

Supporting Families by Providing
Concrete Support in Times of Need at
The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center

Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Elizabeth Snow (Library Partnership Resource Center Community Research Coordinator), John Barli, Tina Bushnell, Kenydra Donalson, Denise Fanning, Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower, LaToya Jennings Lopez, Cherie Kelly, Sarah Livingstone, Nipapat McDow, Toni Spoliansky, Sharon Walters, Staci White (LP SFSA Team)

Institute for Child and Family Services Research



This report was funded by the Children's Bureau; Administration on Children, Youth, and Families; Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant # 90CA1868. The contents of this report are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau.

Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the LP Resource Center (LP RC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies, identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on LP RC's efforts at strengthening families by providing concrete support in times of need.

The Library Partnership Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In June 2008, PSF partnered with Alachua County Library District (ACLD) to identify a place to open a Resource Center with a goal to reduce the stigma people may feel about going into a social services center and encourage community members to seek out resources before a crisis occurs, subsequently preventing risks to child safety. The Library Partnership Resource Center opened its doors to the community in July 2009. The Library Partnership Resource Center (LP RC) is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy, community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of services to meet the

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Library Partnership Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Snow, E., Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R.J., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2022). *The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the LP RC SFSA Team.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

John Barli – Catholic Charities

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador

Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador

Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>. Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on providing concrete support in times of need there are 8 topics with 39 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, its relationship to the LP Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members complete their scores, these data were shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the LP RC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. Meetings that involved the discussion of Concrete Support in Times of Need items took place on items took place on November 15, 2021.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with providing concrete support in times of need. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

It is important to note, that although discussion and findings summarized in this report are informative and provide insights with respect to how LP RC is responsive to providing concrete support in times of need, no specific action items were generated relating to any self-assessment questions or topics associated with this protective factor.

Collectively, it was assessed that LP RC is very responsive to the expressed need of patrons for select concrete supports and services. Findings detailed below reinforce the value and utility of concrete supports and services for community members and households and the efficiency and effectiveness of staff in responding to these identified needs in a supportive and non-stigmatizing manner. The provision of concrete supports to families in times of need is one of LP RC's greatest strengths.

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis?

The following is a measure of how the Library Partnership Resource Center responds immediately when families are in crisis. There were no SFSA questions that the majority of team members thought were not applicable. Findings highlight a team consensus of agreement with 14 of the 15 questions (93%), with 1 within the disagree range. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of LP RC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis.

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at LPRC:

Parents are encouraged to turn to staff in the event of a crisis through:

- The fact that staff listen, show concern and share their own personal challenges as appropriate in informal conversations and regular interactions.
- Materials regularly provided to participating families.
- Information on which staff members can help families with particular issues.

Staff proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress by:

- Expressing concern and offering help in line with the program's philosophy and resources.
- Offering to connect families to resources, including help lines, community resources or public agencies.
- Making space available for staff to meet with parents privately.
- Ensuring that parents can talk with staff members with whom they are the most comfortable.
- Being sensitive and responsive to the impact of family stress on children.
- Keeping family issues confidential unless given explicit permission to share information (except when potential abuse or neglect is at issue and a report is made).

When a family is experiencing extreme difficulties or crisis:

- At least one staff member with a close relationship with the family reaches out to the family proactively.
- If the family wants assistance, staff members, including supervisors or a staff team, work with the family to help them manage the crisis.
- The programs has resources for family assistance, such as diapers, transportation, a safe sleeping environment or even emergency funds.
- If the family agrees, staff connect the family to resources outside the program that can help them, such as medical or mental health specialists, or services such as respite care or emergency crisis services.
- Staff continue to offer support to the family and monitor the situation daily until the situation is manageable.

Overwhelmingly, most concrete support items were identified as strengths of the LPRC by SFSA team members. Staff at LPRC were perceived as involved, approachable, and responsive to parents and families in times of distress and crisis... LPRC has a well-established identity and reputation as a valued resource within the community that provides supports in a non-stigmatized and helpful manner by staff that are informed and empathetic.

Overwhelmingly, as suggested above, most concrete support items were identified as strengths of the LPRC by SFSA team members. Staff at LPRC were perceived as involved, approachable, and responsive to parents and families in times of distress and crisis. Historically, concrete supports and services have been the most requested services and highest identified need (classified by protective factor) amongst patrons and families within the neighborhoods served by LPRC. Reportedly, LPRC has a well-established identity and reputation as a valued resource within the community that provides supports in a non-stigmatized and helpful manner by staff that are informed and empathetic. As one community ambassador noted: “most people turn to the resource center...you can get everything here.” Another team member (community partner) highlighted “...the first place I go to [is the] Library Partnership” when she is seeking resources for a family because she knows that “...there is no judgement and stigma when people seek and receive...supports from LP.” The LPRC’s reputation as a respected resource is shared by other community stakeholders, including local schools that refer parents and families to LPRC. Parents served by the Community Partnership School (CPS) at Howard Bishop who were referred to LPRC have reported being helpfully impacted, expressing to CPS Howard Bishop staff that when going to LPRC they “got their needs met” especially “in distressed moments” and that it was “...always a positive experience.” The quality of established relationships with collaborative partners and referrals to outside services are viewed as a strength. One community ambassador noted that the LPRC staff “make things happen for [her]” and that “word is spreading [in the community]” about these supports. For some parents/patrons, the receipt of select concrete supports becomes an opportunity for exposure to other services responsive to additional protective factors that are subsequently utilized.

The LPRC’s reputation as a respected resource is shared by other community stakeholders, including local schools that refer parents and families to LPRC. Parents served by the Community Partnership School (CPS) at Howard Bishop who were referred to LPRC have reported being helpfully impacted, expressing to CPS Howard Bishop staff that when going to LPRC they “got their needs met” especially “in distressed moments” and that it was “...always a positive experience.”

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the Library Partnership to Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis.

There was only one item whether the consensus rating was a level of disagreement:

When a family is experiencing extreme difficulties or crisis:

- The program has flexible hours of operation to accommodate families outside of regular business hours.

This finding reflects the fact that scheduled services are typically aligned (with some variation on select days) with regular business hours. LPRC is open Monday, Tuesday, and Friday from 9am to 5pm, and Wednesday and Thursday from 11am to 6pm. LPRC used to be open on Saturdays but the number of visits on Saturdays were very low, and those who did visit could often not make connections to other partner resources (e.g., rent and utility assistance) because the other relevant

organizations were closed. All scheduled services and supports are available during all open hours; however sometimes accommodations are made for emergency needs. Although there is no person “on call” if there is an emergency need, any voicemails received after hours from patrons or partners are immediately addressed the next morning, when the center opens. Staff noted, “we always follow-up...[there] is never a lag time” in responding to any received message and there is a formal policy at LPRC to return calls within 24-48 hours. Team members (staff, community partners, and community ambassadors) report that they have not heard patrons express that the hours of operation are a barrier to receipt of support and services at LPRC. Given such, at this time, SFSA team members do not see any issues with LPRC’s hours as they are, and no action item is recommended.

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community?

There are 13 questions associated with a measure of how the LP Resource Center provides information and connections to services in the community. Findings highlight a team consensus of agreement with all (100%) of these 13 questions.

What LP Resource Center Does Well to Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community.

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at LPRC:

Staff proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress by:

- Expressing concern and offering help.
- Offering to connect families to resources, including help lines, community resources or public agencies.
- Making themselves and/or other designated home visitors available to parents if parents need to talk.
- Being sensitive and responsive to the impact of family stress on children.
- Keeping family issues confidential unless given explicit permission to share information (except when potential abuse or neglect is at issue and a report is mandated).
- Helping families to identify short-term supports and prepare long-term strategies so they are better able to sustain themselves and endure hardships.

Parents are encouraged to share information about community resources (e.g., toy exchanges, resale shops, play lots, family activities), as well as more formal services.

The program maintains up-to-date information about services in the community that includes hours of operation, fees, locations, eligibility requirements, language capacities, etc. Services to be included are:

- Food pantries
- Health providers
- Domestic violence services

- Shelters
- Respite care for children
- Alcohol and substance abuse services
- Mental health services (for adults and children)
- Economic supports
- Legal assistance
- Quality early care and education

The program actively builds collaborative links with other service providers by:

- Bringing services on site, when possible.
- Easing the referral process by ensuring the workers in different programs know each other and work together.
- Coordinating follow-up efforts across service providers, ensuring that the family is involved in service coordination and informed about all communication.
- Developing memorandum of understanding or established processes with partners to coordinate services for families in crisis.
- Using input from participating parents to identify and advocate to fill gaps in the services available to families.

One of the clearly identified strengths at LPRC is the quality of staff and the collaborative relationship with staff from the library, especially in efforts to proactively engage with and help parents and families...Library staff note that calls forwarded to LPRC are “always addressed in an efficient and timely manner” adding that there is “...never a call that is not responded to.” ... Staff share resources and actively coordinate efforts to collectively assist a parent/patron that may seem in distress or in need of assistance.

One of the clearly identified strengths at LPRC is the quality of staff and the collaborative relationship with staff from the library, especially in efforts to proactively engage with and help parents and families. Front desk staff at both the Library and LPRC are educated on all resources provided by each organization as well as collaborative partners. Library staff note that calls forwarded to LPRC are “always addressed in an efficient and timely manner” adding that there is “...never a call that is not responded to.” Team members discussed how LPRC works “across the hall” with the library to address patron needs. Staff share resources and actively coordinate efforts to collectively assist a parent/patron that may seem in distress or in need of assistance. An example was highlighted regarding a mother whose son had COVID-19. She had no money, transportation, or food. Library and LPRC staff could not find an agency available to help, so they figured out an “out of the box” solution. They were able to use Instacart, community donations, and funding from United Way for COVID-related needs to get food delivered to the family. LPRC and Library staff worked together and “followed through until there was a solution.”

These efforts to assist distressed parents and families are commendable and in line with the core principles of a strengthening families framework for help. The quality of the collaborative relationship between LPRC and the Library and their shared dedication to providing supports and services in a proactive, non-stigmatized, and meaningful way enhances their status as a trustworthy community resource legitimately interested in the well-being of parents and families.

The quality of the collaborative relationship between LPRC and the Library and their shared dedication to providing supports and services in a proactive, non-stigmatized, and meaningful way enhances their status as a trustworthy community resource legitimately interested in the well-being of parents and families.

SFSA Team members report that the most utilized/requested concrete supports available on site at LPRC are food and clothing. The library's most utilized concrete support is computer access. All these supports are low barrier services (no ID or income requirements, means/needs tests, etc.) and are available to everyone. Much of LPRC's funding is from grants rather than direct county, state, or federal funding. This allows more flexibility, fewer barriers, and fewer limiting eligibility requirements regarding who can receive services. Library computers are secure for patrons to print, scan, email, and fill out online applications that contain personal and/or sensitive information at no cost to the patron.

Patrons also make use of the fax machine at LPRC. Faxing is a valued service as there are still many agencies (i.e., DCF, SSA, Unemployment) that utilize faxing as their preferred method for formal document (e.g., applications, etc.) delivery/transfer. Other frequently requested concrete supports and resources include household items and assistance with bills.

The SFSA Team highlighted, as an asset of LPRC, the quality and comprehensiveness of their community partnerships and connections with other organizations that can be resources for concrete supports for parents and families. The LPRC does not just disseminate information regarding other community resources, they are effective in linking patrons to these resources, advocating for patrons, coordinating, and working with partner agencies, and following-up with patrons to see that their needs have been met. It was noted that LPRC staff make a point to "reach out to the community and know the community organizations."

The LPRC does not just disseminate information regarding other community resources, they are effective in linking patrons to these resources, advocating for patrons, coordinating, and working with partner agencies, and following-up with patrons to see that their needs have been met.

LPRC staff also advocate for (and guide) patrons when connecting them to other organizations for resources helping them navigate different service systems. This reduces stress for patrons as they are not

left “alone” when navigating processes with other systems of care. Parents and families are seen as partners in the process where collective “brainstorming” takes place to identify the best resources to address need and mitigate familial crisis and stress. When brainstorming with families, LPRC staff (it was reported) always have “A, B, and C in mind” not just one agency; multiple options are identified for service and resource provision. External to LPRC supports, housing and utilities are additional common concrete supports for which assistance is sought. For these services and needs, staff are informed of community resources, have paperwork from select agencies, help guide patrons through application processes, and focus on ensuring there is a “warm handoff” to the relevant community support/partner. Some connections with agencies/partners (depending on the need, demand, and agency/partner resources and protocols) require more time and present more challenges than others.

LPRC staff...advocate for (and guide) patrons when connecting them to other organizations for resources helping them navigate different service systems. This reduces stress for patrons as they are not left “alone” when navigating processes with other systems of care.

Parents and families are seen as partners in the process where collective “brainstorming” takes place to identify the best resources to address need and mitigate familial crisis and stress.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for Library Partnership Resource Center to Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community.

There were no identified areas of focus for improvement by the SFSA Team as such relates to LPRC providing information and connections to services in the community.

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Help Families to Develop Skills They Need to Identify their Needs and Connect to Supports?

There are 11 questions associated with a measure of how the Library Partnership Resource Center helps families to develop skills they need to identify their needs and connect to supports. Agreement existed for 9 of 11 questions, suggesting that LPRC does a very good job in providing concrete supports to its patrons and helping families in crisis. These assessments were based on first-hand knowledge (especially among the Community Ambassadors) where supports were provided in a non-stigmatized manner with

helpful and meaningful links to service providers for concrete supports and services related to all other protective factors.

What LP Resource Center Does Well to Help Families to Develop Skills They Need to Identify their Needs and Connect to Supports.

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at LPRC:

Staff help parents to identify and mobilize their own resources to address their families' needs by:

- Encouraging families to take the lead when creating a plan to address family needs, including addressing barriers and anticipated outcomes.
- Communicating to families that seeking help is not an indicator of weakness or failure as a parent, but rather is a step toward building resilience.
- Encouraging parents to advocate for themselves and their child.
- Providing information and guidance to families so that they understand their rights in accessing services, gain knowledge of relevant services and learn how to navigate through service systems.

When staff make referrals to outside services, they support family leadership by:

- Brainstorming with families about what resources would be helpful.
- Respecting when a family is not comfortable with a specific provider by helping them to either address and resolve the issue or identify other resources.
- Helping parents learn how to address barriers to utilizing services (e.g., lack of transportation or childcare, fees, language barriers, lack of translation services, lack of cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness).
- Coaching parents as they fill out initial paperwork required to access these services, (e.g., insurance and eligibility forms).
- Making a personal connection between families and service providers (if families have agreed to share information through written consent).

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for LP Resource Center to Help Families to Develop Skills They Need to Identify their Needs and Connect to Supports.

There was a consensus neither agree nor disagree rating for the following two items:

Staff help parents to identify and mobilize their own resources to address their families' needs by:

- Connecting parents to peer-to-peer navigation support

When staff make referrals to outside services, they support family leadership by:

- Following up with families on referrals to ensure that they were satisfied with the services they received and providing help in advocating for themselves if they were not satisfied.

Team members did not expand upon reasons for the above rating nor recommend any action items associated with this assessment.

Fidelity of Concrete Support in Times of Need Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

The SFSA Team identified the weighted average team score as the consensus measure for each item associated with the Concrete Support in Times of Need assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)³ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Concrete Support in Times of Need Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 36 (of a possible score of 39) or 92%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the promoting Social Connections were implemented with high fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 36 (of a possible score of 39) or 92%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the promoting Social Connections were implemented with high fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

The Library Partnership Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As denoted earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, LP RC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the LP RC in accordance with the CSSP’s protective factors framework. The names and/or biographies of these team members are detailed below.

³ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Tarr, J., Harnar, M. A., & Ahsan, N. (2014). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Unpublished whitepaper presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s annual conference in Dallas, TX.

John Barli – Catholic Charities

John Barli came to Gainesville in 1974 to attend the University of Florida, after 38 years in the for-profit world, John made the jump to non- profits after serving on The Catholic Charities Gainesville Advisory Board. He is motivated every day by the opportunity to transform lives.

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Tina Bushnell is originally from St. Petersburg, Florida and has been a Gainesville resident since 1985. She attended Santa Fe College and went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from University of Florida. She also holds a Master of Library and Information Science from Florida State University. Ms. Bushnell began working at the Alachua County Library District in 2011 and became the manager of the Library Partnership Branch in 2016. She is dedicated to collaborating with the resource center by providing complimentary services and programs to make the Library Partnership a “one stop shop” for the community. She enjoys spending time with her son and his family, who also live in Gainesville, but spends most of her time outside of work relaxing with her cats.



Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador



Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Denise Fanning is originally from Texas and has been in Gainesville since 2008. She is a Gator Grad, and Marine Veteran, with a bachelor’s in psychology, and has been working in the nonprofit community since 2011. She joined the Catholic Charities family in November of 2020 and feels fortunate to be a part of an organization that truly embodies an ethos of providing compassionate services to the community.

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower was born in Philadelphia and has been a Florida resident since 2008 after moving here from South Carolina. She is the proud mother of three adult sons and one adult daughter who graduated from Santa Fe College. Ms. Jazmen is also a graduate of the Catholic Charities Bridges to Prosperity Class of 2012. This is where she learned the importance of being involved in her community. She has since served as an active member of the Gainesville Housing Authority Board from 2014 – 2018 and the Catholic Charities Board from 2018 – present. Ms. Jazmen has also been a key member of the Library Partnership Resource Center Community Advisory Council since 2019 and now brings her experience and enthusiasm to the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes strongly in taking an active role with community organizations and encourages others to do the same so they can help steer. She thanks God that she is able to be a help to her community.



LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School



Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Cherie holds a Master’s in Clinical Psychology and Bachelor’s in Psychology from the University of Louisville. She is certified in the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support and the WhyTry Youth Resiliency Program. In 2009, Cherie joined Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) as part of their Family Team Conferencing program. Since 2013, Cherie has worked with PSF’s Resource Centers, and has served as the Library Partnership Resource Center Manager for 5 years. Cherie has helped create programs designed to build family protective factors, including homework help, enrichment programs, a re-entry conference and job fair, and a Parent and Community Advisory Council. Cherie builds community collaborations by connecting with other non-profits, faith-based organizations, businesses, government, and schools, while also building a system of case management and supports for families. Cherie most enjoys grant writing, developing equitable, community-based programs and services by connecting with families to understand their needs and building meaningful relationships with children who participate in programs. Cherie serves on the Race Equity Workgroup at PSF, University of Florida’s Workforce Development Committee, and the Community Partnership School Leadership Council.

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Ms. Sarah Livingstone grew up in Montclair, New Jersey, a diverse, arts focused town. She attended and graduated from Santa Fe College, with an associate degree in Early Education, and then obtained a bachelor’s degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences from the University of Florida. After this schooling, Sarah moved back to New Jersey and continued her education, graduating from Rutgers University, with a master’s in social work. She holds a licensure of social work in the state of New Jersey. Sarah is currently employed with Partnership for Strong Families. There, in her role as Family Support Facilitator, for the Library Partnership Resource Center, she works in tandem with all levels of stakeholders on behalf of families in the Northeast side of Gainesville, Florida. Sarah is an author and an owner of ARE U Motivated LLC. She coordinates and facilitates mental health discussions in the community. Sarah is a member of the Child Protection Task Force, based in Gainesville, FL. She is the middle child and very close to her family members. Her mother and father attended the University of Florida, as well, her mother graduating from the nursing program, and her father, the chemical engineering program. Sarah involves herself in activity groups in the community and prioritizes self-care. Sarah appreciates that the Library Partnership Resource Center (LPRC) is available to the public, without regard to a person’s demographics, income, and/or plight in life. It is a non-discriminatory environment and reparative in nature. With a strengths-based approach, LPRC focuses on infusing and enhancing protective factors in the lives of the patrons served. Sarah finds joy in being a part of the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes that the existence of the team not only encourages communication between the community members, researchers, and the resource centers, but the functioning of the team creates cohesion within the resource centers; awareness of gaps in services; room for adjustment and solutions, and responsiveness to all families, family members, and community members.



Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador

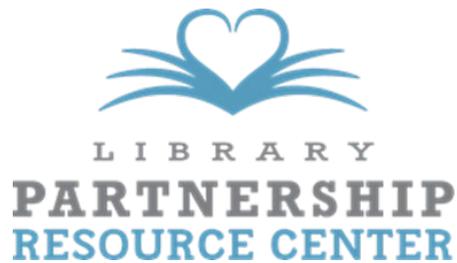


Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Staci White is from Gainesville, Florida. She holds a bachelor’s degree in English with a minor in African American Studies and earned her master’s degree in Educational Leadership and Administration. After teaching with Alachua County Public Schools, Ms. White joined the Children’s Home Society of Florida in her current role at Howard Bishop Middle School in 2020. She is passionate about providing resources for all families and communities.

Although not formally members of the LP SFSA Team, Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Elizabeth Snow (Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center), and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) attended each meeting of the LP SFSA Team meetings and served as key supports for team processes. **Robin Perry** provided initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and recommendations by the team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying team members' views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the LP Resource Center. **Elizabeth Snow** is the Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Snow maintained regular contact with team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. **Toni Spoliansky** served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the LP Resource Center. It is important to note that the role of the above three individuals was seen as supportive in nature. An empowerment perspective was adopted, as a team they would decide the meeting schedule and facilitation process with all members assuming equal status as knowledge experts with respect to community needs and the role, value, functioning, and responsiveness of the LP Resource Center to community need related to supporting families through the promotion of parental resilience. There was no effort by those in supportive roles to censure conversation and discussion points; efforts were made as feedback was regularly sought regarding facilitation processes and preferences of group members for these processes. All notes were converted into minutes that were distributed to team members for their review, edits, and approval. Feedback and recommended edits to documented discussion items and decisions could be provided within scheduled meetings (the team decided on monthly two-hour meetings) or in dialog/e-mails to Robin Perry and/or Elizabeth Snow in-between meetings (which would then be discussed with all team members at the next in-person or virtual meeting).

Suggested Citation: Perry, R., Snow, E. Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2022). *Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need at The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.



Supporting Families by
Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development at
The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center

Elizabeth Snow (Library Partnership Resource Center Community Research Coordinator),
Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), John Barli, Tina Bushnell, Kenydra Donalson, Denise
Fanning, Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower, LaToya Jennings Lopez, Cherie Kelly, Sarah
Livingstone, Nipapat McDow, Toni Spoliansky, Sharon Walters, Staci White (LP SFSA
Team)

Institute for Child and Family Services Research



This report was funded by the Children’s Bureau; Administration on Children, Youth, and Families;
Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant #
90CA1868. The contents of this report are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily
represent the official views of the Children’s Bureau.

Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the LP Resource Center (LP RC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies, identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on LP RC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting knowledge of parenting and child development.

The Library Partnership Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In June 2008, PSF partnered with Alachua County Library District (ACLD) to identify a place to open a Resource Center with a goal to reduce the stigma people may feel about going into a social services center and encourage community members to seek out resources before a crisis occurs, subsequently preventing risks to child safety. The Library Partnership Resource Center opened its doors to the community in July 2009. The Library Partnership Resource Center (LP RC) is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy,

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Library Partnership Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Snow, E., Perry, R., Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2021). *The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of services to meet the needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the LP RC SFSa Team.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

John Barli – Catholic Charities

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador

Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador

Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/> Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development there are 18 topics with 70 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, its relationship to the LP Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their scores, these data were shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the LP RC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. Discussion of the LP RC activities and services related to knowledge of parenting and child development predominantly took place on November 15, 2021.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

The following is a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with promoting knowledge of parenting and child development. For the purposes of this summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

How Does the Library Partnership Resource Center Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children?

There are 14 questions associated with how staff at the LP Resource Center model developmentally appropriate interactions with children. Findings demonstrate a team consensus of agreement with 11 of the 14 questions (78.6%), and a consensus rating of neither agree nor disagree for the remaining 3 questions. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generated from an open discussion of the LP RC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What the Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at the LP RC:

- Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of child development:
 - Staff model developmentally appropriate responses to children's behavior, interests, temperaments and need for exploration and learning.

- Staff understand and can explain the development arc for young children.
- Staff can explain to parents how various activities and interactions support their child's development.

Staff work collaboratively with parents to coordinate support for children's development:

- Staff develop an ongoing partnership with parents to ensure regular communication, common understanding of the child's development and coordinated action to provide each child with the appropriate experiences for their developmental stage.
- Staff and parents together use appropriate assessment tools to screen for developmental concerns and monitor development.

Physical discipline (i.e., spanking or hitting) is not allowed in the program by staff or parents.

When staff talk with parents about discipline, they:

- Explain why physical discipline is not allowed in the program, even though this may be different from the family's approach to discipline.
- Provide information on age- appropriate positive discipline techniques and reasonable expectations.
- Offer ideas for alternate ways to manage children's behavior and to recognize and reinforce desired/appropriate behavior.
- Encourage parents to discuss behavior challenges they may have at home.
- Recognize different parental and cultural approaches to discipline and discuss them with parent

There was general agreement among SFSA team members that supporting parents with parenting and child development is a focus and priority of the LP RC. LP RC staff primarily address this protective factor by modeling appropriate interactions, creating a comfortable environment for parents and their children, and making referrals for parenting support based on individual family needs. Collectively, findings suggest that LP RC staff demonstrate a strong understanding of child development through their actions and communications with parents and their children. Interactions with parents are collaborative in nature, allowing staff and parents to provide coordinated support for their children.

There was general agreement among SFSA team members that supporting parents with parenting and child development is a focus and priority of the LP RC. LP RC staff primarily address this protective factor by modeling appropriate interactions, creating a comfortable environment for parents and their children, and making referrals for parenting support based on individual family needs.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the Library Partnership Resource Center to Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children

The following three items received a consensus rating within the neither agree nor disagree range:

Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of child development:

- Staff participate in regular training that updates their knowledge on advances in understanding child development.

When staff talk with parents about discipline, they

- Connect parents to other parents who can share or model positive parenting approaches
- Make arrangements to have appropriate language and cultural interpreters to support difficult conversations with families.

Some SFSA team members reported being unfamiliar with the types of training that staff at the LP RC receive. Those team members who are staff shared that LP RC staff participate in child development trainings as necessary and learn best practices from skilled community partners (including the Child Advocacy Center and Village Counseling Center).

Topics related to connecting parents and making language and cultural interpreters available were discussed when reviewing results related to the Parental Resilience protective factor, including the development of action items to “continue involvement of peer mentors in future LP RC programs and events” (p. 23) and to “continue with current efforts to expand the LP RC’s ability to provide services and information in other languages” (Perry et al., 2021, p. 17).³

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development?

There were 30 questions associated with nine broad indicators measuring the extent to which LP RC provides information and resources on parenting and child development. There was a consensus rating of agreement for 23 of these questions (76.7%) with seven questions where team consensus was within the neither agree nor disagree range.

What the Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at LP RC:

Parenting education classes are offered as one among several strategies for increasing parents’ knowledge of parenting and child development.

Parenting education classes are offered in a way that reflects best practices in the field, including:

- Course content is focused on parenting information and developmental information for a particular age group or targeted population, such as children with special needs.

³ Perry, R., Snow, E. Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2021). *The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team’s Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

- Parents have opportunities to try out new parenting techniques in the context of parent-child activities and/or as “homework” assignments between classes.
- Classes are engaging and interactive with opportunities for discussion and reflection (rather than being overly reliant on lecture and written information).
- Classes and programs are delivered by staff with appropriate training and credentials for the program.
- Staff exhibit warmth, genuineness, flexibility, empathy and good communication skills with families.
- Child care is offered while parents are in classes.
- Transportation, food or other supports are provided as appropriate to enable parents to participate.
- If implementing an evidence-based or proven program, the program is delivered with fidelity to the original course design and content.

Parenting information and materials used by the program are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and:

- Reflect a diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds and family structures.

Parenting and child development information is provided through multiple avenues to meet diverse learning styles, including:

- Books and videos in a resource library.
- Parenting classes.
- Regular postings on bulletin boards in public spaces.
- Posting of information and links on a program website and/or social media pages accessed by participants.

Parents are connected to a variety of resources that can help them explore different ways of parenting, such as:

- Parent education groups (including fatherhood groups).
- Counseling.
- Support groups.
- Mentors/coaches.

Parent education offerings and staff coaching on parenting are responsive to the needs of parents in different circumstances. For example:

- Different parenting styles of mothers and fathers and the strengths of each
- Needs and concerns of first-time parents
- Needs of parents who are parenting a child with a disability
- Noncustodial parents
- Nontraditional caregivers (e.g., grandparents, foster parents)"

Staff provide “just in time” parenting tips and discuss parenting issues with parents when:

- Child behavior or development issues arise (e.g., potty training, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, separation issues, aggressive behavior).
- A parent appears to be frustrated or stressed and in need of support.

- A parent appears to be having difficulty relating to or communicating with their child.

If the program serves expecting families and new mothers and fathers, the program provides opportunities for parents to learn about:

- Prenatal and infant health and development
- The birth process and what to expect
- The needs of postnatal women and their families
- The developing role of first-time parents (including adolescent parents, if appropriate)
- Planning for the child's needs after birth (e.g, car seats, cribs).

Team members noted that parenting classes were offered onsite in the past and that LP RC staff frequently refer patrons to partner organizations that currently offer formal parenting education. These organizations include Catholic Charities, Meridian Behavioral Health, Healthy Families, Healthy Start, the HIPPPY program (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters), the SNAP program (Stop Now and Plan) through CDS Family and Behavioral Health Services, and the Alachua County School Board mentoring program for parents. In sum, findings suggest that the parenting classes offered onsite in the past, and those classes and supports that parents are currently referred to by LP RC, provide content in a variety of formats that reflect best practices in a manner that is targeted to specific issues and parenting needs, and is friendly, supportive, and engaging.

Many of the referral partners listed above have more capacity than the LP RC for providing home visits and individualized services related to parenting and child development. The SFSA team felt that providing parenting education services through direct referrals to appropriate community partners is currently working well. The strong collaborative partnerships that the LP RC maintains are a valuable resource for providing meaningful information on parenting and child development for patrons/parents in the community.

...findings suggest that the parenting classes offered onsite in the past, and those classes and supports that parents are currently referred to by LP RC, provide content in a variety of formats that reflect best practices in a manner that is targeted to specific issues and parenting needs, and is friendly, supportive, and engaging.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for Library Partnership Resource Center to Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development

There were seven questions for which the consensus rating was neither agree nor disagree; these include the following:

Parenting education classes are offered in a way that reflects best practices in the field, including:

- Parents go through a series of classes as a group – with other forms of contact between classes to maintain their engagement.

Information is provided to parents on stages of child development and what to expect of their children at each stage.

Parenting information and materials used by the program are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and:

- Are available in the language spoken by program families.
- Encourage parents to reflect on their own parenting history and culture, rather than encouraging stereotypes.

Parenting and child development information is provided through multiple avenues to meet diverse learning styles, including:

- Support groups.
- Opportunities for parents with similar concerns to come together and share specific information on such issues as accident prevention, toilet training, routine preventative health care, nutrition, sleep patterns, Shaken Baby Syndrome, safe sleep, etc.

Parents are connected to a variety of resources that can help them explore different ways of parenting, such as:

- Parenting groups and organizations that promote social inclusion and host groups that correspond to different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups represented the community.

The team did not recommend any action items specific to these topics but noted that if parents express interest in onsite support groups or parenting classes, such as a series where parents go through classes as a group, that the LP RC could revisit offering this type of program. While formal opportunities for parents to discuss topics related to developmental stages or child/infant safety are not currently offered, the LP RC prominently displays brochures and pamphlets with information about prenatal health, safe sleep, child abuse prevention, and community resources for families. LP RC staff often refer expectant and new parents to Alachua County where staff conducting a coordinated intake can direct people to the most appropriate program (such as Healthy Start or Healthy Families).

SFSA team members noted that the LP RC could benefit from having printed materials being more culturally and linguistically accessible. This topic has been discussed regarding other protective factors as well and the team previously presented an overarching action item to make more materials available in other languages (especially Spanish due to expressed need).

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Encourage Parents to Observe, Ask Questions, Explore Parenting Issues and Try Out New Strategies?

There was a team consensus rating of agreement for 5 of the 14 items (35.7%) relating to how the staff and programs at the LP RC encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies. Average weighted team scores reflected a consensus rating of neither agree nor disagree for the other 9 items (64.3%).

What Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Encourage Parents to Observe, Ask Questions, Explore Parenting Issues and Try Out New Strategies

Team consensus of agreement was present for the following 5 items:

Parents and staff work together to design and organize opportunities for parent led discussions (such as a Community Café or Parent Café series) to explore:

- Connecting parents with materials and websites, support groups, play groups and community resources specific to their children's special needs.

Staff recognize and support the parenting challenges experienced by families with children who have special needs by:

- Being sensitive to parents' frustration, protectiveness, guilt, loss and other related feelings, and acknowledging the challenges families may be experiencing.
- Supporting parents in understanding appropriate developmental expectations for their children with special needs.
- Checking in with parents about the impact their children's special needs may have on family dynamics and parental stress.
- Connecting parents with materials and websites, support groups, play groups and community resources specific to their children's special needs.

Team members discussed how staff at the LP RC address child and parent needs either onsite or by referral depending on the individual situation. Families with children with special needs are sometimes supported fully onsite and sometimes are referred to other agencies as appropriate. One staff team member provided the following example: If a child needs an IEP or 504 for accommodations at school, LP RC staff will work directly with parents to call the school and coach them through advocating for their child; whereas if a child with a developmental difference needed a specific therapy or service, staff would connect the family with a provider. One such community partner frequently utilized by the LP RC is the Early Steps program, an early intervention system offered through the Florida Dept. of Health.

Like other types of parenting supports previously discussed, SFSA team members felt that the LP RC's individualized approach to supporting families with children with special needs currently works well and no action items were recommended at this time.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for Library Partnership Resource Center to Encourage Parents to Observe, Ask Questions, Explore Parenting Issues and Try Out New Strategies

The following nine questions relating to how the LP RC encourages parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues, and try out new strategies received average team scores in the neither agree nor disagree range:

Parents and staff work together to design and organize opportunities for parent led discussions (such as a Community Café or Parent Café series) to explore:

- Cultural/ethnic expectations and practices about parenting.
- Different parenting practices.
- Parent/child relationships.

- How to interact effectively with their children (e.g., listening; appreciating ideas, efforts and feelings; creating a non-threatening environment).
- *Being especially supportive at the time that special needs are initially identified.
- *Ensuring that program parent-child activities are appropriate for families with children with special needs.

Staff recognize and support the parenting challenges experienced by families with children who have special needs by:

- Regularly checking in with parents about parenting issues.
- *Being especially supportive at the time that special needs are initially identified.
- *Ensuring that program parent-child activities are appropriate for families with children with special needs.

**These two items are repeated by the SFSA tool as they are used to measure aspects of how staff organize opportunities for parent-led discussions as well as how staff recognize and support the parenting challenges experienced by families with children who have special needs.*

Team members discussed how efforts to develop parent-led groups have been challenging in the past due to lack of engagement and attendance. A community partner team member noted a monthly mutual support program called Circle of Parents (an initiative of the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida) that meets at the Millhopper Library Branch. This program has similarly struggled with low attendance. One community ambassador team member expressed it would be nice to get more parents involved in parent-led groups to discuss parenting and children, but that this would only be effective with a larger group of parents, “not just one or two.” Team members agreed that an assessment of interest would be necessary before trying to implement future parent-led groups and recommended the following action item:

Action Item #1: Future Parent and Community Advisory Council could poll parents to assess if there is an interest in parent-led discussion and support groups, and if not, assess what the barriers or reasons for a lack of interest may be.

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Address Parenting Issues from a Strength-Based Perspective?

There were 12 questions intended to gauge how the LP RC addresses parenting issues from a strength-based perspective. The average team scores demonstrated a consensus of agreement for 11 of these questions (91.7%). One question was rated within the neither agree nor disagree range.

What Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Address Parenting Issues from a Strength-Based Perspective

Team consensus of agreement was present for the following 11 items, suggesting that team members perceived the following actions and practices as strengths of the LP RC:

Home visitors share their observations of children with parents to help the parents recognize:

- Their children's unique assets, temperament, personality, communication styles and behavioral cues.
- Their children's positive social skills and developmentally appropriate emotional behavior.
- Their children's independence and abilities.
- Activities families can use to enhance their children's skills and development.
- Signals that development may not be on track.

Staff reinforce positive parent-child interactions by:

- Noticing and acknowledging when parents are attuned to their children's needs or are communicating effectively with their children.
- Sharing something positive with parents about their children's behavior and development.

Staff proactively and respectfully address concerns about parenting techniques or behavior by:

- Asking open-ended questions to understand the behavior from the parent's perspective.
- Acknowledging young children's frustrating behavior and recognizing parents' efforts to deal with it effectively.
- Sharing concerns about a child's behavior and/or about the parents' parenting practices and respectfully offering alternatives.
- Connecting parents to resources and supports that may help to address parenting issues.

As with other parenting services, the LP RC aims to avoid duplicating efforts and leans on strong community partnerships for home visiting services. Some of these partners that provide home visits include Healthy Start, Healthy Families, and the HIPPY program (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters). Community ambassador and community partner SFSA team members highlighted these collaborative partnerships as a strength of the LP RC. There was also agreement among community ambassadors that part of why referrals to partner organizations work is because parents in the community view LP RC staff as a trusted, non-judgmental, and reliable source of getting connected to other resources

Findings also suggest that LP RC staff consistently engage with parents and their children in a supportive and strength-based manner. There are proactive efforts to be respectful toward parents regarding shared concerns about their child's behavior and needs, while recognizing parent's efforts along with their need for supports and resources in select situations.

...LP RC staff consistently engage with parents and their children in a supportive and strength-based manner. There are proactive efforts to be respectful toward parents regarding shared concerns about their child's behavior and needs, while recognizing parent's efforts along with their need for supports and resources...

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for Library Partnership Resource Center to Address Parenting Issues from a Strength-Based Perspective

The following question received an average team score in the neither agree nor disagree range:

Home visitors share their observations of children with parents to help the parents recognize:

- 3.16.2 Their children’s growth and development patterns.

Team members mainly discussed the strengths and collaborative partnerships related to how the LP RC addresses parenting issues from a strength-based perspective. The team did not specifically discuss the above question, which was the only question without a team consensus rating of agreement. No action item was recommended.

Fidelity of Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

As denoted earlier, the SFSA Team identified the weighted average team score as the consensus measure for each item associated with the Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)⁴ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 40 (of a possible score of 70) or 57%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 40 (of a possible score of 70) or 57%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

⁴ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Tarr, J., Harnar, M. A., & Ahsan, N. (2014). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Unpublished whitepaper presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s annual conference in Dallas, TX.

The Library Partnership Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As denoted earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, LP RC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the LP RC in accordance with the CSSP’s protective factors framework. The names and/or biographies of these team members are detailed below.

John Barli – Catholic Charities

John Barli came to Gainesville in 1974 to attend the University of Florida, after 38 years in the for-profit world, John made the jump to non- profits after serving on The Catholic Charities Gainesville Advisory Board. He is motivated every day by the opportunity to transform lives.

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Tina Bushnell is originally from St. Petersburg, Florida and has been a Gainesville resident since 1985. She attended Santa Fe College and went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from University of Florida. She also holds a Master of Library and Information Science from Florida State University. Ms. Bushnell began working at the Alachua County Library District in 2011 and became the manager of the Library Partnership Branch in 2016. She is dedicated to collaborating with the resource center by providing complimentary services and programs to make the Library Partnership a “one stop shop” for the community. She enjoys spending time with her son and his family, who also live in Gainesville, but spends most of her time outside of work relaxing with her cats.



Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador



Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Denise Fanning is originally from Texas and has been in Gainesville since 2008. She is a Gator Grad, and Marine Veteran, with a bachelor’s in psychology, and has been working in the nonprofit community since 2011. She joined the Catholic Charities family in November of 2020 and feels fortunate to be a part of an organization that truly embodies an ethos of providing compassionate services to the community.

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower was born in Philadelphia and has been a Florida resident since 2008 after moving here from South Carolina. She is the proud mother of three adult sons and one adult daughter who graduated from Santa Fe College. Ms. Jazmen is also a graduate of the Catholic Charities Bridges to Prosperity Class of 2012. This is where she learned the importance of being involved in her community. She has since served as an active member of the Gainesville Housing Authority Board from 2014 – 2018 and the Catholic Charities Board from 2018 – present. Ms. Jazmen has also been a key member of the Library Partnership Resource Center Community Advisory Council since 2019 and now brings her experience and enthusiasm to the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes strongly in taking an active role with community organizations and encourages others to do the same so they can help steer. She thanks God that she is able to be a help to her community.



LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School



Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Cherie holds a Master’s in Clinical Psychology and Bachelor’s in Psychology from the University of Louisville. She is certified in the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support and the WhyTry Youth Resiliency Program. In 2009, Cherie joined Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) as part of their Family Team Conferencing program. Since 2013, Cherie has worked with PSF’s Resource Centers, and has served as the Library Partnership Resource Center Manager for 5 years. Cherie has helped create programs designed to build family protective factors, including homework help, enrichment programs, a re-entry conference and job fair, and a Parent and Community Advisory Council. Cherie builds community collaborations by connecting with other non-profits, faith-based organizations, businesses,

government, and schools, while also building a system of case management and supports for families. Cherie most enjoys grant writing, developing equitable, community-based programs and services by connecting with families to understand their needs and building meaningful relationships with children who participate in programs. Cherie serves on the Race Equity Workgroup at PSF, University of Florida's Workforce Development Committee, and the Community Partnership School Leadership Council.

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Ms. Sarah Livingstone grew up in Montclair, New Jersey, a diverse, arts focused town. She attended and graduated from Santa Fe College, with an associate degree in Early Education, and then obtained a bachelor's degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences from the University of Florida. After this schooling, Sarah moved back to New Jersey and continued her education, graduating from Rutgers University, with a master's in social work. She holds a licensure of social work in the state of New Jersey. Sarah is currently employed with Partnership for Strong Families. There, in her role as Family Support Facilitator for the Library Partnership Resource Center, she works in tandem with all levels of stakeholders on behalf of families in the Northeast side of Gainesville, Florida. Sarah is an author and an owner of ARE U Motivated LLC. She coordinates and facilitates mental health discussions in the community. Sarah is a member of the Child Protection Task Force, based in Gainesville, FL. She is the middle child and very close to her family members. Her mother and father attended the University of Florida as well, her mother graduating from the nursing program, and her father, the chemical engineering program. Sarah involves herself in activity groups in the community and prioritizes self-care. Sarah appreciates that the Library Partnership Resource Center (LP RC) is available to the public, without regard to a person's demographics, income, and/or plight in life. It is a non-discriminatory environment and reparative in nature. With a strengths-based approach, LP RC focuses on infusing and enhancing protective factors in the lives of the patrons served. Sarah finds joy in being a part of the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes that the existence of the team not only encourages communication between the community members, researchers, and the resource centers, but the functioning of the team creates cohesion within the resource centers; awareness of gaps in services; room for adjustment and solutions, and responsiveness to all families, family members, and community members.



Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador



Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Staci White is from Gainesville, Florida. She holds a bachelor’s degree in English with a minor in African American Studies and earned her master’s degree in Educational Leadership and Administration. After teaching with Alachua County Public Schools, Ms. White joined the Children’s Home Society of Florida in her current role at Howard Bishop Middle School in 2020. She is passionate about providing resources for all families and communities.

Although not formally members of the LP SFSA Team, Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Elizabeth Snow (Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center), and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) attended each meeting of the LP SFSA Team meetings and served as key supports for team processes. **Robin Perry** provided the initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and recommendations by the team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying team members’ views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the LP Resource Center. **Elizabeth Snow** is the Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Snow maintained regular contact with team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. **Toni Spoliansky** served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the LP Resource Center. It is important to note that the role of the above three individuals was seen as supportive in nature. An empowerment perspective was adopted, as a team they would decide the meeting schedule and facilitation process with all members assuming equal status as knowledge experts with respect to community needs and the role, value, functioning, and responsiveness of the LP Resource Center to community need related to supporting families through the promotion of parental resilience. There was no effort by those in supportive roles to censure conversation and discussion points; efforts were made as feedback was regularly sought regarding facilitation processes and preferences of group members for these processes. All notes were converted into minutes that were distributed to team members for their review, edits, and approval. Feedback and recommended edits to documented discussion items and decisions could be provided within scheduled meetings (the team decided on monthly two-hour meetings) or in dialog/e-mails to Robin Perry and/or Elizabeth Snow in-between meetings (which would then be discussed with all team members at the next in-person or virtual meeting).

Suggested Citation: Snow, E., Perry, R., Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2022). *Supporting Families by Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development at The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.



Supporting Families by
Promoting Parental Resilience at
The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center

Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Elizabeth Snow (Library Partnership Resource Center Community Research Coordinator), John Barli, Tina Bushnell, Kenydra Donalson, Denise Fanning, Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower, LaToya Jennings Lopez, Cherie Kelly, Sarah Livingstone, Nipapat McDow, Toni Spoliansky, Sharon Walters, Staci White (LP SFSA Team)

Institute for Child and Family Services Research



This report was funded by the Children’s Bureau; Administration on Children, Youth, and Families; Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant # 90CA1868. The contents of this report are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children’s Bureau.

Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the LP Resource Center (LP RC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies, identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on LP RC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting parental resilience.

The Library Partnership Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In June 2008, PSF partnered with Alachua County Library District (ACLD) to identify a place to open a Resource Center with a goal to reduce the stigma people may feel about going into a social services center and encourage community members to seek out resources before a crisis occurs, subsequently preventing risks to child safety. The Library Partnership Resource Center opened its doors to the community in July 2009. The LP RC is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy, community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of services to meet the needs of patrons, and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Library Partnership Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Snow, E. Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2021). *The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the LP RC SFA Team.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

John Barli – Catholic Charities

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador

Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador

Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program

² For more information regarding CSSP’s Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/> Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). *Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors*. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on Parental Resilience there are 25 topics with 97 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors framework, its relationship to the LP Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their scores, these data were shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the LP RC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. Meetings that involved the discussion of Parental Resilience items took place on August 16 and September 13.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with promoting Parental Resilience. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

How Does LP Resource Center Demonstrate that Parents are Valued?

There are 32 questions associated with a measure of how the LP Resource Center demonstrates that parents are valued. There were no SFSA questions that the majority of team members thought were not applicable. Findings highlight a team consensus of agreement with 17 of the 32 questions on demonstrating that parents are valued, with 15 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of LP RC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What the LP Resource Center Does Well to Demonstrate that Parents are Valued

Staff strive to recognize and affirm the central role of parents in their children's lives through every interaction with families including policies, practices, and informal communication.

The program has multiple avenues for regular communication with families:

- The program provides an orientation for families about the program philosophy, goals, and objectives.
- Staff use a variety of methods (e.g., new family orientations, small group meetings, individual conversations, and written questionnaires) to provide information and gather input from families about activities throughout the year.
- Staff regularly ask parents about their observations of their child.

All family members are made to feel welcome:

- Someone is available to greet families when they come in.
- Staff are respectful even when family visits are unexpected.

Staff develop mutually respectful relationships with all family members by:

- Taking time to get to know family members individually, by name.
- Listening and learning about their interests, current activities, hopes and expectations for themselves and their children.
- Regularly inquiring about what is happening in their lives.
- Providing emotional support and encouragement.
- Sharing appropriate information about themselves.
- Recognizing and acknowledging parents' strengths, efforts, and contributions.
- Taking time to understand the complex needs of individual parents, such as navigating child custody or the child support system, playing dual roles in a single-parent household or having children with different partners.

The program seeks to reflect the community and families it serves by:

- Building a staff that reflects the community and families served.
- Intentionally recruiting and employing staff members who are skilled at working with the diversity of the families in the program.
- Connecting with elders and other trusted messengers of the diverse cultural groups represented in the community served.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the overall positive impact and meaningful practices (through multiple formal, informal, and regular communication methods) that the LP Resource Center and its staff engage in that: recognize and affirm the central role of parents in their children's lives; make all family members feel welcome; and aid in the development of mutually respectful relationships between staff and all family members. These are clearly identified strengths with the LP RC. Collectively these findings reinforce that mutual respect and support are defining features of the relationship between LP RC staff and patrons. Team members noted LP RC staff are welcoming, respectful, patient, supportive, and strength-based in their interactions with patrons. Community ambassadors highlighted that staff "...almost always say something positive..." and are "...gentle and listen, patient and try to help and support..." all patrons (adults, parents, and children). These efforts help build connections, meaningful relationships, and build trust.

... findings reinforce that mutual respect and support are defining features of the relationship between LP RC staff and patrons. Team members noted LP RC staff are welcoming, respectful, patient, supportive, and strength-based in their interactions with patrons. Community ambassadors highlighted that staff “...almost always say something positive...” and are “...gentle and listen, patient and try to help and support...” all patrons (adults, parents, and children). These efforts help build connections, meaningful relationships, and build trust.

Although there was collective agreement on the above items, the team did identify an action item associated with enhancing existing communication, engagement, and outreach efforts. This action item is:

Action Item #1: Build on existing communication methods to improve messaging and increase awareness of the LP Resource Center as a trustworthy place that treats parents with respect and acknowledges their strengths.

Although team members praise LP RC staff and the supports/services provided, there was perceived value in enhancing community awareness regarding the services provided and that it is a place that is supportive, focuses on patron and family member strengths, and is non-stigmatizing. For those in the community unaware of the LP RC, there may be some fear they will not be welcomed or treated with respect given experiences with other human/social service providers and authorities. Word of mouth (between patrons and families and among partners and collaborators) within the served community/neighborhoods has been one of the best engagement tools. Toward this end, there seems to be agreement that word of mouth reviews between and amongst families is generally positive. These personal connections and reviews/insights are important and reinforce the necessity of “...developing trust with community partners and families...” and establishing “...relationships with families...” in order to maximize influence and impact of LP RC staff within the community. Select team members commented to LP RC staff that “...the Resource center is always reliable...”, and that its “...reputation precedes you...” adding that there is a “...full circle of reliability and trust.” The location of the LP RC within (and relations with) the library serves as a good connection for building trust, reducing stigma, and making resources easy to find. It was asserted that to many in the community the Resource Center and Library are “...seen as one...” entity in their supportive capacity and as a resource for individual patrons and families. This reinforces the collaborative nature of the Library and the RC for which there is a collective impact of both on patrons, youth, and families served. Building upon this collaboration and ensuring consistency within and across programing and messaging is important.

... there seems to be agreement that word of mouth reviews between and amongst families is generally positive. These personal connections and reviews/insights are important and reinforce the necessity of "...developing trust with community partners and families..." and establishing "...relationships with families..." in order to maximize influence and impact of LP RC staff within the community.

Although there has been effective word-of-mouth and informal methods of disseminating information about the LP RC among families/households, continuation and enhancement of existing formal procedures can be considered, including:

- Continue to build relationships with key supporters at local schools (e.g., counselors, principals, school social workers, etc.) who have trusting relationships with families and serve (or could serve) as referral sources.
- Continue to use newsletters and emails from the LP RC targeting patrons and families within the community for building awareness about available resources and how to access them.
- Continue and expand coordinated efforts with the Alachua County Library District administration to disseminate information (e.g., website, blogs, library newsletter, etc.) about the nature and scope of LP RC resources.

A new Community Outreach Coordinator position with PSF may be an added support/resource that can be used by LP RC to aid with some of the recommended activities associated with Action Item #1.

In addition to the above, the team agreed that LP RC seeks to reflect the community and families it serves by:

- Building a staff that reflects the community and families served.
- Intentionally recruiting and employing staff members who are skilled at working with the diversity of the families in the program.
- Connecting with elders and other trusted messengers of the diverse cultural groups represented in the community served.

These findings are positive and reinforce ways that LP RC demonstrates how the diversity of families and parents served are valued. Some efforts have been successful and aided in high ratings for the above items. For example, it was noted that when recruiting and selecting interns each semester, LP RC aims to select a diverse group of students who demonstrate the ability to communicate and interact effectively with LP RC community members. When LP RC had an AARP volunteer position, this position was typically filled by someone who was representative of the racial, ethnic, or cultural background of community members.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for LP Resource Center to Demonstrate that Parents are Valued

Although individual member ratings may have been impacted by a lack of knowledge or limited utilization of services and supports, it is notable that the team consensus was a rating of Neither Agree nor Disagree for eight out of nine questions focused on the value of fathers and their unique needs. These included:

Staff show that they value fathers and are sensitive to their unique needs by:

- Taking part in periodic training on understanding and appreciating fathers' needs and parenting.
- Providing information specific to fathers/male family members in a special area such as a lounge, bulletin board, or bookshelf.
- Providing a diaper changing table in the men's room or other area accessible to men.
- Providing peer activities or services that are man-to-man, father-to-father.
- Engaging male participants to greet other men at program activities.
- Establishing ongoing partnerships with community resources that provide services to fathers.
- Being aware of barriers that limit father involvement, such as a difficult relationship with the child's mother, lack of information or a non- custodial relationship with child.
- Encouraging fathers and male family members to engage in all aspects of the program, not only activities for fathers, including leadership roles.

There was a very involved discussion regarding these items, including an overview of broader factors and influences impacting upon the level of engagement and responsiveness of fathers to LP RC engagement attempts, supports and activities. These discussions led to consideration of one key action item:

Action Item #2: Collaborate with community partners who have successfully engaged fathers and other male caregivers to gather insight and ideas for improving engagement at LP RC.

There was consensus among team members of the value and need of engaging with and encouraging the active involvement/participation of fathers/males in family life and LP RC activities, including participating in the SFSA Team. This recommendation is not in conflict with established LP RC protocols that target messaging and services toward “families” in efforts to be inclusive of all types of caregivers (mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster, etc.). Agreement/consensus to explore enhanced efforts of engagement of fathers and other male caregivers exists with the acknowledgement that there has been concerted and collaborative efforts with other agencies to engage with fathers in the past, but these initiatives often “fizzled out” and a realization that there are limited father-specific agencies/services in Gainesville to partner with. Comments related to the limited success of past engagement efforts, suggested that limited success was a byproduct of a number of related factors, including (but not limited to): “...fear of social services...[because]...most organizations [are] hooked to social services...” concern that collaboration between agencies would result in the sharing of

personal/family information; stigma associated with receiving support (especially given gender/family role expectations); and discomfort with engagement and talking about problems. Several team members identified a few existing services and engagement models used by other agencies/organizations/providers (e.g., Catholic Charities' "Bridges to Prosperity" program, Bishop Dixon, Community Partnership School, etc.) that have been successful in engaging with fathers and male caregivers that could be referenced, collaborated with, and/or used as a model for outreach and services. Many of these referenced initiatives focused on "...one-off services..." more than programs; for example, employability workshops and skill development for navigating social/workplace environments for increasing individual opportunities for success, etc.

... the limited success of past engagement efforts [of fathers], suggested that limited success was a byproduct of a number of related factors, including (but not limited to): "...fear of social services...[because]...most organizations [are] hooked to social services...;" concern that collaboration between agencies would result in the sharing of personal/family information; stigma associated with receiving support (especially given gender/family role expectations); and discomfort with engagement and talking about problems.

Additional items that received a consensus rating of Neither Agree nor Disagree included:

As a part of staff orientation and ongoing staff development, program staff regularly have opportunities to develop skills and knowledge to work effectively with diverse families. Staff development may include:

- Inviting partner organizations to provide workshops for staff on working with diverse families.
- Coordinating site visits at organizations that serve different populations so that staff can learn how to best serve diverse families.
- Facilitating discussions to help staff members understand and appreciate their culturally different communication styles.

An involved discussion of these results led to the development of the following action items:

Action Item #3: Talk with the PSF Racial Equity Workgroup about opportunities and goals for training in cultural awareness and working with diverse families, especially for Resource Center staff.

Action Item #4: Work with PSF leadership to pursue possible trainings led by partner organizations (such as the Pride Center of NCFL and the Rural Women’s Health Project).

It was acknowledged that Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) offers cultural awareness trainings to all its staff, including LP RC staff; however, participation is encouraged not required, even though most staff do participate. PSF acknowledges the importance of these topics and established a Racial Equity Workgroup in the Summer of 2020 that reportedly meets regularly. As part of SFSA Team discussions, the LP RC manager, Cherie Kelly, who is part of the Racial Equity Workgroup, will propose the topic of enhancing cultural awareness training for LP RC staff. The team also saw value in:

- collaborating with existing and/or developing partnerships with other organizations (e.g., the Pride Center of North Central FL and the Rural Women’s Health Project, etc.) for the provision of professional development and training activities on equity, inclusion, and cultural awareness.
- documenting/highlighting for the team, community, and patrons, the types of training all LP RC staff receive.

In addition to the above, there was one item related to how LP RC attempts to reflect the community and families it serves for which the consensus was neither agree nor disagree:

- Seeking to hire staff members that provide families and children with connections to the diversity that exists in society - even if the program's community is mono-lingual, mono-ethnic or mono-cultural.

This finding stimulated an involved discussion and review of recruitment and hiring practices at the LP RC and the Library. There is a desire and efforts reportedly have been made to hire and recruit staff that are reflective of the community served and have the knowledge and experience to fulfill this item expectation. Although a goal, it was acknowledged that such may not be attained based on the ability to find applicants that meet all job requirements. Regardless, efforts are made and PSF and LP RC representatives indicated they would like to expand these efforts and advertise open positions with local organizations and websites that cater to Black Professionals and Spanish-speaking Professionals. Ensuring that new hires are a good “fit” with the community they are working with has always been a noted and important priority. These discussions led to the following action item identified by the team:

Action Item #5: Continue and expand targeted advertising of job postings to ensure open positions are seen by more individuals who reflect the cultural groups served by the LP RC and other Resource Centers.

Ensuring that new hires are a good “fit” with the community they are working with has always been a noted and important priority.

There were two items that focus on the supports provided to immigrant and refugee families. The team scores and consensus ratings reflect a neither agree nor disagree assessment on these items, namely:

- Ensuring that staff are knowledgeable about immigrant and refugee families' unique challenges and can help address them in a respectful manner.
- Maintaining up-to-date information on supports and services most relevant to immigrant and refugee families.

At this time no action item is recommended, in part, as the team requires additional information to better understand the distribution of immigrant and refugee families and their needs within the community served. The conversation related to these items was explorative and informative for many members as efforts were made to discuss and better understand the existing resources for and needs of immigrant and refugee families in the Gainesville and surrounding areas.

Catholic Charities in Gainesville (serving five counties, including rural communities) and Jacksonville (an office with immigration services) provides more specific supports (including concrete supports) focused on the needs of immigrant and refugee families. The LP RC has a close collaborative relationship with Catholic Charities (represented on the team) and has linked families to Catholic Charities and other partner organizations (e.g., Community Partnership School) when specialized assistance is needed. However, LP RC may not have a comprehensive understanding of how many families it serves that are immigrant and refugee families because they do not ask about immigration status and do not deliver/withhold services to any patron and their family members based upon that status. The team endorsed the continuation of this protocol/practice and any efforts that minimize the stigma for seeking services and protect the privacy of those served. It was noted that trust and fear of disclosing immigration status is often a barrier to service for some individuals and families. This fear/barrier, it was thought, is overcome by word-of-mouth endorsements and assurances by other patrons that share information that an organization (like LP RC and Catholic Charities) was helpful and can be trusted. It was conjectured by staff that some of the current families served (identified as African American or Black) may be immigrants or a second or third generation of immigrants from countries like Jamaica, Haiti, etc. In any regard, it was highlighted that there may be unique needs of select immigrant and refugee populations that the LP RC may not be equipped to serve. For example, one challenge Catholic Charities has noticed with serving immigrant families is their literacy level, both in English and sometimes in a person's native language. Translation and information may not be sufficient, and people may need additional assistance with applications and accessing resources from any community resource.

How Does the LP Resource Center honor each family's race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting?

There are 8 questions associated with a measure of how the LP Resource Center honors each family's race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting. Findings highlight a team assessment (consensus) of agreement with 3 of these 8 questions, and 5 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. No questions had a consensus of disagreement.

What the LP Resource Center Does Well that Honors Each Family's Race, Language, Culture, History, and Approach to Parenting

Program staff ensure that all families, regardless of family structure; socioeconomic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds; sexual orientation; abilities; or preferred language are included in all aspects of the program, including volunteer opportunities.

- Staff are trained to be knowledgeable about the parenting practices and approaches to family decision-making of different cultural and ethnic groups.
- The program regularly gathers information about family interests, beliefs and expectations, including those relating to the child's culture and language development, and seeks to partner with families in incorporating those features into program activities and structure.
- The program displays diverse families and family structures in books, posters and program materials.

Collectively, the team agreed that LP RC staff make efforts to be inclusive and are very respectful of all families' race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting. However, select efforts (some already underway) could be initiated to address identified language barriers and select needs of some families/households. The LP RC has seen an increase in people who primarily speak Spanish. This includes referrals from other agencies for families with challenging immigration statuses as the LP RC doesn't have as many institutional barriers (like requiring SSNs) for families to receive concrete supports and other services. However, the LP RC does not currently have enough bilingual staff or translation resources to adequately address this increased need. No program materials are currently published in

...the team agreed that LP RC staff make efforts to be inclusive and are very respectful of all families' race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting. However, select efforts (some already underway) could be initiated to address identified language barriers and select needs of some families/households.

Spanish; although multiple solutions are already being explored and the LP RC is working on having rack cards, printed program information, intake, and "getting to know you" forms translated into Spanish. With limited funds to pay for contracted translation services; there is a focus on recruiting more bilingual volunteers and efforts at applying for grants to fund contracted translation services. These circumstances led to the endorsement of Action Item #6:

Action Item #6: Continue with current efforts to expand LP RC's ability to provide services and information in other languages (primarily Spanish).

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the LP Resource Center to Honor Each Family's Race, Language, Culture, History, and Approach to Parenting

There were five items for which the consensus was a rating of Neither Agree nor Disagree by the team; these include:

Program staff ensure that all families, regardless of family structure; socioeconomic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds; sexual orientation; abilities; or preferred language are included in all aspects of the program, including volunteer opportunities.

- Parents have opportunities to share skills, talents and cultural traditions with children and other parents.
- Staff engage grandparents, elders, and extended family members in discussions on parenting and the transmission of cultural beliefs.

An effort is made to ensure program information and outreach materials are linguistically and culturally appropriate. Materials are:

- Translated, whenever possible, into the language(s) spoken by all families in the community served.
- Reviewed by a Parent Advisory Committee to ensure that they are culturally relevant and linguistically accessible to all families in the program.
- Designed or selected to reflect the culture(s) of the community served.

The last set of items reflect/parallel observations denoted in response to select items above (related to increased need for Spanish program and outreach materials) and a perceived need for reactivating a Community Advisory Council (or Parent Advisory Committee). The LP RC does have an existing Community Advisory Council (CAC) that has not met since Feb. 2020 (before the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated mitigation efforts). In past years, CAC members often planned parent/family activities that they felt would be of interest and value to the community. These events were perceived as successful in terms of family engagement and attendance. CAC and LP RC staff are working to restructure and enhance the existing council as a Parent & Community Advisory Council (PCAC) with involvement from more parents in keeping with the role and structure recommendations/model suggested by the National Family Support Network. LP RC has developed a PCAC handbook; the next step is to hold an interest meeting for parents and other community members by the end of 2021. It is suggested that membership include representation from a variety of social groups reflective of community members served by LP RC and partner organizations. These discussions/considerations led to the following Action Item:

Action Item #7: Continue current efforts to develop the existing CAC into a Parent and Community Advisory Council for the LP RC. Hold an interest meeting for potential members by the end of 2021.

How Does the LP Resource Center Encourage Parents to Manage Stress Effectively?

There are 13 questions associated with a measure of how the LP Resource Center encourages parents to manage stress effectively. Of these, the team scores signaled agreement with eleven items (84.6%).

What the LP Library Resource Center Does Well that Helps Parents Manage Stress Effectively.

The following were identified as strengths by LP RC in their efforts to help parents manage stress effectively.

Staff know how to respond appropriately to family crises that come to their attention. Staff receive training and support from other staff members on:

- Understanding the impact of family crises and/or loss on all family members – especially children -- and how to respond appropriately.
- Supporting families' immediate and long-term plans.
- Talking to families about difficult issues and helping them access additional help.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Recognizing domestic violence, depression, developmental delays, mental illness, chronic health problems, substance abuse and other signs of imminent crisis and knowing how to respond appropriately.
- Understanding trauma and its impact on children and how staff can help.
- Other community agencies providing specialized services to families and children.

The program provides regular opportunities for parents to relieve stress through:

- Linking parents to organized support groups.
- Organizing spa days, exercise classes or other parent-only social activities.
- Making staff or consultants available for parents to talk to individually about issues that are troubling them.

Staff know how to respond appropriately to family crises that come to their attention. Staff receive training and support from other staff members on:

- Understanding the impact of family crises and/or loss on all family members – especially children—and how to respond appropriately.
- Supporting families' immediate and long-term plans.
- Talking to families about difficult issues and helping them access additional help.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Recognizing domestic violence, depression, developmental delays, mental illness, chronic health problems, substance abuse and other signs of imminent crisis and knowing how to respond appropriately.
- Understanding trauma and its impact on children and how staff can help.
- Other community agencies providing specialized services to families and children.

Program staff are perceived as proactively responsive and supportive when parents/patrons demonstrate common signs of stress. This corroborates other findings denoted elsewhere in the report that suggest a quality level of support, professionalism, respectful, and caring attitude of LP RC staff toward parents and all patrons. Opportunities are provided for parents to relieve stress through links/referrals to support groups, organizing parent-only social activities, and (if necessary and/or requested) arranging for individual consultations with staff and other professionals to address issues that are a source of stress in their lives.

Confidence in, and acknowledgement of, the skills (and training) of LP RC staff in being able to respond and assist families in crisis is manifested in findings denoted above. Taken together, these findings reinforce a perspective that LP RC staff are competent, compassionate, and skilled in assisting families and children experiencing a variety of crises and stresses (interpersonal, interfamilial, and environmental) in a manner that is respectful and professional.

... these findings reinforce a perspective that LP RC staff are competent, compassionate, and skilled in assisting families and children experiencing a variety of crises and stresses (interpersonal, interfamilial, and environmental) in a manner that is respectful and professional.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the LP Resource Center to Help Parents Manage Stress Effectively

Although the staff affiliated with LP RC are seen as quick to respond to families in crisis, there was less agreement in terms of the extent to which regular opportunities are provided to relieve parental stress through:

- Setting aside space and time for parents to gather, talk and participate in informal activities.
- Providing occasional childcare so parents can take a “night out,” go shopping or participate in other parent-only activities.

Team scores (below an average level of agreement) for these items reflect a desire, especially among Community Ambassadors and patrons for opportunities for more informal parent-only activities at the LP RC, resources permitting. Given the impact of COVID-19, these opportunities have become more limited; however, expansion of such activities (when safe to do so) were seen as an area of value/importance in promoting parental and community resilience. Informal parent interactions reportedly happened a lot more before the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents were able to gather and talk before and following Afterschool Programs. LP RC Patrons, in general, “hang out and talk” to one another in the parking lot; this currently happens but was more prevalent pre-pandemic). The library space (adjacent to LP RC) also allows for “spillover” where people accessing the LP RC can then go to informally gather and talk. Community Ambassadors and LP RC staff spoke of the benefit of select pre-

COVID activities for children (e.g., field trips, etc.) that allowed parents some respite from caregiving responsibilities, opportunities to socialize with other parents, and to access other supports and participate in other LP RC or Library activities on their own or in concert with other parents/patrons. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the frequency of such endeavors, LP RC recently (spring and summer 2021) held some events, including a Movie Night and a Mother’s Day Brunch (occurred outside in a parking lot while children participated in activities inside), which were adapted to allow for social distancing protocols but still enabled parents to interact and make informal social connections with other parents and patrons.

When possible, LP RC provides child activities at the same time as parent activities. While not officially “childcare” it does give parents a break and a chance to engage in activities that are parent centered. The implementation of parent-only activities with the provision of childcare or concurrent child-based activities may be a way of engaging parents and help parents manage stress and enhance social connections.

When possible, LP RC provides child activities at the same time as parent activities. While not officially “childcare” it does give parents a break and a chance to engage in activities that are parent centered. The implementation of parent-only activities with the provision of childcare or concurrent child-based activities may be a way of engaging parents and help parents manage stress and enhance social connections. However, key challenges to providing these concurrent child activities include limited staff (background checks are required, especially for work with children), limited space, and liability concerns regarding the use of Library space. Given the potential benefits and above noted considerations, the following action item was recommended:

Action Item #8: Work with PSF and Library leadership to address barriers to providing more child activities during LP RC programs and events.

How Does the LP Resource Center Support Parents as Decision-makers and Help Build Decision-making and Leadership Skills?

The team scores signaled agreement with 26 of the 41 (63.4%) questions associated with how the LP Resource Center support parents as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills.

What the LP Resource Center Does Well that Support Parents as Decision-makers and Help Build Decision-making and Leadership Skills?

Responses/team scores and feedback highlight a level of respect and understanding afforded parents by staff in actions that reinforce parental authority in dealings and interactions with their children. There was strong agreement that the following items and actions take place:

Staff reinforce parental authority by:

- Respecting parents' directions and/or decisions about their children.
- Learning about parents' expectations and limits for their children.
- Talking respectfully with parents about how to handle differences in expectations regarding children's behavior and development.
- Understanding the parenting and child behavior norms of the parent's culture.
- Being careful not to contradict a parent in front of his or her child or other children.

Parents are engaged as partners in developmental screenings or assessments of their child:

- All staff are trained in the program's confidentiality policy regarding screening and results.
- Parents are informed about the confidentiality policy and what it means to them.
- Parents participate in the screening and/or are informed of the results of all screenings as soon as possible.
- The program consults with parents immediately when child health, behavior or developmental problems are suspected or identified.
- Parents work with staff to develop plans and accommodations for their children based on the screening.
- All plans for the child that result from assessments are fully discussed with parents and documented in the children's files, and parents are provided copies of the plan.
- The program assists parents in finding and connecting to specialists (e.g., a physician, physical therapist, or child study team) for further evaluation when their children are identified in the screening process as having possible special needs.

Parents and staff develop family plans together that:

- Identify the family's assets, interests, skills, needs and goals for themselves and their children.
- Identify services and opportunities within the program that may help parents achieve their goals and effectively use their skills and talents.
- Identify other community resources and opportunities that may help families achieve their goals, continue their learning and/or provide other avenues for involvement and leadership.
- Are updated regularly.

The program supports a parent's personal education and career goals by:

- Referring families to educational and career resources (e.g., GED programs, adult education, ESL classes, employment opportunities, workplace literacy, parenting skills, job training, job preparation skills).
- Forming partnerships with nearby educational resources, including higher education institutions, to support families' learning interests and educational goals.

- Linking families with community resources for internships, volunteer and leadership activities and other experiences that expand parents' knowledge and skills and build on their career interests.

The program promotes participation in activities by:

- Addressing topics, issues and skills that families identify as important to them.
- Designing activities to address interests of different family members (e.g., fathers, mothers, other family members).
- Conducting face-to-face or telephone outreach to families who might not otherwise participate.

There were no recommended action items associated with the above items. Collectively, these findings reinforce a perceived perspective that LP RC staff interactions and efforts are perceived as informed, responsive, respectful, and in the best interests of strengthening families through supportive engagement and promotion of parental authority/role as decision makers.

... LP RC staff interactions and efforts are perceived as informed, responsive, respectful, and in the best interests of strengthening families through supportive engagement and promotion of parental authority/role as decision makers.

Further, the quality and level of support for parents is clearly manifested in the team scores where the team agreed that LP RC staff and resources (across all activities associated with each item) clearly support a parent's personal education and career goals.

... the team agreed that LP RC staff and resources (across all activities associated with each item) clearly support a parent's personal education and career goals.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the LP Resource Center to Support Parents as Decision-makers and Help Build Decision-making and Leadership Skills?

There were two items (related to supporting parents' education and career goals) that received a consensus rating of neither agree nor disagree. These included:

- Inviting past program parents and community volunteers to share their educational and career experiences with families.

- Providing formal and/or informal parent mentoring opportunities (potentially with staff, alumni parents/families, elders and/or professionals in the community) to serve as a resource and support for parent leadership development.

Discussion regarding these items highlighted that LP RC has used peer mentors whenever possible at events and select programs. For example, the keynote speakers for the Re-entry Conference and the discussion facilitators at the Mother's Day Brunch were parent and community peer mentors. These opportunities were seen as positive and valued activities by Community Ambassadors that should be continued and enhanced, whenever possible, leading to the following recommended action item:

Action Item #9: Continue involvement of peer mentors in future LP RC programs and events.

Although the team perceives there is strong support for parents and families among LP RC staff and within program activities and supports, the team identified areas of potential improvement where opportunities can be afforded to parents to serve as leaders and decision makers by:

- Providing opportunities for families to volunteer and contribute to the program.
- Encouraging and supporting parents in becoming active members of the program's governing/advisory groups and in taking on leadership roles.
- Asking families for input into staff hiring and training.

Collectively, these items reinforced the perceived value in enhancing patron and parent participation in programmatic decision-making processes at the LP RC, reinforcing the need for implementing Action Item #7 (see above). The importance and potential role of the Parent and Community Advisory Council (PCAC) in aiding with expanding supports for families and engaging parents/patrons as potential leaders and decision makers was discussed at length. Once restructured/re-instituted, members of the new PCAC can decide on their priorities as a group and have input on LP RC policies and decisions. Current plans regarding the structure of the PCAC recommend 10-12 members, where most (at least a majority) will be motivated and engaged parents. The importance of recruiting and empowering motivated parents and community members as PCAC members couldn't be overstated by one Community Ambassador who emphasized the process should unfold "very carefully." In the past, select "roadblocks" to progress and participation resulted when engaged participants came to meetings and were disappointed to "have nothing come from it." This causes "...a lot of people to not want to come to [future] meetings." It was suggested that any meetings of the PCAC result in a plan with action that follows shortly thereafter: "We [need to] come up with a plan and then we get it done." It was thought, with agreement from the Team as a whole, that quick action and results from meetings will keep people and the community more engaged with the PCAC and the LP RC.

The importance and potential role of the Parent and Community Advisory Council (PCAC) in aiding with expanding supports for families and engaging parents/patrons as potential leaders and decision makers was discussed at length ... The importance of recruiting and empowering motivated parents and community members as PCAC members couldn't be overstated ...

A final set of items that generated action items included those associated with the continued development of parent leaders and supporting parents' opportunities for leadership in community change. Here, team scores for the following items were below the threshold of agreement:

The program helps to support the continued development of parent leaders by supporting:

- Personal growth—such as attending conferences or special events and collecting and sharing information of interest to other parents.
- Leadership development trainings and mentoring activities.
- Training opportunities for advocacy and civics (e.g., how local and state government works, how to foster change).

The program helps to support parents' opportunities for leadership in community change by:

- Connecting parents to advocacy groups that work on issues related to child, family and community needs.
- Ensuring that local, state and federal policy information is discussed at staff meetings/advisory council meetings and relevant information is shared with families.
- Connecting parents to groups that inform and shape policy at the local, state or national level.

There was involved feedback and suggestions from Community Ambassadors and other members regarding these items; all perceived as having some value for enhancing decision-making and leadership skills of parents/patrons within the community. Community Ambassadors expressed an interest in attending different trainings and/or conferences. Other community leaders and future PCAC members could attend professional development trainings with support from the LP RC and grant funds. If interested, SFSA team members and/or future PCAC members could be involved in presenting alongside LP RC staff and grant staff at conferences like the Florida Child Protection Summit. Children's Bureau grantee meetings, policy meetings, and presentations could be opportunities for LP RC parent leaders with lived experience of the child welfare system to speak with legislators and policy makers. These would be empowering activities and opportunities to promote a leadership model that reinforces the role of parents as community leaders. These discussions/brainstorming activities led to the itemization of two final action items:

Action Item #10: Pending interest of PCAC members – pursue grant funds to have parent and community leaders attend relevant conferences and trainings.

Action Item #11: Invite parent and community leaders from the SFSA team and future PCAC to attend and/or present to policy makers during annual grantee meetings and policy meetings.

How Does the LP Resource Center Help Parents Understand How to Buffer their Child During Stressful Times?

There were three questions associated with a measure of how the LP Resource Center helps parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times for which the team scores signaled agreement with two. LP RC was seen as successfully implementing the following:

- Parents and staff receive ongoing training and up-to-date information on dealing with stress and trauma including:
 - How stress impacts the child's brain, behavior, and development
 - Recognizing the signs of stress in children
 - How stress may impact the child's behavior and how to shape adult responses to the child's behavior accordingly
 - The important role that parents and caring adults play in buffering children during stressful times
- Parents and staff have access to a mental health consultant who can help them proactively address the needs of children and other family members during stressful times.

Although there was one item where the team score did not reach the threshold of agreement (i.e., “Staff receive training on talking with parents about helping children in times of family crisis”), no Action Items were suggested as it was thought denoted efforts highlighted by the Partnership for Strong Families to provide continued and targeted training (highlighted earlier in this report) on these topic areas were sufficient for the future. In any regard, the importance of all staff to receive training and support to enhance their ability to help parents meet the needs of their children during stressful times was reinforced. An itemization of any such training would be of value in any subsequent SFSA reviews.

Fidelity of Parental Resilience Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

The SFSA Team identified the weighted average team score as the consensus measure for each question associated with the Parental Resilience assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and

Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)³ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Parental Resilience Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 58 (of a possible score of 97) or 60%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Parental Resilience Factor were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework. The series of action items recommended by the LP SFSA Team are appropriately targeted to enhance the fidelity score of provided supports and services addressing parental resilience.

The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 58 (of a possible score of 97) or 60%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Parental Resilience Factor were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

The Library Partnership Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As denoted earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, LP RC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the LP RC in accordance with the CSSP’s protective factors framework. The names and/or biographies of these team members are detailed below.

John Barli – Catholic Charities

John Barli came to Gainesville in 1974 to attend the University of Florida. After 38 years in the for-profit world, John made the jump to non- profits after serving on The Catholic Charities Gainesville Advisory Board. He is motivated every day by the opportunity to transform lives.

³ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Tarr, J., Harnar, M. A., & Ahsan, N. (2014). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Unpublished whitepaper presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s annual conference in Dallas, TX.

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Tina Bushnell is originally from St. Petersburg, Florida and has been a Gainesville resident since 1985. She attended Santa Fe College and went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from University of Florida. She also holds a Master of Library and Information Science from Florida State University. Ms. Bushnell began working at the Alachua County Library District in 2011 and became the manager of the Library Partnership Branch in 2016. She is dedicated to collaborating with the resource center by providing complimentary services and programs to make the Library Partnership a “one stop shop” for the community. She enjoys spending time with her son and his family, who also live in Gainesville, but spends most of her time outside of work relaxing with her cats.



Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador



Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Denise Fanning is originally from Texas and has been in Gainesville since 2008. She is a Gator Grad, and Marine Veteran, with a bachelor’s in psychology, and has been working in the nonprofit community since 2011. She joined the Catholic Charities family in November of 2020 and feels fortunate to be a part of an organization that truly embodies an ethos of providing compassionate services to the community.

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower was born in Philadelphia and has been a Florida resident since 2008 after moving here from South Carolina. She is the proud mother of three adult sons and one adult daughter who graduated from Santa Fe College. Ms. Jazmen is also a graduate of the Catholic Charities Bridges to Prosperity Class of 2012. This is where she learned the importance of being involved in her community. She has since served as an active member of the Gainesville Housing Authority Board from 2014 – 2018 and the Catholic Charities Board from 2018 – present. Ms. Jazmen has also been a key member of the Library Partnership Resource Center Community Advisory Council since 2019 and now brings her experience and enthusiasm to the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes strongly



in taking an active role with community organizations and encourages others to do the same so they can help steer. She thanks God that she is able to be a help to her community.

LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School



Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Cherie holds a Master’s in Clinical Psychology and Bachelor’s in Psychology from the University of Louisville. She is certified in the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support and the WhyTry Youth Resiliency Program. In 2009, Cherie joined Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) as part of their Family Team Conferencing program. Since 2013, Cherie has worked with PSF’s Resource Centers, and has served as the Library Partnership Resource Center Manager for 5 years. Cherie has helped create programs designed to build family protective factors, including homework help, enrichment programs, a re-entry conference and job fair, and a Parent and Community Advisory Council. Cherie builds community collaborations by connecting with other non-profits, faith-based organizations, businesses, government, and schools, while also building a system of case management and supports for families. Cherie most enjoys grant writing, developing equitable, community-based programs and services by connecting with families to understand their needs and building meaningful relationships with children who participate in programs. Cherie serves on the Race Equity Workgroup at PSF, University of Florida’s Workforce Development Committee, and the Community Partnership School Leadership Council.

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Ms. Sarah Livingstone grew up in Montclair, New Jersey, a diverse, arts focused town. She attended and graduated from Santa Fe College, with an associate degree in Early Education, and then obtained a bachelor’s degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences from the University of Florida. After this schooling, Sarah moved back to New Jersey and continued her education, graduating from Rutgers University, with a master’s in social work. She holds a licensure of social work in the state of New Jersey. Sarah is currently employed with Partnership for Strong Families. There, in her role as Family Support Facilitator, for the Library Partnership Resource Center, she works in tandem with all levels of stakeholders on behalf of families in the Northeast side of Gainesville, Florida. Sarah is an author and an owner of ARE U Motivated LLC. She coordinates and facilitates mental health discussions in the community. Sarah is a member of the Child Protection Task Force, based in Gainesville, FL. She is the middle child and very close to her family members. Her mother and father attended the University of Florida, as well, her mother graduating from the nursing program, and her father, the chemical engineering program. Sarah involves herself in activity groups in the community and prioritizes self-care. Sarah appreciates that the Library Partnership Resource Center (LPRC) is available to the public, without regard to a person’s demographics, income, and/or plight in life. It is a



non-discriminatory environment and reparative in nature. With a strengths-based approach, LPRC focuses on infusing and enhancing protective factors in the lives of the patrons served. Sarah finds joy in being a part of the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes that the existence of the team not only encourages communication between the community members, researchers, and the resource centers, but the functioning of the team creates cohesion within the resource centers; awareness of gaps in services; room for adjustment and solutions, and responsiveness to all families, family members, and community members.

Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador



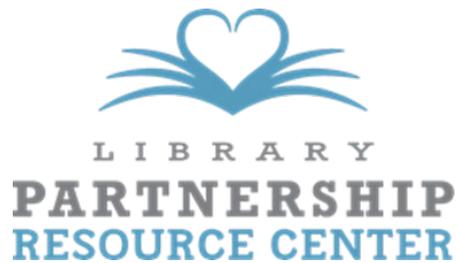
Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Staci White is from Gainesville, Florida. She holds a bachelor’s degree in English with a minor in African American Studies and earned her master’s degree in Educational Leadership and Administration. After teaching with Alachua County Public Schools, Ms. White joined the Children’s Home Society of Florida in her current role at Howard Bishop Middle School in 2020. She is passionate about providing resources for all families and communities.

Although not formally members of the LP SFSA Team, Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Elizabeth Snow (Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center), and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) attended each meeting of the LP SFSA Team meetings and served as key supports for team processes. **Robin Perry** provided initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and recommendations by the team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying team members’ views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the LP Resource Center. **Elizabeth Snow** is the Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Snow maintained regular contact with team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. **Toni Spoliansky** served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the LP Resource Center. It is important to note that the role of the above three individuals was seen as supportive in nature. An empowerment perspective was adopted, as a team they would decide the meeting schedule and

facilitation process with all members assuming equal status as knowledge experts with respect to community needs and the role, value, functioning, and responsiveness of the LP Resource Center to community need related to supporting families through the promotion of parental resilience. There was no effort by those in supportive roles to censure conversation and discussion points; efforts were made as feedback was regularly sought regarding facilitation processes and preferences of group members for these processes. All notes were converted into minutes that were distributed to team members for their review, edits, and approval. Feedback and recommended edits to documented discussion items and decisions could be provided within scheduled meetings (the team decided on monthly two-hour meetings) or in dialog/e-mails to Robin Perry and/or Elizabeth Snow in-between meetings (which would then be discussed with all team members at the next in-person or virtual meeting).

Suggested Citation: Perry, R., Snow, E. Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2021). *Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience at The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.



Supporting Families by
Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children at
The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center

Elizabeth Snow (Library Partnership Resource Center Community Research Coordinator),
Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), John Barli, Tina Bushnell, Kenydra Donalson, Denise
Fanning, Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower, LaToya Jennings Lopez, Cherie Kelly, Sarah
Livingstone, Nipapat McDow, Toni Spoliansky, Sharon Walters, Staci White (LP SFSA
Team)

Institute for Child and Family Services Research



This report was funded by the Children's Bureau; Administration on Children, Youth, and Families;
Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant #
90CA1868. The contents of this report are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily
represent the official views of the Children's Bureau.

Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the LP Resource Center (LP RC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies, identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on the LP RC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting children's development of social and emotional competence.

The Library Partnership Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In June 2008, PSF partnered with Alachua County Library District (ACLD) to identify a place to open a Resource Center with a goal to reduce the stigma people may feel about going into a social services center and encourage community members to seek out resources before a crisis occurs, subsequently preventing risks to child safety. The Library Partnership Resource Center opened its doors to the community in July 2009. The Library Partnership Resource Center (LP RC) is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy,

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Library Partnership Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Snow, E., Perry, R., Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2022). *The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of services to meet the needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

The Library Partnership Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the LP RC SFSa Team.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

John Barli – Catholic Charities

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador

Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador

Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/> Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on Social and Emotional Competence of Children there are 16 topics with 48 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, its relationship to the LP Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their scores, these data were shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the LP RC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. The team discussed some of the LP RC activities related to social and emotional competence of children when reviewing other protective factors and specifically discussed the social and emotional competence survey items on November 15, 2021.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with promoting social and emotional competence of children. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

How Does the Library Partnership Resource Center Help Parents Foster Their Child's Social Emotional Development?

There are 7 questions associated with how the LP Resource Center helps parents foster their child's social and emotional development. Findings suggest a team consensus of agreement with 6 of the 7 questions (85.7%), and 1 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of the LP RC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What the Library Partnership Resource Center *Does Well* that *Helps Parents Foster Their Child's Social Emotional Development*

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at the LP RC:

The program introduces family members to social and emotional development by:

- Providing parents with information on the importance of supporting children’s healthy social and emotional development— and its connection to success in school and life.
- Providing opportunities to discuss social and emotional issues within a racial and cultural context.
- Offering parents ideas on how to foster a child’s social and emotional learning at home.
- Asking about parents’ observations of their child’s social and emotional development.

Program activities provide opportunities to strengthen bonds between parents and their children (e.g., parent-child playgroups, playing together in cooperative games or make believe, cooking, making an art project together).

Staff respect families’ knowledge and expertise about their children’s unique strengths and challenges as they share information about social and emotional competence.

These results suggest that, in general, SFSA team members view staff’s ability to help parents foster their child’s social and emotional development as a strength of the LP RC. One example of how staff provide this support is through goal-setting meetings with children and their parents who participate in the Strong Kids Afterschool Program. During these meetings, staff listen to parents’ observations and model how to actively involve their child in the discussion by helping them recognize their strengths and achievements and by having them identify their own goals and ideas for improvement. Parents and caregivers are also encouraged to support their children’s social and emotional development through meaningful shared activities. Family events hosted by the LP RC provide opportunities for family bonding through activities that parents and children can enjoy together.

One example of how staff provide this [social and emotional developmental] support is through goal-setting meetings with children and their parents who participate in the Strong Kids Afterschool Program. During these meetings, staff listen to parents’ observations and model how to actively involve their child in the discussion by helping them recognize their strengths and achievements and by having them identify their own goals and ideas for improvement.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the Library Partnership Resource Center to Help Parents Foster Their Child’s Social Emotional Development

The following item was the only one in this section for which the consensus rating was neither agree nor disagree:

- The program introduces family members to social and emotional development by:
- Helping parents understand age-appropriate social and emotional skills and behaviors.

The score for this item was 3.9, falling just below a weighted average of 4.0, with 7 out of 11 (63.6%) team members responding Strongly Agree or Agree. During team discussions, there were no comments made specific to this item nor any action items recommended.

How Does the Library Partnership Resource Center Model Nurturing Care to Children?

There were 16 questions associated with three broad indicators measuring the extent to which the LP RC programs and staff model nurturing care to children. There was consensus agreement on 14 of these questions (87.5%) and two questions where team consensus was within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range.

What the Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Model Nurturing Care to Children

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at LP RC:

Staff nurture children and model nurturing for parents by:

- Responding consistently to children in a warm, supportive manner.
- Creating an environment in which children feel safe to comfortably express their emotions without fear of judgment.
- Showing warmth through appropriate physical contact.
- Demonstrating mutual respect between children and adults (e.g., listening attentively, making eye contact, treating children fairly).
- Responding sympathetically to help children who are upset, hurt or angry.
- Encouraging children to express their feelings through words, artwork and expressive play.
- Modeling empathy and appropriate emotional responsiveness.

Staff receive training, consultation and ongoing coaching to support their skills in supporting children's social emotional development, including:

- Fostering children's social and emotional development in the context of their culture and language.
- Recognizing behavioral/emotional problems or developmental delays.
- Understanding the impact of loss or trauma on children and how to respond appropriately.
- Recognizing the role of sensory awareness and integration in social emotional development and understanding how to promote it.
- Promoting positive relationships among children living in the same house hold.
- Understanding how mental health and wellness affects family relationships and the developmental process of young children.
- Recognizing and responding to the impact of child or parental trauma on parent-child relationships.

Findings suggest that staff, interns, and volunteers at the LP RC are consistently welcoming, warm, and empathetic toward children participating in programs and events. Among SFSA team members, there was a general agreement that staff are nurturing towards children who attend programs at the LP RC and that staff support parents by modeling nurturing interactions.

Findings suggest that staff, interns, and volunteers at LP RC are consistently welcoming, warm, and empathetic toward children participating in programs and events...and that staff support parents by modeling nurturing interactions.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the Library Partnership Resource Center to Model Nurturing Care to Children

There were two questions for which the consensus rating was neither agree nor disagree; these include the following:

Staff receive training, consultation and ongoing coaching to support their skills in supporting children's social emotional development, including:

- Understanding gender differences in child rearing and its impact on social and emotional development.

Families are invited to observe their children interacting with other children and/or staff in the program.

During team discussions, there were no comments made specific to these items nor any action items recommended.

How Does the Library Partnership Resource Center Include Children's Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming?

There was a team consensus rating of agreement for 5 of the 7 items (71.4%) relating to how the LP RC includes children's social and emotional development activities in programming. The remaining two items received a consensus rating of neither agree nor disagree.

What the Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Include Children's Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming

Team consensus of agreement was present for all items related to supporting children's social and emotional development with intentional practices, suggesting that team members perceived the following items as strengths of the LP RC:

The program supports children's social and emotional development with intentional practices that include:

- Encouraging children to express their feelings in ways that are the most comfortable for them.
- Encouraging and reinforcing social skills such as sharing, taking turns and cooperative play.
- Actively involving children in solving their conflicts and problems (e.g., helping children talk out problems and think of solutions; sensitizing children to feelings of others).
- Setting clear expectations and limits for behavior.
- Helping children separate emotions from actions (e.g., not reacting by hitting even when angry).

Staff support children’s development of social skills, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution in the milieu of one-on-one interactions and throughout all after school programming. During enrichment programs led by community partners such as Girl Scouts and Capoeira, LP RC staff and/or trained interns are always present to provide consistent expectations and behavioral boundaries. Additionally, the LP RC partners with other organizations to provide programming specifically tailored to support social and emotional competence, such as a weekly social and emotional skills class co-facilitated with University of Florida Clinical Psychology graduate students.

Staff support children’s development of social skills, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution in the milieu of one-on-one interactions and throughout all after school programming.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the Library Partnership Resource Center to Include Children’s Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming

The following two items, which relate to assistance from mental health consultants, received average team scores in the neither agree nor disagree range:

Mental health consultants assist staff in integrating social emotional development into everyday work by:

- Providing coaching on how to support social and emotional learning for all children.
- Providing support for individual staff in working with children and parents around social and emotional issues, including challenging behaviors.

SFSA team members noted that the LP RC does not have a specific person who is designated as a “mental health consultant” but instead receives mental health training and support from community partners such as the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and the Village Counseling Center. Team members did not express any need for additional mental health consultation support at the LP RC and no action items were recommended.

How Does the Library Partnership Resource Center Help Children Develop a Positive Cultural Identity and Learn to Interact in a Diverse Society?

There were 12 questions intended to gauge how the LP RC helps children develop a positive cultural identity and learn to interact in a diverse society. The average team scores demonstrated a consensus of agreement for five of these questions (41.7%). The other seven questions were rated within the neither agree nor disagree range.

What the Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Help Children Develop a Positive Cultural Identity and Learn to Interact in a Diverse Society

Team consensus of agreement was present for the following five items, suggesting that team members perceived the following actions and practices as strengths of the LP RC:

The program welcomes and affirms the cultures of families it serves by:

- Implementing meaningful and relevant activities, stories and discussions regarding cultural and linguistic differences.
- Inviting families to define and express their ethnicity or culture, including the experiences and values they hold to be most important.
- Including appropriate instructional resources such as books and toys that expose children to role models from their own and other cultural backgrounds.

Staff are encouraged to enhance their own understanding and appreciation for different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, languages and cultural expressions through:

- Being provided with professional development opportunities that allow them to learn more about the history and experiences of different racial and cultural groups.

The program's mental health consultant offers consultation that is respectful of differences in parenting behaviors and child behaviors that stem from traditions and cultural roots.

LP RC provides opportunities to learn about, and celebrate, different cultural groups, especially those most represented by families in the LP RC community. The LP RC also hosts an annual Black History Month family event, and throughout Black History Month, students in after school programming read aloud and discussed a "quote of the day," with quotes from current and historic prominent Black American individuals.

Older youth are given opportunities to share their experiences related to their cultural identity and to explore the challenges of living in a diverse society. Most recently, the LP RC developed a Youth Advisory Board, where teens from East Gainesville met monthly to discuss cyberbullying and online racial discrimination, developing ideas for how to prevent it in the future. This board presented their experiences and ideas for change to parents, teachers, and mentors.

LP RC provides opportunities to learn about, and celebrate, different cultural groups, especially those most represented by families in the LP RC community... Older youth are given opportunities to share their experiences related to their cultural identity and to explore the challenges of living in a diverse society. Most recently, LP RC developed a Youth Advisory Board, where teens from East Gainesville met monthly to discuss cyberbullying and online racial discrimination, developing ideas for how to prevent it in the future.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the Library Partnership Resource Center to Help Children Develop a Positive Cultural Identity and Learn to Interact in a Diverse Society

The following seven items in this section received average team scores in the neither agree nor disagree range:

Staff receive training on how cultural differences affect social and emotional development, especially differences in:

- How the sense of identity is fostered as an individual and/or as part of a family or clan in different cultures.
- The extent to which nonverbal communication is predominant across cultures.
- Diverse cultural views success and appropriate child development. Providing coaching on how to support social and emotional learning for all children.

Staff are encouraged to enhance their own understanding and appreciation for different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, languages and cultural expressions through:

- Being encouraged to share and reflect on their own cultural background, including self-awareness of biases they may hold.
- Being trained in how to sensitively ask questions about each family's specific experience and cultural perspectives.

Program policies and practices support the preservation of home languages by building upon the home languages and dialects of the children and families they serve.

Staff are trained in how to address children exhibiting verbal or nonverbal indicators of racism or intolerance.

Like other sections within the Social and Emotional Competence of Children SFSA Tool, the above items receiving average scores of neither agree nor disagree mostly pertain to staff training. As was true for other protective factor sections, it is possible these ratings were influenced by non-staff SFSA team

members' lack of knowledge about training requirements at the LP RC. While not recommended as a formal action item, team members have previously discussed the potential for providing patrons and other stakeholders with more insight into what training staff receive.

How Does the Library Partnership Resource Center Respond Proactively When Social or Emotional Development Needs Extra Support?

There were six items pertaining to how the LP RC responds proactively when social or emotional development needs extra support. For 5 out of these 6 items (83.3%) there was team consensus of agreement, while 1 item received an average team score of neither agree nor disagree.

What the Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well to Respond Proactively When Social or Emotional Development Needs Extra Support

In general, SFSA team members perceived responding when there are concerns about a child's social emotional development to be a strength of the LP RC. Team consensus of agreement was present for the following five items:

When staff are concerned about a child's social and emotional development, they respond by:

- Discussing concerns (including objective descriptions of behaviors) with the child's parents without casting blame on the parents.
- Arranging for appropriate screenings and assessments.
- Connecting the family to resources that can support the child's social and emotional development (e.g., play therapy, mental health services, parenting classes).
- Helping parents develop strategies for addressing the issue at home.

Staff have access to a mental health consultant to help them:

- Talk respectfully with parents about the child's development, needs or challenges.

SFSA staff team members noted that like addressing other significant developmental needs, extra social and emotional support is handled on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the need, staff may help parents with the process of getting their child an IEP or 504 at school for accommodations, or they may contact an appropriate provider who can offer developmental, behavioral, or mental health services. External providers who are frequently used include Early Steps, the Child Advocacy Center, Village Counseling Center, and Meridian Behavioral Health.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for the Library Partnership Resource Center to Help Children Develop a Positive Cultural Identity and Learn to Interact in a Diverse Society

The following item in this section received a team consensus rating in the neither agree nor disagree range:

Staff have access to a mental health consultant to help them:

- Identify and receive additional resources and/or training to work effectively with individual children and parents.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the LP RC does not have a designated mental health consultant that provides training or resources, which could account for this rating. The LP RC instead utilizes appropriate community partner organizations for mental health service referrals and staff trainings as needed.

Fidelity of Social and Emotional Competence of Children Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

As denoted earlier, the SFSA Team identified the weighted average team score as the consensus measure for each item associated with the Social and Emotional Competence of Children assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)³ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Social and Emotional Competence of Children Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 35 (of a possible score of 48) or 73%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with promoting the Social and Emotional Competence of Children were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening

The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 35 (of a possible score of 48) or 73%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with promoting the Social and Emotional Competence of Children were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

The Library Partnership Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As denoted earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, LP RC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the LP RC in accordance with the CSSP’s protective factors framework. The names and/or biographies of these team members are detailed below.

³ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Tarr, J., Harnar, M. A., & Ahsan, N. (2014). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Unpublished whitepaper presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s annual conference in Dallas, TX.

John Barli – Catholic Charities

John Barli came to Gainesville in 1974 to attend the University of Florida, after 38 years in the for-profit world, John made the jump to non- profits after serving on The Catholic Charities Gainesville Advisory Board. He is motivated every day by the opportunity to transform lives.

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Tina Bushnell is originally from St. Petersburg, Florida and has been a Gainesville resident since 1985. She attended Santa Fe College and went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from University of Florida. She also holds a Master of Library and Information Science from Florida State University. Ms. Bushnell began working at the Alachua County Library District in 2011 and became the manager of the Library Partnership Branch in 2016. She is dedicated to collaborating with the resource center by providing complimentary services and programs to make the Library Partnership a “one stop shop” for the community. She enjoys spending time with her son and his family, who also live in Gainesville, but spends most of her time outside of work relaxing with her cats.



Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador



Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Denise Fanning is originally from Texas and has been in Gainesville since 2008. She is a Gator Grad, and Marine Veteran, with a bachelor’s in psychology, and has been working in the nonprofit community since 2011. She joined the Catholic Charities family in November of 2020 and feels fortunate to be a part of an organization that truly embodies an ethos of providing compassionate services to the community.

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower was born in Philadelphia and has been a Florida resident since 2008 after moving here from South Carolina. She is the proud mother of three adult sons and one adult daughter who graduated from Santa Fe College. Ms. Jazmen is also a graduate of the Catholic Charities Bridges to Prosperity Class of 2012. This is where she learned the importance of being involved in her community. She has since served as an active member of the Gainesville Housing Authority Board from 2014 – 2018 and the Catholic Charities Board from 2018 – present. Ms. Jazmen has also been a key member of the Library Partnership Resource Center Community Advisory Council since 2019 and now brings her experience and enthusiasm to the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes strongly in taking an active role with community organizations and encourages others to do the same so they can help steer. She thanks God that she is able to be a help to her community.



LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School



Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Cherie holds a Master’s in Clinical Psychology and Bachelor’s in Psychology from the University of Louisville. She is certified in the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support and the WhyTry Youth Resiliency Program. In 2009, Cherie joined Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) as part of their Family Team Conferencing program. Since 2013, Cherie has worked with PSF’s Resource Centers, and has served as the Library Partnership Resource Center Manager for 5 years. Cherie has helped create programs designed to build family protective factors, including homework help, enrichment programs, a re-entry conference and job fair, and a Parent and Community Advisory Council. Cherie builds community collaborations by connecting with other non-profits, faith-based organizations, businesses, government, and schools, while also building a system of case management and supports for families. Cherie most enjoys grant writing, developing equitable, community-based programs and services by connecting with families to understand their needs and building meaningful relationships with children who participate in programs. Cherie serves on the Race Equity Workgroup at PSF, University of Florida’s Workforce Development Committee, and the Community Partnership School Leadership Council.

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Ms. Sarah Livingstone grew up in Montclair, New Jersey, a diverse, arts focused town. She attended and graduated from Santa Fe College, with an associate degree in Early Education, and then obtained a bachelor’s degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences from the University of Florida. After this schooling, Sarah moved back to New Jersey and continued her education, graduating from Rutgers University, with a master’s in social work. She holds a licensure of social work in the state of New Jersey. Sarah is currently employed with Partnership for Strong Families. There, in her role as Family Support Facilitator for the Library Partnership Resource Center, she works in tandem with all levels of stakeholders on behalf of families in the Northeast side of Gainesville, Florida. Sarah is an author and an owner of ARE U Motivated LLC. She coordinates and facilitates mental health discussions in the community. Sarah is a member of the Child Protection Task Force, based in Gainesville, FL. She is the middle child and very close to her family members. Her mother and father attended the University of Florida as well, her mother graduating from the nursing program, and her father, the chemical engineering program. Sarah involves herself in activity groups in the community and prioritizes self-care. Sarah appreciates that the Library Partnership Resource Center (LP RC) is available to the public, without regard to a person’s demographics, income, and/or plight in life. It is a non-discriminatory environment and reparative in nature. With a strengths-based approach, LP RC focuses on infusing and enhancing protective factors in the lives of the patrons served. Sarah finds joy in being a part of the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes that the existence of the team not only encourages communication between the community members, researchers, and the resource centers, but the functioning of the team creates cohesion within the resource centers; awareness of gaps in services; room for adjustment and solutions, and responsiveness to all families, family members, and community members.



Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador

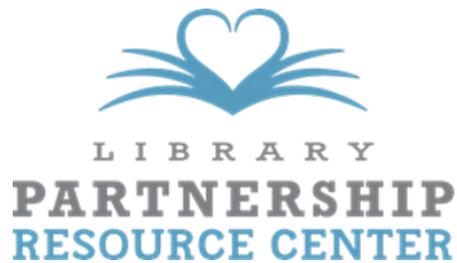


Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Staci White is from Gainesville, Florida. She holds a bachelor’s degree in English with a minor in African American Studies and earned her master’s degree in Educational Leadership and Administration. After teaching with Alachua County Public Schools, Ms. White joined the Children’s Home Society of Florida in her current role at Howard Bishop Middle School in 2020. She is passionate about providing resources for all families and communities.

Although not formally members of the LP SFSA Team, Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Elizabeth Snow (Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center), and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) attended each meeting of the LP SFSA Team meetings and served as key supports for team processes. **Robin Perry** provided the initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and recommendations by the team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying team members' views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the LP Resource Center. **Elizabeth Snow** is the Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Snow maintained regular contact with team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. **Toni Spoliansky** served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the LP Resource Center. It is important to note that the role of the above three individuals was seen as supportive in nature. An empowerment perspective was adopted, as a team they would decide the meeting schedule and facilitation process with all members assuming equal status as knowledge experts with respect to community needs and the role, value, functioning, and responsiveness of the LP Resource Center to community need related to supporting families through the promotion of parental resilience. There was no effort by those in supportive roles to censure conversation and discussion points; efforts were made as feedback was regularly sought regarding facilitation processes and preferences of group members for these processes. All notes were converted into minutes that were distributed to team members for their review, edits, and approval. Feedback and recommended edits to documented discussion items and decisions could be provided within scheduled meetings (the team decided on monthly two-hour meetings) or in dialog/e-mails to Robin Perry and/or Elizabeth Snow in-between meetings (which would then be discussed with all team members at the next in-person or virtual meeting).

Suggested Citation: Snow, E., Perry, R., Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2022). *Supporting Families by Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children at The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.



Supporting Families by
Promoting Social Connections at
The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center

Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Elizabeth Snow (Library Partnership Resource Center Community Research Coordinator), John Barli, Tina Bushnell, Kenydra Donalson, Denise Fanning, Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower, LaToya Jennings Lopez, Cherie Kelly, Sarah Livingstone, Nipapat McDow, Toni Spoliansky, Sharon Walters, Staci White (LP SFSA Team)

Institute for Child and Family Services Research



This report was funded by the Children’s Bureau; Administration on Children, Youth, and Families; Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant # 90CA1868. The contents of this report are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children’s Bureau.

Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from, and recommendations developed by the Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team utilizing a standardized process developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)¹. The CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework is a research-informed model that focuses on engaging families, programs, and communities in enhancing five protective factors:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Since supports and services at the LP Resource Center (LP RC) are structured in accordance with the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs, and associated processes were used to help determine the fidelity of specific implementation strategies, identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on LP RC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting social connections.

The Library Partnership Resource Center

Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) began in 2007 to develop a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC) that emphasize a strengthening family approach while utilizing a Protective Factors Framework to provide prevention services and supports to families. The PSF Resource Center model is built upon a multi-system collaborative focusing on primary prevention that works toward strengthening families with the goal of preventing child maltreatment and reducing entries into foster care. In June 2008, PSF partnered with Alachua County Library District (ACLD) to identify a place to open a Resource Center with a goal to reduce the stigma people may feel about going into a social services center and encourage community members to seek out resources before a crisis occurs, subsequently preventing risks to child safety. The Library Partnership Resource Center opened its doors to the community in July 2009. The Library Partnership Resource Center (LP RC) is one of three Resource Centers in Gainesville that partner with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites) to provide services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners/stakeholders and parents/household members (referred to as patrons) within the targeted areas. It is this multi-system collaborative, with representation from across the five sectors (public, business, philanthropy,

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the Library Partnership Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Snow, E., Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R.J., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2021). *The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social Connections*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

community, and nonprofit), that has allowed a blending of funding, expansion of services to meet the needs of patrons and enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's most at-risk populations.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team and Method

The *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and associated protocols were developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). This is a comprehensive, research-informed approach (based on national studies) that aids in assessing the extent to which a RC has implemented services/activities to engage and strengthen families in alignment with core strategies for building each of the protective factors². The assessment criteria and protocol for self-assessment is standardized. Protocols require the establishment and utilization of a Self-Assessment Team that includes at a minimum: Administrative Staff and/or Program Director, Direct Service Staff, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities). For this project, it was deemed important to also include collaborative partners and other stakeholders in the process (as informed parties/members). These processes were followed in the establishment of the LP RC SFSA Team.

The LP RC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

John Barli – Catholic Charities

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador

Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador

Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

² For more information regarding CSSP's Strengthening Families and Protective Factors Framework, please see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>. Additional information regarding the self-assessment model and associated methodology, tools, and recommended processes, see: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/self-assessments-for-programs/> and Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Within the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* there are a series of questions linked with each Protective Factor. These questions represent actions/activities, program elements, protocols, and policies associated with providing services meant to enhance each Protective Factor according to best-practice/evidence-based standards. For services and supports focused on Social Connections there are 18 topics with 43 associated questions for which each team member is asked to individually rate their level of item statement agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with an option for Not Applicable. This same scale is used for an assessment of all Protective Factor questions. Team members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, its relationship to the LP Resource Center service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their scores, these data were shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each item. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus assessment for each item and indicator (if such was possible) so that a collective assessment could lead to a structured action plan to address any fidelity concerns and program needs. The initial meeting of the LP RC SFSA Team took place on July 21, 2021, and monthly meetings continued through November. Subsequent meetings that involved the discussion of social connections items took place on October 11, and November 15, 2021.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social Connections

The following represents a summary of key findings and recommendations by the team for questions associated with promoting Social Connections. For the purposes of the summary, findings are presented in accordance with the broader questions the tool was structured to answer.

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Help Families Value, Build, Sustain and Use Social Connections?

There are 21 questions associated with how Library Partnership Resource Center helps families value, build, sustain, and use social connections. Findings suggest a team consensus of agreement with 10 of the 21 questions, and 11 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range. There were no questions for which there was a consensus of disagreement. The team had an opportunity to discuss all item responses and brainstorm potential action items generating from open discussion of LP RC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well that Helps Families Value, Build, Sustain and Use Social Connections.

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at LP RC:

Families have access to a comfortable space where they can meet informally.

The program provides opportunities for families to socialize and foster a sense of community by organizing/hosting:

- Regularly scheduled parent-child activities such as Play and Learn groups.
- Celebrations, graduations, and holidays.
- Field trips and community events.
- Events celebrating cultural customs, potlucks, and other opportunities for parents to share and learn about each other's home lives and cultural backgrounds.
- Affordable family activities.
- Social media groups or web pages where parents can get program information and interact with one another.

The program encourages positive relationships between families and staff members by planning informal social events where staff can interact with families.

The program offers or connects families to resources to strengthen relationships between adults (e.g., healthy marriage skills, communication skills, conflict resolution, co-parenting).

Program staff encourage newcomers and isolated or marginalized families to participate in program activities by:

- Calling, sending notes, or making home visits inviting them to program activities.
- Connecting with them on social media platforms through program pages or groups.
- Connecting them with resources (including mental health consultation) that can help them explore difficulties with forming social connections.

There was uniform consensus regarding opportunities and environments that reinforce informal connections among families and parents at the LP RC. The physical space and environment (including the receptiveness and responsiveness of staff) were identified as strengths of the LP Resource Center and Library. These factors reinforce informal opportunities for interacting with and developing connections amongst patrons.

The physical space and environment (including the receptiveness and responsiveness of staff) were identified as strengths of the LP Resource Center and Library.

There was no expanded discussion on many of the above items, apart from acknowledging (throughout SFSA discussions) that efforts to engage families parallel identified needs within the community. The above noted array of events are perceived as important efforts at enhancing family supports and promoting a sense of community within the neighborhoods served. LP RC staff keep a comprehensive list of resources for referring patrons to partner agencies/organizations (a list of community partners and rack cards are also displayed in the LP RC lobby), including those that offer special programs and supports for dads, grandparents, teen moms, teen dads, and other caregivers who would enjoy activities specifically focused on their unique needs and interests.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for Library Partnership Resource Center to Help Families Value, Build, Sustain and Use Social Connections.

There were several questions for which the consensus assessment/rating was neither agree nor disagree; these include the following:

The program provides opportunities for families with similar interests, children's ages and/or circumstances (such as those with twins, parents of infants, parents with special-needs children or parents who speak the same language) to connect with one another:

- Formally, through parent support groups (including those with both broad and narrow focuses).
- Through parent mentoring and matching for one-on-one support.
- Informally, by introducing parents to one another.

The program provides opportunities for families to socialize and foster a sense of community by organizing/hosting:

- Periodic events like coffee breaks and breakfasts.
- Special programs for dads, grandparents, teen moms, teen dads and other caregivers who would enjoy activities directed at their unique needs and interests.

Program staff encourage newcomers and isolated or marginalized families to participate in program activities by:

- Offering support with transportation, childcare or other barriers to participation.
- Making special efforts to connect them with other families who share similar interests.
- Matching families with staff or other families who can help them feel welcome and valued in program activities.

Staff receive training on how isolation or reluctance to participate can be the result of social exclusion due to differences in race, language, culture, appearance, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc.

Responses to the first set of items were discussed at length without any resulting action items. LP RC does not currently facilitate any in-house parent mentoring or support groups but often refers parents/caregivers to partner organizations that already offer these supports in a manner that was perceived by team members to be effective. These include parent support groups and resources (including some in-home supports/visitation programs) offered through Healthy Start, Healthy Families, and the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program which focuses on parents of children aged 2-5 and is organized through Alachua County Public Schools³. Opportunities for parents to connect and socialize are usually facilitated through informal community events (e.g., holiday parties, etc.) rather than formal parent support groups. In addition, parents connect with one another during scheduled LP RC events and programs. Such has been observed during financial fitness

³ For more information regarding these partner programs and resources, see:

Alachua County Public Schools HIPPY Program: <https://www.sbac.edu/domain/6233>

Florida Healthy Start (Central and North Central Florida Coalitions): <https://www.chsandhsncfcoalitions.org/>

Healthy Families—Alachua, Columbia, Union, and Bradford counties: <https://healthyfamiliesacub.wordpress.com/>

workshops, as well as during regular concrete support events (i.e., Clothing Closet, Food Distribution events, etc.). Reportedly, LP RC has offered formal parenting groups and classes before (i.e., Playgroup, Early Steps) but these programs didn't "take-off" or garner much interest or participation. It was noted that multiple library branches offer programs like Story Time on the Green and Baby Time (parent-child, family interaction events). Some locations reportedly get 100 attendees, others get 50-60 attendees for these events, while Library Partnership often gets few to none (when these events were offered). It was suggested that limited attendance in the past for such events was a by-product of scheduling as they were offered during the workday when many parents of young children in the LP community are working, and their children are in daycare.

At this time, the SFSA team believes that current methods of providing informal spaces and times for parents to connect with each other are working well and formal parent groups/classes are not needed although it was suggested it may be "nice to explore" other topic areas/event opportunities in the future that may be of interest to parents in the community for enhancing their social connections. LP RC is currently reaching out (in person and by phone) to parents involved in services and programs to inform them about an initiative to develop a Parent and Community Advisory Council (PCAC). Exploration of community interest in developing in-house parent mentoring and support groups could be conducted by the PCAC, once formed.

... the SFSA team believes that current methods of providing informal spaces and times for parents to connect with each other are working well ... it was suggested it may be "nice to explore" other topic areas/event opportunities in the future that may be of interest to parents in the community for enhancing their social connection ... Exploration of community interest in developing in-house parent mentoring and support groups could be conducted by the PCAC [Parent and Community Advisory Council], once formed.

While discussing the consensus rating of neither agree nor disagree for the second set of items denoted above, the team highlighted several contextual issues and considerations influencing the implementation of suggested efforts focused on newcomers and marginalized or isolated families. These considerations include community partner contributions, privacy considerations, and efforts at establishing trust and enhancing a sense of community amongst patrons/parents and families. It was noted that LP RC is proactive in their efforts to utilize community partners (e.g., hospital social workers and staff at Rural Women's Health Project) to help identify isolated and marginalized families (that the partners may have direct contact with) that could benefit from a referral for LP RC services and resources. These collaborative partners have been a valuable resource for helping target engagement efforts by LP RC staff.

... LP RC is proactive in their efforts to utilize community partners (e.g., hospital social workers and staff at Rural Women's Health Project) to help identify isolated and marginalized families (that the partners may have direct contact with) that could benefit from a referral for LP RC services and resources ...

Although existing referral and engagement strategies are staff-to-patron/family focused, there have been more limited efforts at directly connecting isolated parents to other parents with similar experiences. The hesitancy to engage in such efforts extends from a legitimate concern, and feedback from LP RC patrons, that people prefer to keep their personal affairs and challenges private. Confidentiality and liability/legal considerations were also highlighted by staff as factors impacting the likelihood of making such parent-to-parent connections. The team highlighted that “extra care” is needed regarding confidentiality and building trust with and between parents before matching and connecting specific families. The SFSA team highlighted multiple key components to building trust and a sense of community amongst parents, as well as between parents and LP RC staff. Some thoughts and considerations discussed included the following:

- Although patrons may have social supports/connections that can assist with accessing concrete supports (e.g., securing a ride, help picking up groceries, etc.), some may not have meaningful trusting relationships that would permit the sharing of private information, and stresses they contend with, including possible stigmatizing challenges they are facing.
- Many patrons (especially marginalized and isolated parents/families) fear that other people (staff and other parents and families) may be judgmental, make unhelpful comments, or lack the ability to help solve their problem.
- Past “betrayal of trust” and negative experiences with other people and/or organizations and community agencies may make parents reluctant to trust others, including the LP RC and its staff. Thus, organizations (including LP RC) working with families need to be willing to establish and rebuild trust even if they weren't the ones who initially broke it.
- Rebuilding trust involves setting “...realistic expectations...” and following through with promises. The importance was reinforced to not promise things that may not be possible and to acknowledge that building trust is an incremental process. One team member noted, it is important to “...be encouraging but not sell dreams,” as “...selling a dream will break a spirit.”
- Following through with parents and families and consistency (in treatment of patrons and with services/supports) are important for building trust at the LP RC.

The team highlighted that “extra care” is needed regarding confidentiality and building trust with and between parents before matching and connecting specific families.

Although the team emphasized the importance of the above noted considerations, they also praised LP RC staff for their efforts to best address and connect patrons/parents and families to the resources they need. It was highlighted that LP RC staff always aim to “provide a path to the resource even if we can’t provide the resource.” According to staff, “It’s a safe place to call” and all attempts are made to “Limit the ‘no’” as “...people rely on us”. Staff are perceived as friendly and the physical environment, or “feel of the place,” is welcoming, helps build comfort and trust, and is identified as “...a warm place to be...”

Staff are perceived as friendly and the physical environment, or “feel of the place” [LP RC], is welcoming, helps build comfort and trust, and is identified as “...a warm place to be...”

In any regard, the team thought it to be of value to explore further the means and mechanisms by which (if desired by) parents and families can be directly connected with other parents and families (especially those that are isolated and marginalized) with similar interests and/or experiences. There is also a general interest in furthering knowledge and acting upon feedback from patrons regarding their interests and needs for select services and supports. Although LP RC has satisfaction surveys available (after receipt of service/support), pencils, and a submission box currently available near the front lobby, response rates/input has been limited. LP RC staff and administrators would like to get more patrons to complete satisfaction surveys. Attempts to increase survey completion have included giving them out at programs, emailing them, and having front desk and other staff more directly offer them to patrons. The survey also includes a section for recommendations for improvement and comments about service or program ideas and includes an option to leave a call back number if the person has questions or comments to discuss with the LP RC manager. One idea that was suggested included the creation of a QR code so patrons can easily scan and complete the survey on a phone or other device. The above noted discussion led to the development of two recommended action items:

Action Item #1: Develop a confidential and trusted process for asking parents who access services if they would like to be connected with other parents with similar interests and/or experiences.

Action Item #2: Increase completion of LP RC satisfaction surveys by creating the option to complete surveys digitally. Display a QR code for the surveys on signs and flyers in the Resource Center.

... the team thought it to be of value to explore further the means and mechanisms by which (if desired by) parents and families can be directly connected with other parents and families (especially those that are isolated and marginalized) with similar interests and/or experiences. There is also a general interest in furthering knowledge and acting upon feedback from patrons regarding their interests and needs for select services and supports.

With respect to the final item in the above list (regarding the extent to which LP RC staff “...receive training on how isolation or reluctance to participate can be the result of social exclusion due to differences in race, language, culture, appearance, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc.”), team members’ ratings were influenced, in part, by lack of information non-LP RC staff team members had about the type of training LP RC staff receive. As denoted in reports related to other protective factors⁴, the team values documenting/highlighting for the community and patrons, the types of training all LP RC staff receive.

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Create an Inclusive Environment?

There were 13 questions associated with three broad indicators that attempted to gauge the extent to which LP RC has created an inclusive environment. There was consensus agreement on eight of these items (62%) that LP RC’s programs and staff model positive social skills and community building, as well as that LP RC helps staff learn how to reduce stereotyping and bias. There were five questions where team consensus was within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range.

What Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well that Creates an Inclusive Environment.

There was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports, and actions are implemented with fidelity at LP RC:

The program and its staff model positive social skills and community building by:

- Welcoming all families.
- Inviting all families to program parties or social events.
- Encouraging newcomers and reluctant families to participate through special outreach efforts.
- Helping to resolve conflicts among participants.
- Promoting families’ understandings of different cultures and backgrounds.

⁴ See: Perry, R., Snow, E., Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R.J., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2021). *The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team’s Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

- Working with participating parents to establish ground rules for programs and activities that ensure inclusiveness.

The program helps staff learn how to reduce stereotyping and bias by:

- Modeling inclusive behavior among the staff.
- Intervening appropriately to counteract prejudicial or discriminatory statements from children or other adults (e.g., discussing similarities and differences, establishing rules for fair treatment of others).
- Ensuring that any instances of prejudice are quickly and explicitly addressed, and that staff use any such incidents as opportunities to demonstrate program values of inclusion and respect.

These findings reinforce other findings discussed by the team with respect to other protective factors (see Parental Resilience report; Perry et al., 2021). When the team was asked to assess the extent to which LP RC demonstrates how parents are valued, it was noted that "...LP RC staff are welcoming, respectful, patient, supportive, and strength-based in their interactions with patrons..." where staff "...almost always say something positive..." and are "...gentle and listen, patient and try to help and support..." all patrons (adults, parents, and children) (Perry et al., 2021, p. 10). LP RC staff are very apt at engaging parents/patrons in a supportive manner while utilizing and modelling appropriate social skills in a variety of service and support contexts.

LP RC staff are very apt at engaging parents/patrons in a supportive manner while utilizing and modelling appropriate social skills in a variety of service and support contexts.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for Library Partnership Resource Center to Create an Inclusive Environment.

There were several questions for which the consensus assessment/rating was neither agree nor disagree; these include the following:

The program and its staff model positive social skills and community building by:

- Helping to resolve conflicts among participants.

The program helps staff learn how to reduce stereotyping and bias by:

- Providing professional development opportunities on intentionally countering stereotypes and biases (including both explicit and implicit forms of biased behaviors).
- Providing training and support for helping families and children resolve conflicts effectively.
- Regularly reviewing policies, forms, and documents to ensure that all content discourages beliefs and practices that stereotype, marginalize or discriminate against families.

Families are encouraged to reach out and engage other families, including newcomers and more isolated members, in the program community.

With respect to the first listed item, team members noted that LP RC frequently helps children enrolled in programs to resolve conflict; however, the need to help resolve conflict among adults on site is reportedly not common. In rare cases, when needed, there are policies in place specifically for emergency response and crisis management at the LP RC⁵. These policies were originally constructed in 2014 and have since been revised, most recently in 2019.

In response to other listed items above, it was noted that PSF is currently involved in an active review of policies and forms as a means of identifying any potential bias and to ensure communications promote an inclusive environment. PSF has established a Racial Equity Workgroup that advocates for the regular and thorough review of policies, protocols, and publications of PSF and all its entities (including resource centers). Currently, policies are updated every three years, but there is no formal protocol for what kind of review, if any, happens before or in-between the formal scheduled reviews. The team expressed an interest in having LP RC and other resource center staff be involved in this formal review process. Outside the work of the Racial Equity Workgroup, LP RC has changed/modified flyer language and expanded the gender and race categories on visit sign-in forms to make them more inclusive. Given the above observations and thoughts, and the perceived need for a more detailed itemization of current efforts, the team recommended the following action item:

Action Item #3: Create a document that itemizes steps currently being taken to reduce stereotyping and bias (i.e., review of policies and documents, training, and Racial Equity Workgroup meetings).

...PSF [Partnership for Strong Families] is currently involved in an active review of policies and forms as a means of identifying any potential bias and to ensure communications promote an inclusive environment. PSF has established a Racial Equity Workgroup that advocates for the regular and thorough review of policies, protocols, and publications of PSF and all its entities (including resource centers).

⁵ See: Partnership for Strong Families (2019). *Policy & Procedure Manual: Resource Center Crisis Response Procedure, Policy Number 1509*. Gainesville, FL: Author.

Partnership for Strong Families (2019). *Policy & Procedure Manual: Resource Center Behavioral Intervention, Policy Number 1510*. Gainesville, FL: Author.

How Does Library Partnership Resource Center Facilitate Mutual Support?

What Library Partnership Resource Center Does Well that Facilitates Mutual Support.

There was consensus agreement with a series of seven statements examining the means and mechanisms by which the LP RC helps facilitate mutual support among parents and patrons. These items include:

The program encourages parents to set up mutual support mechanisms (e.g., phone trees, carpools, babysitting co-ops, play groups, social media groups or pages where parents can communicate with one another).

Parent-organized social/educational events and activities are encouraged and supported by:

- Providing information on outside activities for parents to attend together (for example, gathering at playgrounds, fun fairs or libraries).
- Providing supports such as gathering space, childcare and food so that parents can organize and participate in activities together.

Administrators and staff seek opportunities to build good relations within the immediate neighborhood or local community (e.g., inviting neighbors to open houses, using neighborhood resources for special projects, building relationships with local schools).

Staff are visibly engaged with issues of concern to the community and are actively involved with other community organizations.

The program provides and receives support from the local community (e.g., financial support, donated services, volunteer service, tangible gifts, discounted services, letters of support).

The program connects parents to local opportunities that promote family enrichment (e.g., reading hours at the library, parent-child book groups, cultural heritage events).

There was no involved discussion regarding these items nor any recommended action items. However, comments related to other items reviewed within this report and reports regarding other protective factors corroborated these findings. Collectively, these responses reinforce that the LP RC is a significant source of support for families that encourages the development of mutual supports for and among families via the formal and informal resources provided.

LP RC is a significant source of support for families that encourages the development of mutual supports for and among families via the formal and informal resources provided.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for Library Partnership Resource Center to Facilitate Mutual Support.

There were two questions for which there was a consensus rating of Neither Agree nor Disagree:

There is time built into program activities for parents to network and share with each other.

The program encourages staff and families to participate together in community improvement or advocacy projects.

There was limited discussion and no action items recommended for the two items denoted above. With respect to the first item, a staff member highlighted that although there is not specifically “scheduled time” in programs for networking, LP programs frequently involve time built into events for informal socializing and networking. It was asserted that LP RC incorporates social connection into other programs by allowing space and time for connecting and by creating an environment that supports socializing. Other methods include building in breaks and offering food at select events/activities, which can facilitate networking and sharing. SFSA team members present felt that formal scheduled networking time is not needed at this time and that LP RC’s current strategies (infusing informal connection opportunities into other services/supports/activities) provide sufficient support for families to connect with one another.

Fidelity of Social Connections Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

As denoted earlier, the SFSA Team identified the weighted average team score as the consensus measure for each item associated with the Social Connections assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping with Harnar and Tarr, (n.d.) and Tarr, Harnar, & Ahsan (2014)⁶ method recommendations—to binary/dichotomous scores where 1=Agree and Strongly Agree, and 0=Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, and Not Applicable. These scores were summed for the Social Connections Protective Factor where scores <50% of the total score possible represent low fidelity, 50-74% represent moderate fidelity, and >75% possible scores represent high fidelity. The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 27 (of a possible score of 43) or 63%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with promoting Social Connections were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

⁶ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

Tarr, J., Harnar, M. A., & Ahsan, N. (2014). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Unpublished whitepaper presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s annual conference in Dallas, TX.

The aggregate fidelity score from all tabled findings is 27 (of a possible score of 43) or 63%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with promoting Social Connections were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

The Library Partnership Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

As denoted earlier, a team of dedicated community ambassadors, LP RC staff, and collaborative partners worked together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the supports and services provided by the LP RC in accordance with the CSSP’s protective factors framework. The names and/or biographies of these team members are detailed below.

John Barli – Catholic Charities

John Barli came to Gainesville in 1974 to attend the University of Florida, after 38 years in the for-profit world, John made the jump to non- profits after serving on The Catholic Charities Gainesville Advisory Board. He is motivated every day by the opportunity to transform lives.

Tina Bushnell – Alachua County Library District, Library Partnership Branch

Tina Bushnell is originally from St. Petersburg, Florida and has been a Gainesville resident since 1985. She attended Santa Fe College and went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from University of Florida. She also holds a Master of Library and Information Science from Florida State University. Ms. Bushnell began working at the Alachua County Library District in 2011 and became the manager of the Library Partnership Branch in 2016. She is dedicated to collaborating with the resource center by providing complimentary services and programs to make the Library Partnership a “one stop shop” for the community. She enjoys spending time with her son and his family, who also live in Gainesville, but spends most of her time outside of work relaxing with her cats.



Kenydra Donalson – Community Ambassador



Denise Fanning – Catholic Charities

Denise Fanning is originally from Texas and has been in Gainesville since 2008. She is a Gator Grad, and Marine Veteran, with a bachelor’s in psychology, and has been working in the nonprofit community since 2011. She joined the Catholic Charities family in November of 2020 and feels fortunate to be a part of an organization that truly embodies an ethos of providing compassionate services to the community.

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower – Community Ambassador and Community Advisory Council Member

Rebecca “Jazmen” Hightower was born in Philadelphia and has been a Florida resident since 2008 after moving here from South Carolina. She is the proud mother of three adult sons and one adult daughter who graduated from Santa Fe College. Ms. Jazmen is also a graduate of the Catholic Charities Bridges to Prosperity Class of 2012. This is where she learned the importance of being involved in her community. She has since served as an active member of the Gainesville Housing Authority Board from 2014 – 2018 and the Catholic Charities Board from 2018 – present. Ms. Jazmen has also been a key member of the Library Partnership Resource Center Community Advisory Council since 2019 and now brings her experience and enthusiasm to the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes strongly in taking an active role with community organizations and encourages others to do the same so they can help steer. She thanks God that she is able to be a help to her community.



LaToya Jennings-Lopez – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School



Cherie Kelly – LP RC Staff (Resource Center Manager)

Cherie holds a Master’s in Clinical Psychology and Bachelor’s in Psychology from the University of Louisville. She is certified in the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support and the WhyTry Youth Resiliency Program. In 2009, Cherie joined Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) as part of their Family Team Conferencing program. Since 2013, Cherie has worked with PSF’s Resource Centers, and has served as the Library Partnership Resource Center Manager for 5 years. Cherie has helped create programs designed to build family protective factors, including homework help, enrichment programs, a re-entry conference and job fair, and a Parent and Community Advisory Council. Cherie builds community collaborations by connecting with other non-profits, faith-based organizations, businesses,

government, and schools, while also building a system of case management and supports for families. Cherie most enjoys grant writing, developing equitable, community-based programs and services by connecting with families to understand their needs and building meaningful relationships with children who participate in programs. Cherie serves on the Race Equity Workgroup at PSF, University of Florida's Workforce Development Committee, and the Community Partnership School Leadership Council.

Sarah Livingstone – LP RC Staff (Family Support Facilitator)

Ms. Sarah Livingstone grew up in Montclair, New Jersey, a diverse, arts focused town. She attended and graduated from Santa Fe College, with an associate degree in Early Education, and then obtained a bachelor's degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences from the University of Florida. After this schooling, Sarah moved back to New Jersey and continued her education, graduating from Rutgers University, with a master's in social work. She holds a licensure of social work in the state of New Jersey. Sarah is currently employed with Partnership for Strong Families. There, in her role as Family Support Facilitator, for the Library Partnership Resource Center, she works in tandem with all levels of stakeholders on behalf of families in the Northeast side of Gainesville, Florida. Sarah is an author and an owner of ARE U Motivated LLC. She coordinates and facilitates mental health discussions in the community. Sarah is a member of the Child Protection Task Force, based in Gainesville, FL. She is the middle child and very close to her family members. Her mother and father attended the University of Florida, as well, her mother graduating from the nursing program, and her father, the chemical engineering program. Sarah involves herself in activity groups in the community and prioritizes self-care. Sarah appreciates that the Library Partnership Resource Center (LP RC) is available to the public, without regard to a person's demographics, income, and/or plight in life. It is a non-discriminatory environment and reparative in nature. With a strengths-based approach, LP RC focuses on infusing and enhancing protective factors in the lives of the patrons served. Sarah finds joy in being a part of the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team. She believes that the existence of the team not only encourages communication between the community members, researchers, and the resource centers, but the functioning of the team creates cohesion within the resource centers; awareness of gaps in services; room for adjustment and solutions, and responsiveness to all families, family members, and community members.



Nipapat McDow – Community Ambassador

Sharon Walters – Community Ambassador



Staci White – Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop Middle School

Staci White is from Gainesville, Florida. She holds a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in African American Studies and earned her master's degree in Educational Leadership and Administration. After teaching with Alachua County Public Schools, Ms. White joined the Children's Home Society of Florida in her current role at Howard Bishop Middle School in 2020. She is passionate about providing resources for all families and communities.

Although not formally members of the LP SFSA Team, Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Elizabeth Snow (Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center), and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) attended each meeting of the LP SFSA Team meetings and served as key supports for team processes. **Robin Perry** provided initial training and overview of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's SFSA Tool for Community-Based Programs and associated processes for review of findings and development of an action plan and recommendations by the team. Robin Perry was the lead facilitator of select group meetings; summarizing findings generated from the self-assessment tool/survey, asking questions, and clarifying team members' views as they discussed survey results with the goal of moving toward a consensus of perspective related to select survey questions and recommended action items for the LP Resource Center. **Elizabeth Snow** is the Community Research Coordinator for the LP Resource Center and a principal on-site contact for Team members. Ms. Snow maintained regular contact with team members and distributed meeting materials; aided with facilitation of group processes, and (along with Robin Perry) took detailed notes of comments and discussion items. **Toni Spoliansky** served as an information support and assisted in answering any questions individual team members had about the funded project and the role, function, and support of Partnership for Strong Families for the LP Resource Center. It is important to note that the role of the above three individuals was seen as supportive in nature. An empowerment perspective was adopted, as a team they would decide the meeting schedule and facilitation process with all members assuming equal status as knowledge experts with respect to community needs and the role, value, functioning, and responsiveness of the LP Resource Center to community need related to supporting families through the promotion of parental resilience. There was no effort by those in supportive roles to censure conversation and discussion points; efforts were made as feedback was regularly sought regarding facilitation processes and preferences of group members for these processes. All notes were converted into minutes that were distributed to team members for their review, edits, and approval. Feedback and recommended edits to documented discussion items and decisions could be provided within scheduled meetings (the team decided on monthly two-hour meetings) or in dialog/e-mails to Robin Perry and/or Elizabeth Snow in-between meetings (which would then be discussed with all team members at the next in-person or virtual meeting).

Suggested Citation: Perry, R., Snow, E. Barli, J., Bushnell, T., Donalson, K., Fanning, D., Hightower, R., Jennings-Lopez, L., Kelly, C., Livingstone, S., McDow, N., Spoliansky, T., Walters, S., & White, S. (2022). *Supporting Families by Promoting Social Connections at The Library Partnership (LP) Resource Center*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.