and young men and feature successful athletes and professionals from this area with the goal of developing mentorship programs and support groups.

**Parental Resilience Action Item:** The NSFRC will explore opportunities for structuring caregiver and parent support groups with topics including parenting issues, education, and father and mother-specific groups for engagement and support.

**Action Item Update:** Adopting a grassroots approach, the NSFRC Manager is fostering community relationships with local fathers through participation in All Pro Dad's events at a nearby elementary school. Additionally, a collaborative walking event with T.E.A.M Dad, a Healthy Start program dedicated to Teaching, Empowering, and Advocating for fathers, is also in development.

**Action Item Update:** The NSFRC Manager is in search of an affordable curriculum and a skilled professional to lead caregiver support groups, with the commitment to provide this valuable service to the community free of charge.

# NSFRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEMES



## THEME THREE: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT WITH, AND SUPPORTS FOR, CAREGIVERS, WITH A TARGETED FOCUS ON FATHERS, SINGLE MOTHERS, AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES.

**Parental Resilience Action Item:** The NSFRC will create a Parent Advisory Council within the next 12 months.

**Knowledge of Parenting Action Item:** The NSFRC will explore the possibility of developing and integrating the use of informal parenting cafés as a support for parents and for enhancement of their child development and parenting knowledge.

**Knowledge of Parenting Action Item:** The NSFRC will explore opportunities and assess the feasibility for securing additional staff and/or other resources (including the training of staff and volunteers) to expand programming that enhances supports for parents related to increasing/promoting knowledge of parenting and child development topics.

**Action Item Update:** The NSFRC is actively building capacity and participating in local parenting events as part of its efforts to eventually establish a Parenting Advisory Council.

**Action Item Update:** Like the Parent Advisory Council and Parenting classes, informal parenting cafés are in the early stages of cultivating community connections. The NSFRC is actively seeking volunteer leaders to support these efforts.

**Action Item Update:** The NSFRC Manager consistently offers informal one-on-one support to caregivers, sharing knowledge on parenting and child development topics. A retired teacher continues to provide expert assistance to youth during homework help, engaging with caregivers on child development matters. The NSFRC is in the process of hiring a new Family Support Coordinator who will contribute to supporting caregivers in this capacity in the future.

# NSFRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEMES



## THEME FOUR: BUILD CAPACITY TO CONNECT WITH NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS THROUGH ACCESSING LOCAL RESOURCES, STAFF TRAINING, AND CONNECTING WITH LOCAL CHURCHES.

**Social Connections Action Item:** The NSFRC will make a deliberate effort to connect with and ask for involvement from places of worship that serve marginalized populations.

**Resilience Action Item:** The NSFRC will develop a strategy of engagement to connect with non-English speaking populations by exploring what resources exist for interpretation assistance through local agencies and congregations.

**Social and Emotional Action Item:** The NSFRC will increase staff and community partner training to better address and explore means to better support the needs of children, youth, adults, and families impacted by the effects of child maltreatment and chronic substance abuse/addiction and the needs of youth and young adults within the LGBTQ+ community.

**Action Item Update:** The NSFRC is actively fostering connections with local community members and churches. Notably, a recent manifestation of these relationships occurred when a church generously covered the cost of a hotel stay for a family whose house had burned down, an initiative facilitated by the NSFRC.

**Action Item Update:** The NSFRC continues to rely on local translation services with the public library, a local pastor and PSF staff who provide individual assistance and help translating flyers. In partnership with the Rural Women's Health Clinic, staff also have access to the Language Line, as needed for interpretation services. A warm welcome is extended to all patrons who contribute to fostering inclusivity.

**Action Item Update:** The Columbia Family Resource Council works to enhance outreach to vulnerable populations. The NSFRC consistently offers meeting space to a local LGBTQ+ group supporting individuals of all ages in the queer community. Additionally, the NSFRC has submitted a grant application focused on addressing opioid abuse in Columbia County.

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