

FOCUSING ON ACTION: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES SELF-ASSESSMENT (SFSA) JULY 2024 UPDATES FOR THE SWAG FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER (SWAG FRC)

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The SWAG SFSA Process



The purpose of the Stengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) process was to evaluate the SWAG Family Resource Center's (SWAG FRC) practices, programs, and services based on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework. The SWAG FRC's SFSA team consisted of 2 direct service staff members, 3 community collaborators from partner organizations, and 4 Community Ambassadors who utilized services and programs at the SWAG FRC. Team members individually completed a survey related to the implementation of each protective factor at the SWAG FRC, and then came together for critical discussion to assess survey results and develop action items to address any gaps in programs, services, or Resource Center practices. SWAG FRC staff have been working hard to implement these action items with available resources and staff capacities. Updates and plans for implementing action items have been categorized into four key themes determined by the SWAG SFSA team and are summarized in this report. The key themes are:

- **Theme One:** Develop peer-to-peer led trainings, a speaker series, and parent support nights.
- **Theme Two:** Increase awareness by utilizing key community members and improving messaging to the community.
- **Theme Three:** Increase engagement with SWAG FRC programs, local businesses, schools, fathers/males, diverse populations, and patrons in the planning process for programs.
- **Theme Four:** Begin hosting social connection events, community events, and parent-only activities, once appropriate, considering safety and public health recommendations.

Since completing the initial SFSA process, SWAG FRC staff have focused on enhancing services and supports associated with all four themes. 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. Additionally, for action items related to the Social and Emotional Competence of Children protective factor, there are recommendations in lieu of action items as the team determined the SWAG FRC staff's recommendations would be better served in this area due to their experience. This report covers the time 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. While there are updates for all the SWAG FRC's action items, it is important to recognize that progression of action items may have slowed due to significant staff changes and funding restrictions at the SWAG FRC over the last 6 months. However, SWAG FRC staff, community partners, and community ambassadors will continue to work collaboratively to make the best use of available resources to complete action items and improve services and programs at the SWAG FRC.

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. The contents of this project are funded by the Children's Bureau, under grant #90CA1868.

The contents of this project do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau.

SWAG FRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEME UPDATES



THEME ONE: DEVELOP PEER-TO-PEER LED TRAININGS, A SPEAKER SERIES, AND PARENT SUPPORT NIGHTS.

Overarching Action Item: Create a dynamic speaker series and/or programs to reach two audiences - parents and youth.

Action Item Update: The SWAG FRC has continued the community garden which staff report many parent-child pairs have participated in. The SWAG FRC re-introduced their Dad's Group in February 2024, however patron engagement dwindled, leading to the series being put on pause again. The Safe Space program was reintroduced in February 2024 for patrons, adults and children alike, who identify within the LGBTQ+ community. As with the Dad's Group, attendance at Safe Space was limited and the group was ceased in March 2024. We are continuing to assess community needs and readiness for additional programming designed to reach parents and youth.

Social Connections Action Item: Explore opportunities for the development of parent support groups and mentoring opportunities that are parent centered. Consideration may be given to the implementation of a "parent support night" following discussions with parents and Community Ambassadors.

Action Item Update: SWAG FRC staff report that their monthly Community Dinner event has become an informal parent support night, as caregivers come together to have a meal together and chat about their lives. The Baby SWAGgers baby shower events for soon-to-be parents also serve as an opportunity for parents to connect and support one another, including having community matriarchs in attendance to provide support and mentorship to new parents.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Explore means and mechanisms for Community Ambassadors to participate in training opportunities.

Action Item Update: In February 2024, the SWAG FRC hosted a Mental Health First Aid training that was open to community members and staff alike. At the Health and Wellness Fair hosted in May 2024, patrons were able to sign up and participate in various trainings with partner organizations including asthma training with UF Health Pediatrics, Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, and more. In February 2024, the SWAG FRC hosted a Know Your Rights workshop presented by Florida Legal Services and Alachua County informing patrons of their renter's rights and assisting with landlord issues, rental issues, and legal barriers affecting housing stability.

Concrete Supports in Times of Need Action Item: Explore a peer-to-peer training program, created by and for community members, related to getting needed supports and resources and how to act in a collective manner to advocate for each other.

Action Item Update: Patrons in regular attendance to the SWAG FRC events often share their Resource Center knowledge with new patrons, encouraging them to access the SWAG FRC's services and supports. The SWAG FRC's weekly Community Cafe event allows patrons the opportunity to share ideas related to programming at the SWAG FRC. The monthly Community Dinner event serves a similar purpose in having the community come together, with patrons having an opportunity to share their ideas for programming at the center.

SWAG FRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEME UPDATES



THEME TWO: INCREASE AWARENESS BY UTILIZING KEY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND IMPROVING MESSAGING TO THE COMMUNITY.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Utilize community members to help raise awareness of the SWAG FRC.

Action Item Update: Community members at the SWAG FRC often raise awareness of the Resource Center via word-of-mouth and sharing the SWAG FRC's monthly calendar. Staff report that patrons who frequent the SWAG FRC are often quick to help new patrons and share their knowledge with them regarding the SWAG FRC's services and supports. During the monthly Farm Share Food Distribution, staff have noticed new patrons or community volunteers who have heard about the SWAG FRC from other community members.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Reevaluate the current engagement and outreach strategies to improve messaging to parents/families/households regarding the agency (SWAG FRC).

Action Item Update: Flyers for events and monthly calendars are always available for patrons and are often spread throughout the community. The SWAG FRC Manager also sends out monthly emails to community partners, informing them of upcoming events and programs so they may share in their circles. SWAG FRC staff often attend community events to help spread the word regarding the SWAG FRC and connect with potential partner organizations, including the Safe Choices and Safe Communities Fair and the UF FYCS Networking Fair. In addition, staff and volunteers immerse themselves in community outreach events in adjacent neighborhoods, sharing calendars and insight about SWAG FRC.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Action Item: Explore the means and mechanisms by which the community can become more aware of parenting and child development supports available at the Resource Center.

Action Item Update: To explore the means and mechanisms to increase community awareness of parenting and child development supports, the SWAG FRC utilizes flyers for events and monthly calendars that are available at the center and distributed to those in the community. The SWAG FRC also has a regularly updated slideshow displayed in their lobby that allows patrons that visit the center to see upcoming events and services. The SWAG FRC continues to host their Baby SWAGgers program, a neighborhood baby shower held quarterly for expectant mothers in the community. The mothers are given newborn essentials and safety information, while being introduced to other neighborhood mothers to expand their support networks. HeadStart and the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County have been tabling regularly at the SWAG FRC, and staff have been recommending families to come on those days to get support for daycare.

SWAG FRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEME UPDATES



THEME TWO: INCREASE AWARENESS BY UTILIZING KEY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND IMPROVING MESSAGING TO THE COMMUNITY.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Recommendation: Help spread awareness of social and emotional programming by advertising the open-door policy on applications for children's programming. The open-door policy reflects consistent efforts of staff to communicate with parents that they are welcome to approach staff at any time with questions or concerns regarding their children, programming, and supports available for children at the FRC and in the community.

Recommendation Update: Language regarding the open-door policy was added to the homework help and summer camp applications beginning in January 2023. Moving forward, parents and caregivers will be required to attend an orientation for homework help and summer camp to ensure understanding of the policies and give caregivers a chance to ask questions of their own. Staff report that they keep in contact with the caregivers of children enrolled in their afterschool and summer camp programs to keep them involved.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Formalize a communication channel between the Southwest Advocacy Group (SWAG) Board and the members of the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team.

Action Item Update: No formalized communication channel has been created between the Southwest Advocacy Group (SWAG) Board and the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. However, one member of the SWAG Board was on the SFSA team.

SWAG FRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEME UPDATES



THEME THREE: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SWAG FRC PROGRAMS, LOCAL BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, FATHERS/MALES, DIVERSE POPULATIONS, AND PATRONS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR PROGRAMS.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Increase engagement with local businesses and schools to promote the Resource Center.

Action Item Update: The SWAG FRC has built relationships with local schools that some children in the afterschool and summer camp program attend, including Hidden Oaks Elementary School and Terwilliger Elementary School. SWAG FRC's Academic Enrichment and Support Coordinator will begin meeting with local elementary school personnel during the summer break from school, with plans to further engage teachers and students during the FY24-25 academic year. Within the SWAG FRC, there is a small business board that advertises local businesses, often those owned by SWAG patrons. The SWAG FRC job board also posts many job opportunities available through local businesses. SWAG FRC staff plan to partner with more local businesses in late 2024, seeking to bring a free/mobile laundry facility and local mechanics to provide services at the SWAG FRC.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Recruit more fathers to utilize the services and programs at the SWAG FRC.

Action Item Update: The SWAG FRC re-introduced their Dad's Group in February 2024, however patron engagement dwindled, leading to the series being put on pause again. Staff continue to increase awareness and encourage more fathers to participate in the SWAG FRC's events and services. Staff report increased attendance by fathers to the Baby SWAGgers baby shower events for expectant mothers.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Strengthen partnerships with local organizations such as Meridian Behavioral Healthcare to provide mental health support for the community.

Action Item Update: Meridian Behavioral Healthcare continues to be onsite at the SWAG FRC once a week to spread awareness of their services and connect the community to mental health resources. Staff also refer patrons to the Equal Access Clinic for free healthcare, or Impower for virtual mental health services. In April 2024, the SWAG FRC started a partnership with Village Counseling Center to bring a children's therapist to the SWAG FRC once a week.

SWAG FRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEME UPDATES



THEME THREE: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT WITH SWAG FRC PROGRAMS, LOCAL BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, FATHERS/MALES, DIVERSE POPULATIONS, AND PATRONS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR PROGRAMS.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Action Item: Ensure that value is placed on peer-to-peer programs and services that are most needed and wanted by parents in the community.

Action Item Update: The SWAG FRC hosts its weekly Community Café and monthly Community Dinner in which patrons can connect with one another and provide advice on their individual situations on a peer-to-peer level. The SWAG FRC continues to host its Baby SWAGgers program, a neighborhood baby shower held quarterly for expectant mothers in the community. Mothers and fathers are given newborn essentials and safety information, while also being introduced to other neighborhood mothers to expand their support networks and emphasize peer-to-peer support.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Recommendation: Enhance understanding and appreciation for individuals from different cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, languages, and cultural expressions; and include volunteers and interns in cultural competence trainings.

Recommendation Update: The SWAG FRC staff strive to utilize a warm and nonjudgmental approach to assisting and advocating for patrons. SWAG FRC staff receive cultural sensitivity training in patron engagement and in the promoting of the protective factors. Language Line Solutions hosted a training for staff to utilize the language line to communicate via video or phone call in over 100 languages as needed by patrons. The SWAG FRC Family Support Coordinator also created a document with common phrases in both English and Spanish for staff to utilize during common encounters with Spanish speaking patrons. The SWAG FRC continues to have “All Are Welcome” LGBTQIA+ stickers throughout the center. More diversity and cultural awareness trainings will be explored in late 2024.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Recommendation: Enhance trainings to include competence of environmental and economic factors and how these factors come into play in social and emotional development.

Recommendation Update: In February 2024, the SWAG FRC hosted a Mental Health First Aid training that was open to community members and staff alike, covering common mental health signs, diagnoses, and how to deescalate situations appropriately.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Create a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to advise the SWAG FRC.

Action Item Update: In 2023, the SWAG FRC staff re-introduced the idea of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to patrons and youth in the community, however staff report little to no interest from local youth at this time. Efforts will be made to increase youth-focused programming and develop the YAC in late 2024.

SWAG FRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEME UPDATES



THEME THREE: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT WITH SWAG FRC PROGRAMS, LOCAL BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, FATHERS/MALES, DIVERSE POPULATIONS, AND PATRONS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR PROGRAMS.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Host social connection events with themes catered towards fathers.

Action Item Update: The SWAG FRC re-introduced their Dad's Group in February 2024, however patron engagement dwindled, leading to the series being put on pause again. The SWAG FRC staff also make sure to encourage fathers to come to the quarterly Baby SWAGgers baby shower event.

Social Connections Action Item: Explore the creation of a Community Advisory Council (CAC) with broad representation of community members who are motivated to serve the community and enhance supports for its members. Special attention should be paid to ensure the inclusion of fathers and grandfathers on this advisory committee.

Action Item Update: In 2023, the SWAG FRC staff re-introduced the idea of the Community Advisory Council (CAC) to patrons and community members, however staff report little to no interest from patrons at this time. The Southwest Advocacy Group, which includes representation from the SWAG communities, continues to meet and advocate for the needs of the community. Community interest in developing a formal CAC will be reassessed throughout the year.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Explore what the organizational framework would be in terms of engagement and program planning that involves patrons.

Action Item Update: The SWAG FRC staff report that program planning involves patrons informally, through reaching out for feedback or ideas on proposed programming while patrons are visiting the SWAG FRC, often during Community Café, Community Dinner, and Farm Share events. Patrons may also leave feedback through anonymous patron surveys. The Community Weatherization Coalition had meetings hosted at the SWAG FRC, with the opportunity for community members to be paid for spearheading event ideas and planning.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Create a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) or Community Advisory Council (CAC) to advise the SWAG FRC..

Action Item Update: In 2023, the SWAG FRC staff re-introduced the idea of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and Community Advisory Council (CAC) to patrons and community members, however staff report little to no interest from patrons at this time. Efforts will be revisited throughout the year.

SWAG FRC'S ACTION ITEM KEY THEME UPDATES



THEME FOUR: BEGIN HOSTING SOCIAL CONNECTION EVENTS, COMMUNITY EVENTS, AND PARENT-ONLY ACTIVITIES, ONCE APPROPRIATE, CONSIDERING SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS.

Parental Resilience Action Item: Host a community event to talk about gun violence that can serve to help connect the community with grief counselors.

Action Item Update: The Academic Enrichment and Support Coordinator attended the Safe Choices and Safe Communities Fair revolving around gun violence to show the SWAG FRC's support for these initiatives. The upcoming Back-to-School Bash will have signups for a potential gun violence awareness event featuring grief counselors from the Village Counseling Center. The SWAG FRC is seeking out a partnership with Moms Demand Action and Strong MINDED Mentors who advocate for gun violence awareness.

Social Connections Action Item: The SWAG FRC needs to reinstate and expand social connection/community events once it is safe to do so, given current safety and public health concerns.

Action Item Update: All social connection and community events have been reinstated. Current community events and/or recurring services providing social connections include Community Café, Baby SWAGgers, and the monthly Community Dinner.

Social Connections Action Item: Ensure that patrons have supportive and responsive means and mechanisms to openly communicate with and/or inform the staff about any knowledge or skill sets they believe staff should have to better serve the community.

Action Item Update: Patron satisfaction surveys have always been available at the SWAG FRC, and staff continue to ensure each patron is aware of the option to provide feedback and openly communicate with staff so that the community can be better served. The SWAG FRC staff are seeking alternatives to the current survey process to provide patrons acknowledgement and responses to their feedback, in order to encourage further engagement and the desire to provide feedback. Staff report patrons often provide feedback or ideas to staff, interns, and volunteers informally while they visit the FRC. The SWAG FRC has many community members and patrons that volunteer at the Resource Center, so other community members feel comfortable communicating their thoughts and opinions to individuals they recognize from the community.

THE SWAG FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

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