

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, then convened for critical discussions to assess survey results and develop action items to address any gaps in programs, services, or Family Resource Center practices. 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. It is important to note that action items may overlap with another protective factor or theme. This report addresses updates from January 2024 through June 2024. As the federal grant project period is ending on September 29, 2024, this will be the final 6-month period of reporting on action item progress, although NSFRC staff, community partners, and community ambassadors will continue to work collaboratively to make the best use of available resources 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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The contents of this project do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau.

NSFRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEMES



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

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

Action Item Update: The NSFRC continues to receive regular bread donations from Panera Bakery every Tuesday at 9 am and has an on-site emergency food pantry. Efforts are currently underway with Catholic Charities and NorthSide Church of Christ to expand the pantry. The on-site community garden has been harvested, yielding cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, and onions, along with peaches from a peach tree. In June, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program came on-site to provide participants with vouchers to purchase fresh vegetables from a local farmers market.

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.

Action Item Update: A collaboration with Columbia High School's adult education program is in the works to allow students to come to the NSFRC and utilize the on-site computers. NSFRC staff will continue to explore opportunities for on-site computer use and technology classes for all patrons.



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.

Action Item Update: Two agencies offer co-located services to NSFRC patrons. DCF Hope Florida staff are present on Tuesdays from 10am to 4pm to share information about their program and enroll families as needed. There are now two staff members who provide coverage for each other to better assist patrons when other requirements arise that may take them away from the office. Meridian Behavioral Healthcare conducts on-site outreach on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 9am to 12pm. NSFRC staff continue to be open to exploring new co-located opportunities.

NSFRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEMES



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

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.

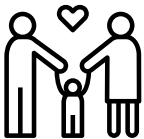
Concrete Supports Action Item: The NSFRC will be more proactive at a community level; perhaps sponsoring/coordinating an event to bring partners together (in a positive and constructive manner) to address the unmet needs of individuals and families adversely impacted by the lack of affordable housing 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: One student has been assisting over the summer through the Summer Youth Initiative to support the NSFRC's summer enrichment programming, which collaborates with Richardson's Summer Program. Additionally, there are two other volunteers: one supports youth activities, and the other helps with the clothing closet and events. There have been promising collaborations with Morehouse College, along with ongoing support from Florida Gateway College.

Action Item Update: In addition to being part of the Homeless Coalition, the NSFRC manager is working with the city manager, who is creating a housing commission in which the manager will participate. The NSFRC welcomes people experiencing homelessness and frequently works with them on a one-on-one basis to identify supports unique to their situation.

Action Item Update: The NSFRC continues to support the strategies laid out by the Homeless Coalition in addressing homelessness. In March, the NSFRC was awarded an Opioid Grant, which may support people experiencing homelessness. Current efforts include working with the Department of Health to build a repository of knowledge on national, state, and county statistics to create informational materials in preparation for dissemination efforts.

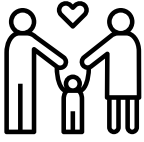


THEME THREE: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT WITH, AND SUPPORTS FOR, CAREGIVERS, WITH A TARGETED FOCUS ON FATHERS, SINGLE MOTHERS, AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES.

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.

Action Item Update: NSFRC staff continue to reach out to fathers and provide one-on-one support to them as needed. Social events like Family Fun Day serve as potential connection opportunities to engage fathers further, leading to ongoing personalized services. There is ongoing interest and planning to collaborate with T.E.A.M. Dad, a Healthy Start initiative, for future events.

NSFRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEMES



THEME THREE CONTINUED: 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 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.

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: In May, there was a community dinner with local caregivers to discuss resources and plan activities for the summer to keep children engaged. Other caregiver supports are typically provided on a one-on-one basis as needed.

Action Item Update: NSFRC staff continue to actively build capacity and participate in local parenting events as part of their efforts to eventually establish a Parenting Advisory Council.

Action Item Update: NSFRC staff plan to establish parenting cafes once school is back in session.

Action Item Update: In March, a new part-time Family Support Coordinator was hired utilizing new grant funds to provide support for youth programming such as homework help and summer enrichment. Additionally, funds have been awarded from the Scaff Foundation, some of which are designated for parenting cafes.

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: NSFRC staff continue to collaborate closely with local religious organizations, keeping them informed through their own listserv. Future dissemination efforts with opioid funds will involve connecting with local churches. The NSFRC also engages with faith-based initiatives like Uplift Columbia by attending planning meetings and participating in events whenever possible.

Action Item Update: The NSFRC continues to rely on local translation services through partnerships with the public library and PSF staff, who offer individual assistance and help with translating flyers. Staff also received training on utilizing the Language Line to support patrons effectively.

Action Item Update: NSFRC staff have recently received training in True Colors, affective decision-making, navigation, and team cultural and emotional intelligence. Work on the opioid grant aims to reduce instances of child maltreatment through education and prevention. Additionally, NSFRC consistently offers a meeting space to a local LGBTQ+ group, supporting individuals of all ages in the queer community.

THE NORTHSTAR FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

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