



Supporting Families by Providing
Concrete Support in Times of Need at the
NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC)

Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator), Katrina Evans, Stephanie Harden, Keaven Jones, Philip Mobley, Bonnie O'Neal, Allen Pope, Narrie Smith, Patricia Perry, and Toni Spoliansky (NSFRC SFSA Team support)

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 NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) 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 NSFRC are structured 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 (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on NSFRC's efforts at strengthening families by providing concrete support in times of need.

NorthStar Family 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 FRC 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. With the assistance of funding from the Children's Bureau Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families grant, Partnership for Strong Families opened their newest FRC serving the Greater Lake City area in March 2021. NSFRC is co-located on the campus of the Richardson Community Center in the Fergusson Building and is one of five FRCs operated by PSF in Alachua and Columbia counties 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

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the NorthStar Family Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2022). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's and Lake City's most in need populations.

The NSFRC 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 FRC 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, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities) referred to as Community Ambassadors. 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 NSFRC SFSA Team.

The NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Katrina Evans – Columbia County Public Library
Stephanie Harden – Florida Department of Child and Families
Keaven Jones – Community Ambassador/Collaborative Partner
Dr. Philip Mobley – NSFRC Manager
Bonnie O'Neal – Community Ambassador
Allen Pope – Community Ambassador
Patricia Perry – NSFRC Staff
Narrie Smith – NSFRC Volunteer

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

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/>

NSFRC service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their scores, the data was 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 for each topic and question (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 orientation meeting of the NSFRC SFSA Team took place on October 6, 2021, and three meetings followed through December. The team meeting that involved the discussion of Concrete Support in Times of Need questions took place on November 7, 2022.

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.

Collectively, it was assessed that NSFRC is very responsive to the expressed need of patrons for select concrete supports and services. The 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 NSFRC's greatest strengths.

How Does NorthStar Family Resource Center Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis?

The following is a measure of how the NSFRC responds immediately when families are in crisis. There were no SFSA questions for which the majority of team members thought were not applicable. Findings highlight a team consensus of agreement with 15 of the 15 questions (100%). 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 NSFRC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What NSFRC Does Well to Respond Immediately When Families are in Crisis.

There was uniform consensus in the assessment that staff at NSFRC are caring, engaged and responsive to parents and families in times of distress and crisis. Need for concrete supports is reportedly high within the neighborhoods served by NSFRC and, subsequently, any effort to address these needs, it is thought, aids with a reduction in stress experienced within patron households. There are a variety of concrete supports provided at NSFRC. These were highlighted in the meeting and elsewhere (see Perry et al., 2022) and include (but are not limited to): School Supplies, Computer/Printer/Copier Use, Clothing Assistance, Health Events, Fax Use, Housing/Rent Assistance, and (on Tuesdays) Panera Bread.

NSFRC staff (one full-time and one part-time employee) spend a notable amount of time engaged in connecting patrons to existing community services, collaborative partners, and other resources in addition to these direct/tangible supports provided on site. Although existing supports are regularly utilized (and appreciated), NSFRC's resources are limited in contrast to identified community need. This is particularly the case with respect to food insecurity needs of patrons and, sometimes, clothing and diaper needs for the abundance of single parents in the neighborhoods served. When resources at the NSFRC are limited, referrals and connections are made with other collaborative partners (for example, Catholic Charities, etc.) and/or efforts are made to secure select resources directly or through the PSF. For example, NSFRC was awarded a grant from the United Way of Suwannee Valley to provide emergency financial support for rent and utilities to qualifying individuals/families. Rent and utility support can also be provided through PSF's Columbia County Children's Partnership Council for up to \$200 per household (where there is a child in the home). Individual donations have also been solicited and received for temporary housing in hotels/motels and for gift cards for food (e.g., Publix, etc.). Regardless, as the NSFRC Manager noted, it is "heartbreaking when you have to turn [families] away" because "...we don't have exactly what they need."

...NorthStar FRC is (as noted by one member and agreed to by others) "...a caring place to be...people here truly care..." Additionally, supports and services are distributed without stigma, and staff are proactive in responding to patron and family needs in a confidential manner.

When the needs of patrons and their family members are medical or mental health related, referrals are typically made. NSFRC has held an annual health fair which brings medical and mental health providers to the neighborhood, providing information sessions and materials. There have been occasions (not a regular practice) when a representative from Meridian Behavioral Healthcare³ has come on site to provide an evaluation of a patron in need that was struggling with mental health issues. When a crisis presents itself onsite, the FRC Manager has worked with Meridian and Wekiva Springs Center⁴ (based in Jacksonville, Florida) to provide same-day assistance. Regardless, a major barrier for patrons receiving adequate medical and mental health care is transportation. Though Meridian does have a mobile response support team that will come on site to stabilize a situation (which NorthStar has used once), there is no public transportation system in Lake City. For those with cars, the cost (including gas costs) of using their car may be prohibitive. However, many people don't have cars or cannot afford them. There has generally been reluctance to provide gas station gift cards among service agencies in the area (including NSFRC) as these cards can be used for other items at the gas station, including alcohol. Alcohol and substance abuse are continued issues of concern within the communities served by NSFRC. One SFSA team member—that serves as a School Board member—highlighted that a large number of students and their families are struggling with a combination of substance abuse and mental health issues, especially those attending Columbia High School. Although engaged with collaborative partners,

³ For more information regarding Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc., please see: <https://www.mbhci.org/>

⁴ For more information regarding Wekiva Springs Center, see: <https://wekivacenter.com/>

many of these needs are not addressed directly by NSFRC but are a source of stress and strain for families served.

Program staff (Dr. Mobley and Ms. Perry) and their families have an established presence and history within the community as residents, leaders, stakeholders, civil servants, and advocates for change. Their knowledge of community resources, level of personal attention to patrons, and caring disposition were highlighted as assets by community ambassadors and collaborative partners on the SFSA Team. Staff are reported as welcoming, engaged, knowledgeable, and responsive in a personable and professional manner to patrons. These attributes reinforce that NorthStar FRC is (as noted by one member and agreed to by others) "...a caring place to be...people here truly care..." Additionally, supports and services are distributed without stigma, and staff are proactive in responding to patron and family needs in a confidential manner. If existing resources at NSFRC cannot address the immediate expressed needs of a visiting patron, staff use knowledge and existing working relationships with representatives of other community organizations to advocate for a patron (and/or their family) and ensure there is a "warm handoff" to that resource. Although booklets and written information regarding other community resources exist, the importance of staff being proactive, responsive, and developing a friendly, supportive relationship with patrons to best assess their needs and refer to the appropriate resource was emphasized as a strength at NSFRC. Following a "warm handoff," patrons are encouraged to reconnect with staff with a report on the outcome of any referral. Further, active efforts to follow up with patrons following a referral are commonly made by staff, as well as reaching out to families (already known to staff) in the community when word-of-mouth suggests they are in need or in crisis.

...staff use knowledge and existing working relationships with representatives of other community organizations to advocate for a patron (and/or their family) and ensure there is a "warm handoff" to that resource...the importance of staff being proactive, responsive, and developing a friendly, supportive relationship with patrons to best assess their needs and refer to the appropriate resource was emphasized as a strength at NSFRC.

Collaborative partners on the SFSA team corroborated the quality of "warm handoffs" and relationships built by and with NSFRC staff. One member, a Hope Navigator from the Florida Department of Children and Families, spoke of how the quality of the collaborative relationship with staff and the identification of need of neighborhood families has led to an exploration of efforts to set up a satellite office at NSFRC as (it was noted) "...this is where the action is, right here." Such an endeavor would allow NSFRC to provide immediate/timely resources and supports to families in crisis with emergency needs, with Hope Florida⁵ working to provide more long-term planning to aid families.

⁵ Hope Florida — A Pathway to Prosperity is a recent program developed by the Florida Department of Children and Families meant to provide individualized assistance (via advocacy, strategic planning, and goal-focused initiatives/action) to individuals and families in need in an effort to promote a "...path to prosperity, economic self-sufficiency and hope by focusing on community collaboration between the private sector, faith-based community, nonprofits and government entities to break

The characterization of the NSFRC as a “caring” and “safe” place to be, was reinforced by statements of one community ambassador that spoke affectionately (at one point with tears in their eyes) of how helpful the resources and staff have been for them and their family, including their son with special needs. The community ambassador noted that should they meet another person in the neighborhood or broader community that is in a position like themselves, they “gives them the contact information for NorthStar.” Here, the friendliness and empathetic disposition of staff are seen as foundations to the development of relationships that are supportive of families.

...consensus exists that support and activities are implemented with clear fidelity to the CSSP model as such relates to how: parents are encouraged to turn to staff in the event of a crisis, staff proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress, and staff and the program support families experiencing extreme difficulties or crises.

Given the above observations by the SFSA team, there was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports/activities, and actions are implemented with fidelity at NSFRC:

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.

down traditional community silos, in an effort to maximize resources and uncover opportunities.” See <https://www.myflfamilies.com/APathwaytoProsperity/> for more details.

- If the family wants assistance, staff members, including supervisors or a staff team, work with the family to help them manage the crisis.
- The program has resources for family assistance, such as diapers, transportation, a safe sleeping environment or even emergency funds.
- The program has flexible hours of operation to accommodate families outside of regular business hours.
- 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.

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

There were no identified areas of potential focus/improvement warranting an action item related to items associated with this assessment question.

How Does NorthStar Family Resource Center Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community?

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

What NSFRC Does Well to Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community.

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.

Collectively, the team agreed that staff at NSFRC are proactive in responding to patrons and their families in times of stress and resourceful in their efforts to connect patrons to other community supports that can provide specific services. Efforts at providing information about and linking patrons to existing resources and concrete supports within the community (in addition to supports offered at NSFRC) were praised by the team and reflected in the agreement with the following items:

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.

Information regarding access to concrete supports in the community is frequently requested of NSFRC staff and of its collaborative partners and, as findings from the assessment suggest, NSFRC staff are effective in their efforts to provide support and facilitate connections with resources for patrons and their families to meet these needs. These supports are augmented by efforts of the Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency (with the Florida Department of Children and Families), where the local representative (and member of the SFSA team), Ms. Stephanie Harden, is working on the development of an expanded list of services—and networking with individuals and organizations to enhance these services—including concrete supports like food and transportation.

Although the assessment rated NSFRC highly on the above indicators, team members engaged in an expanded discussion on housing and shelter needs for individuals and families in the neighborhoods served by NSFRC and broader Lake City and Columbia County. Unlike larger regional cities (e.g., Jacksonville and Gainesville) Lake City doesn't have any homeless shelters despite current housing and homeless population needs. One team member noted "...Columbia County doesn't want homeless shelters here..." highlighting a historical perspective within the community that frowns upon the establishment of a permanent homeless/housing shelter for individuals and families. There are select financial supports for obtaining low-income and/or emergency temporary shelter (in rental

apartments/properties and at hotels/motels) provided by (for example) the United Way of Suwannee Valley and the Partnership for Strong Families (for families with children only). These supports were praised by the team but are not seen as having a sustained/lasting impact as housing and rent prices have become excessively high for those with limited to no income. A member highlighted knowledge of local apartments exceeding \$1,500 a month, with requirements for first and last month payment and security deposits amounting to almost \$6,000 in costs prior to moving in. Sharp increases in rent are a by-product, in part, of limited to no rent control provisions. Another member noted that “...Columbia [County] is a very political place and there is a network of people trying to minimize these things as a problem.” Yet, there are families that “have been thrown in the street because of things that are outside of their control. Their rent went from \$800 to \$1700. That's a problem.”

The current rental market is not affordable for many working and low-income families that “...are just trying to make ends meet.” With limited low-income housing options, no homeless shelters, and up to a two-year waitlist for low-income housing, housing circumstances are a major source of stress for families in the area served by NSFRC. Circumstances are dire for some homeless families; increasing their risk of being separated. The NSFRC Manager recounted a situation where a grandmother (that he was attempting to support through NSFRC) who was the primary caregiver of her grandchildren eventually decided to place her grandchildren in care while she remained homeless and slept outside. Sometimes homeless parents with children in care, it was reported, may be receiving differential treatment from local community programs and supports due to different definitions of homelessness embraced by separate organizations. For example, the difficulties of a pregnant young mother of two children (in care) were highlighted as short-term emergency housing, and housing deposit supports from select programs were difficult to obtain because she was temporarily residing in a hotel/motel and not considered homeless by those organizations from which concrete supports were being solicited. NSFRC staff worked with local faith organizations to close the gap and provide emergency financial assistance while she was waiting to get into a housing program. She was able to maintain her housing in the hotel and has since moved into a stable rent situation. One member, Mr. Pope, used to work in a local detention center. He recounted how some homeless individuals would intentionally get arrested so they could get in shelter and have food. Although on cold nights dropping below 35 degrees, Lake City has a “cold night shelter,” hosted by Parkview Baptist Church⁶, it continues to resist funding a permanent shelter and has taken efforts to clear out any encampments, especially those within public view or near public and/or shopping areas.

With limited low-income housing options, no homeless shelters, and up to a two-year waitlist for low-income housing, housing circumstances are a major source of stress for families in the area served by NSFRC. Circumstances are dire for some homeless families; increasing their risk of being separated.

The staff at NSFRC have connected patrons to community resources and advocated on their behalf for many of the above identified needs (including housing, etc.). Should patrons have children, these efforts

⁶ Learn more about Parkview Baptist Church at: <http://www.pbclc.com/>

are complimented by a collaborative relationship (as denoted above) with representatives from the DCF Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency. As suggested above, these efforts may not always result in an adequate provision of resources to address select concrete support needs. The lack of community supports can be tragic for some, especially homeless populations dealing with other issues. For example, staff report how NSFRC was a daily refuge for a young woman that was homeless. She visited NSFRC (and the Richardson Community Center on the same property) multiple times a week, would rest in a chair or computer station and request snacks and food during the day, but reportedly slept outside in the evenings due to the lack of a local shelter. Sadly, she died one evening of a reported drug overdose while outdoors near the NSFRC. This death, and stress brought on to others due to housing and homelessness problems, are seen as preventable. Team members highlighted that there are many vacant buildings and properties that could be repurposed for low-income and homeless families and/or a shelter. Some team members have investigated these options with community leaders and officials with limited success; although one member has recently explored, with local clergy, the idea of buying vacant land for the location of tiny houses to address low-income housing needs. These observations led, in part, to suggestions of potential areas of action for which NSFRC could serve a role (see below, Action Item #2).

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Provide Information and Connections to Services in the Community.

Although there were no identified areas of disagreement to NSFRC's current efforts to address this assessment question there was a broader discussion of ongoing community needs. This discussion included the impact of available resources on NSFRC's ability to respond directly to those needs, especially for food insecurity among households served. Food insecurity has reportedly been, and continues to be, an issue of concern for many families within the neighborhoods served by NSFRC. Although NSFRC has made efforts to address this need (see below) with collaborative partners, they do not yet have, but are wanting to install a food pantry. Food requests are common among patrons, especially following the peak impact of COVID-19 upon the community. By way of explanation, it was reported that the availability of COVID-19 relief funds allowed several groups (including local churches, etc.) to provide food distribution to needy families. With the reduction of relief funds, these organizations have ceased food assistance efforts.

Food insecurity reportedly has been, and continues to be, an issue of concern for many families within the neighborhoods served by NSFRC.

With limited resources to address these needs, NSFRC has made efforts to partner with other community resources to address food insecurity. In 2021 food was not a prominent concrete support service, serving only 13 individuals directly because food supports relied on sporadic donations. In February 2022 NSFRC secured support from Panera Bread (a restaurant) that provides day old bread and

pastries every Tuesday to patrons. Since the start of this program, there have been 2071 uses of this service. Further, the NSFRC Manager has engaged in discussions with Catholic Charities and Farm Share⁷ about setting up a regular distribution of food to families through NSFRC. However, Farm Share does not travel to Lake City, so food would need to be picked up in Jacksonville (approximately 60 miles away) and delivered to NSFRC in Lake City. The food bank used by the three Gainesville FRCs (in Alachua County) does not serve Lake City (Columbia County). The FRC Manager has also reached out to local farmers that have allowed NorthStar staff, volunteers, and local youth (engaged with NSFRCs Youth Advisory Council activities) to visit their farms to collect (for distribution to local households) residual food/produce not sold/used by the farm. One major barrier impacting the likelihood of formal food distribution activities is the lack of space to store food, including no refrigerator to hold select perishable items. The Richardson Community Center (located physically next to NSFRC) has a refrigerator and a cafeteria area but NSFRC doesn't use this area because Richardson Community Center rents out the space for events, and it could cause confusion with those who paid to use the space. The Northside Church of Christ (a local congregation located less than a mile from NSFRC) has indicated a willingness to share refrigerator space for NSFRC functions/events. If daily food distribution is not feasible, the FRC Manager thinks (and team members agree) a specific day for food distribution in the week is important for families served by NSFRC. Should efforts at NSFRC mirror existing food distribution activities at the Gainesville FRCs, a partnership with a food bank needs to be established. At other FRCs food is delivered on pre-determined days, patrons sign up in advance (knowing the scheduled distribution days) to receive food at a designated day and time. A large number of volunteers are needed to separate, organize, and pack food (a 3-to-4-hour task) for distribution to patrons and their families. The above noted discussion led to the development of this recommended action item:

Action Item #1: Continue efforts at securing an on-site food pantry at NSFRC and explore the feasibility of facilitating regular food distribution to families while ensuring there is support (community, food, volunteers, etc.) to implement food distribution in an efficient manner.

Although there were favorable ratings provided to NSFRC with respect to items associated with the provision of concrete supports in times of need—given the quality and level of connections made and advocacy engaged in on behalf of patrons—there was collective concern about the level of community response and advocacy to select individuals and families most in need (see previous section). One member highlighted that “...Columbia County is a community of people of faith, but that faith is not always demonstrated...”; adding, “...people want to stay in their corners and believe everything is okay.” Team members shared they felt “people in Lake City don’t want to acknowledge there is a [homelessness and housing] problem and don’t want a shelter.” Members thought that the community context was such that nothing would happen unless these issues received significant media attention

⁷ Farm Share is a food bank based in Jacksonville (approximately 60 miles from Lake City in Duval County) that works with Florida farms to distribute fresh and non-perishable food to individuals and families in need. For more information regarding Farm Share, see: <https://www.farmshare.org/>

along with a response/support from state representatives. These discussions led to the following action item:

Action Item #2: NorthStar FRC will be more proactive at a community level; perhaps sponsoring/coordinating an event to bring partners together (in a positive and constructive manner) to address the unmet needs of individuals and families adversely impacted by the lack of affordable housing and homelessness issues.

How Does NorthStar Family 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 NSFRC helps families to develop skills they need to identify their needs and connect to supports. Agreement existed for 11 of 11 questions (100%), suggesting that staff do a good job helping parents to identify and mobilize their own resources to address their families' needs and supporting family leadership when they make referrals to outside services. There was no question which any team member disagreed with.

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

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.
- Connecting parents to peer-to-peer navigation support

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).

- 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.
- Making a personal connection between families and service providers (if families have agreed to share information through written consent).

The responsiveness and the caring, committed attitude of staff and volunteers was highlighted as a contributing factor to the favorable ratings by the SFSA Team on all the topics and questions identified above. Although there are a limited number of paid staff, these staff and the regular committed volunteers at NSFRC have deep ties to the local community and are committed to a perspective that supports and strengthens local families. Community events, resources permitting, are a preferred method/means of bringing people together to address issues and promote collective advocacy. One example included the *Remembering Richardson High School: A Historical Dedication* event on February 26, 2022. Richardson High School used to be located on the property that the NSFRC and Richardson Community Center are located on. The event was a “...celebration of Richardson High School's official designation as a place of deep social and educational meaning in the African American community in Columbia County, Florida” (Lake City Chamber of Commerce, 2022). The event included a ceremonial unveiling of a new monument (as a State of Florida historical site), as well as music, visual storytelling, tributes to classmates and teachers, historical reflections, slide show presentations, and food trucks (Chase, 2022). It was a well-attended event that brought together residents (individuals, parents, families, and alumni of Richardson High School), community stakeholders and leaders, and collaborative partners. This celebration was seen as a positive experience for all that attended, receiving local news coverage. The NSFRC assisted in the organization and facilitation of the event, had informational resources available to all who attended, and provided additional supports as needed. This, and other community events are held to engage families within the community to reinforce NSFRC as a support that promotes cohesion within the community by enhancing familiarity and trust among community members.

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

As discussed above, NSFRC was rated highly in its efforts and ability to help families develop skills needed to connect to supports within the community and identify needs. The team highlighted, however, that there is a need to build upon NSFRC strengths and focus on community-based change, first by building trusting relationships and collaborations with and between parents and community partners. It was thought that more formal efforts at community-based advocacy could be done that support families and family leadership. It was emphasized that there was a need for advocacy, a “...need to be a voice for change in a positive way.” The team agreed and highlighted the value of focusing such efforts on the issue of homelessness and lack of low-income housing within the community served. Given that, it was reported that the United Way Homeless Coalition and the DCF Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency are other organizations interested in these issues, and subsequently a possible collaboration with these organizations was suggested. Toward this end, the following action item was recommended:

Action Item #3: NSFRC will explore a possible collaboration with the United Way Homeless Coalition and the Florida Department of Children and Families to develop a formal strategy (including short- and long-term plans) for addressing the lack of affordable housing and homelessness issues impacting families in Columbia County.

This collaboration or “task force” could examine factors contributing to the housing problem, including potential impact of gentrification, and lack of resources and supports to assist people with fixing/improving residences and neighborhoods. In the past, the NSFRC Manager served as the chair of a housing committee in Jacksonville, Florida. He has some experience working with these issues and suggested that NSFRC help organize a housing summit for Columbia County (perhaps as an activity linked to Action Item #3). It was suggested that youth who are part of the Youth Leadership Council, developed through the Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families Grant, be involved in these initiatives (associated with Action Item #3) as they have shown a past interest in advocacy work for the community.

...there is a need to build upon NSFRC strengths and focus on community-based change, first by building trusting relationships and collaborations with and between parents and community partners...more formal efforts at community-based advocacy could be done that supported families and family leadership in said efforts.

In addition to issues related to the lack of affordable housing, NSFRC staff and some team members highlighted that an area for improvement or focus of future services and supports should address enhancing computer and technology skills of select patrons, especially seniors. It was reported that there are many patrons who make use of the computers/workstations at the NSFRC (there are 10 computers/laptops patrons can use) that may require assistance in navigating resources online. To promote self-sufficiency in these areas, it was suggested that the provision of technology classes including basic computer and phone usage classes would be a good asset for NSFRC. These efforts could be done in collaboration with the Columbia County Public Library (for which a team member, Katrina Evans, is a representative) as they already have an established curriculum for computer basics, internet browsing, and Microsoft Office software. In the past, the local police department has done community presentations on internet safety, security, and avoiding online scams. Similar presentations for participants in any technology classes at NSFRC would be a benefit. These considerations led to the following action item:

Action Item #4: NSFRC will explore, in collaboration with the Columbia County Public Library, the possibility of implementing computer and technology classes on site.

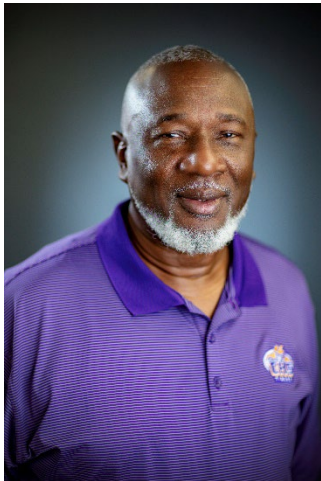
Fidelity of Concrete Support in Times of Need Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

The SFSA Team identified the weighted average Team score as the consensus measure for each question associated with the concrete support in times of need assessment topics. 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) 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 39 (of a possible score of 39) or 100%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Concrete Support in Times of Need Protective Factor were implemented with high fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.**

...the services and supports associated with the Concrete Support in Times of Need Protective Factor were implemented with high fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

The NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

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



Allen Pope Sr. has visited NorthStar 183 times since first coming in September 2021; much of this time includes regular attendance for the community walk. Allen has also helped with several community events hosted by NorthStar. He has lived in Columbia County since 1973 and graduated from Columbia High before joining the Army. Allen was in the service for three years as a Cannon Crewman then worked at Carlon PVC Pipe Co. He has experience with General Electric as a military policeman in Ocala, FL and as a correctional officer. Allen has been a volunteer coach in Columbia County for 18 years and volunteers at his church, New Bethel AME, in several capacities. Allen is a husband of 22 years to Beverly Pope and father of four biological children and three adopted children. The Popes have fostered over 15 children and provided respite care to other foster families. Mr. Pope shares that he loves the caring and inviting

atmosphere at NorthStar. He is glad that the SFSA team has identified many issues that are lacking in the community and the need for them to be addressed.



Bonnie O'Neal has been coming to NorthStar Family Resource Center since August 2021 as a patron to access services for herself and her family. She was raised in Kissimmee, FL and eventually moved to Lake City, FL in 2019 from Ocala, FL. Bonnie received her Associate of Science degree at Florida Metropolitan University and started schooling to become a medical assistant. Unfortunately, she had to leave the program early to be a caretaker for sick family members. Bonnie is a wife of 28 years to her husband Byron, is a mom to a son and daughter, and loves spending time with her family. She loves everything about NorthStar and was happy to join the SFSA team to be involved and share her experiences.



Keaven Jones is originally from White Springs, FL but has been a part of the Lake City community for 39 years and first started to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in May of 2021 as a patron. Keaven works for Career Source Florida Crown as a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supervisor. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market. WIOA also matches employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. While he and his two boys are not helping with his mother's yard beautification projects, he is spending time with them and his nieces and nephews at local parks and playgrounds. Keaven loves opportunities that Northstar provides and the support they provide to all cultures. He shares that he "was inspired by the staff and volunteers that I have encountered while attending the community center" and that "kids that I have met while visiting help to remind me why the future looks so bright."



Dr. Philip Mobley is the NorthStar Family Resource Center Manager and the Senior Minister of the Northside Church of Christ, located in Lake City, FL. He was raised in Lake City but lived for many years in Jacksonville, FL developing his personal and professional skills. Phil received his Doctoral Degree in Education Leadership from the University of North Florida in 2019, his MBA from Jacksonville University in 2002, and a Bachelor's degree from the University of North Florida in 1975. Dr. Mobley served as a Board Member of the Suwanee Valley United Way and the Community Advisory Board for the Columbia/Hamilton County Health Department. He is currently a member of the Richardson Community Center Advisory Board. Phil is a husband of over 48 years to Lotonia (Toni). They have two children, seven grandsons, and two granddaughters. Phil loves that NorthStar provides services and resources to families to help prevent or resolve crises and develop strategies to strengthen families. Dr. Mobley shared that he enjoyed hearing everyone's perspective through the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment meetings.



Narragansett "Narrie" Smith, sister of Phil Mobley, has been a longtime patron, supporter, and volunteer of the NorthStar Family Resource Center. She has lived all her life in Lake City, FL. Narrie has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of North Florida and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Nova University. After 23 years as a teacher, Narrie became the Principal of Niblack Elementary school, raising their school score from an F to an A. Narrie has served as the Assistant Superintendent of the Columbia County School District and currently sits on the Columbia County School Board. She is a minister and director of Christian Education at New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. She spends her time volunteering at NorthStar, with Columbia County Schools, and being with family. Narrie is a wife of 47 years to Johnny Smith, mother to two daughters, and proud grandmother of 6. She loves working with children and models her life around serving God and His people. Narrie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because it identified areas to grow and improve as a Family Resource Center.



Ms. Patricia A. Perry has been the Administrative Assistant at NorthStar Family Resource Center since before the doors opened to the public in March 2021. She was born and raised in Lake City, FL and has spent much of her life there. Patricia graduated from Columbia High School in 1974 and attended Florida A&M University in Tallahassee and Seattle Central College in Seattle, WA. Starting as a file clerk and working her way up through the Columbia County Clerk of Courts for 30 years, she retired as the Chief Deputy Clerk. Patricia is a wife of 35 years to Nathan Perry Jr. and mother to Joshua Perry. Her church family is a major part of her life, she has been a member of New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church since 1969. Patricia loves that NorthStar makes efforts to help the community in any way possible. She hopes her varied experience and familiarity with the people of Lake City will be a benefit to the community.



Katrina P. Evans, Director of the Columbia County Public Library, has supported the NorthStar Family Resource Center and been a member of the Lake City Resource Center Advisory Council since its inception. She grew up in Lake Placid, FL but has lived in Lake City for more than 25 years. Ms. Evans has a master's degree in Library and Information Studies from Florida State University and a bachelor's degree in literature and history from the University of North Florida. She began her career at the historic Walton-DeFuniak Library and was later hired at Columbia County Public library in 1997. After 19 years of service as Outreach and Youth Services Librarian and Assistant Director, Ms. Evans became the library director in 2016. She has served on the Board of the Northeast Florida Library Information Network and has volunteered in various capacities with the Florida Library Association and Edward Rutledge Chapter, NSDAR. Ms.

Evans has served on local school advisory committees and volunteers with her church. Her husband, Kevin, is a school media specialist at a local elementary school and they have two sons, Drew and Rhys. Katrina joined the SFSA team to learn about local resources that she can take back and share with library staff and patrons. She loves that NorthStar is providing a "one-stop-shop" to our community where people can get assistance with a variety of needs. She shares, "I love that this need is now being met so compassionately by NorthStar Family Resource Center and its amazing staff."



Stephanie Harden began to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in January of 2021. Stephanie is a native of Philadelphia, PA, but she has lived in Florida for the last thirteen years, she began working in Lake City last year through a promotion to Hope Navigator II with the Department of Children and Families. Stephanie is working on her master's degree in Strategic Business from Northcentral University and plans to get her doctorate in Theology. She has 30 years of teaching background and over 20 years of customer service experience, along with over 20 years of Ministerial Leadership and Counseling, that she applies to assisting families in need. Stephanie is the business owner/CEO of Loving Arms Services and serves on several boards including the Partnership for Strong Families Children's Partnership Counsel. Stephanie is a wife of 20 years to Pastor Troy Harden, mother of 10 children (blended family), and a grandmother of

17 beautiful grandchildren. In addition to spending time with her family, she reads, loves to thrift store shop, and is completing her first book. Stephanie loves that NorthStar is in a central part of Lake City that needs resources and is working to create a service provision agreement to open a Hope Florida Navigator satellite station at the Family Resource Center. Stephanie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because there were several wonderful action items to work on. With years of experience in various resource centers Stephanie appreciates the compassion and family atmosphere shown at NorthStar.

Although not formally members of the NSFRC SFSA Team, Dr. Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator) and Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator) attended each of the NSFRC SFSA Team meetings. They, and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended these meetings as well, 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 NSFRC. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the NSFRC, and a principal on-site contact for team members. Ms. Lancaster 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 NSFRC.

Suggested Citation:

Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2023). *Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need at the NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC)*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

References

- Browne, C.H. (2014). *The Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework: Branching Out and Reaching Deeper*. Washington, D.C.: The Center for the Study of Social Policy.
- Chase, K. (2022) *Alumni at an old historic high school in Lake City reunited for a special dedication*. WCJB.com. <https://www.wcjb.com/2022/02/27/alumni-an-old-historic-high-school-lake-city-reunited-special-dedication/>
- 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/>
- Lake City Chamber of Commerce (2022). *Remembering Richardson High School: A Historic Dedication*. <https://web.lakecitychamber.com/events/Remembering-Richardson-High-School-A-Historic-Dedication-5706/details>
- Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2022). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.
- 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.



Supporting Families by
Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
at NorthStar Family Resource Center

Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator), Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Katrina Evans, Stephanie Harden, Keaven Jones, Philip Mobley, Bonnie O'Neal, Allen Pope, Narrie Smith, Patricia Perry, and Toni Spoliansky (NSFRC SFSA Team support)

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 NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) 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 NSFRC are structured 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 (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on NSFRC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting the knowledge of parenting and child development.

NorthStar Family 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 FRC 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. With the assistance of funding from the Children's Bureau Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families grant, Partnership for Strong Families opened their newest FRC serving the Greater Lake City area in March 2021. NSFRC is co-located on the campus of the Richardson Community Center in the Fergusson Building and is one of five FRCs operated by PSF in Alachua and Columbia counties 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

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the NorthStar Family Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2023). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's and Lake City's most in need populations.

The NSFRC 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 FRC 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, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities) referred to as Community Ambassadors. 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 NSFRC SFSA Team.

The NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Katrina Evans – Columbia County Public Library
Stephanie Harden – Florida Department of Child and Families
Keaven Jones – Community Ambassador/Collaborative Partner
Dr. Philip Mobley – NSFRC Manager
Bonnie O'Neal – Community Ambassador
Allen Pope – Community Ambassador
Patricia Perry – NSFRC Staff
Narrie Smith – NSFRC Volunteer

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 promoting 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

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/>

Framework, its relationship to the NSFRC service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their surveys, the data was 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 for each topic and question (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 orientation meeting of the NSFRC SFSA Team took place on October 6, 2022, and three meetings followed through December. The team meeting that involved the discussion of Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development questions took place on December 5, 2022.

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

It is important to note, that although findings summarized in this report are informative and provide insights, discussions on these results were limited in comparison to the other protective factors discussed in the SFSA process. The reason for this is twofold. SFSA Team members highlighted that many of the positive scores on these questions paralleled comments related to other protective factors, primarily promoting parent and family resilience, and promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of children. Additionally, due to limited resources and early service and support priorities, NSFRC does not yet directly provide parenting supports such as parenting education classes and support groups, parent counselling, and/or child development classes that are discussed in these topics. According to NSFRCs 2021 Profile of Services and Supports report, “There were only two reported services/supports linked to promote parenting and child development in 2021; these included the provision of information and referrals to parenting classes within the community” (Perry et al., 2022c).

How Does NSFRC Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children?

There is a consensus of agreement (reaching an average threshold score of 4.0 or higher) with 7 of the 14 questions (50%) that NSFRC models developmentally appropriate interactions with children, with 7 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range.

As discussed earlier in other reports (Perry et al., 2022a; 2022b; Lancaster et al., 2022) the SFSA team perceives the skills and competencies of staff and volunteers to be exemplary when interacting with parents and children. Staff “...are committed in their work to support parents and enhance the well-being of families...” while “...building a sense of trust with... the development of mutually respectful relationships.” (Lancaster et al., 2022). As noted in Perry et al. (2022b), “...staff at NSFRC are caring, engaged and responsive to parents and families in times of distress and crisis.” There is frequent engagement with parents/caregivers to “...discuss family circumstances and child/youth developmental issues of importance to enhance a child’s life, school success and social and emotional development while providing parents/caregivers with needed support to meet their child’s needs...” where staff “...serve as role models for children and parent/caregivers...through interactions with children and in dialog with parents/caregivers about appropriate behavioral expectations for children (and with respect to parenting) that are developmentally appropriate.” (Perry et al., 2022a).

What NSFRC Does Well to Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children

The caring approach to providing knowledge of parenting and child development was a great help to one couple in their 80s who adopted their 9-year-old great grandsons. Staff and volunteers were able to sit down with the parents one-on-one and share modern parenting techniques, viewpoints, and manage expectations. They were receptive to these engagements, and it appears that the relationship with the boys and their parents have strengthened after becoming involved with the center. Incidentally, this family attends the same church as Narragansett Smith, a NSFRC volunteer who often brings her two grandchildren when helping with Homework Help. Though the children are normally required to sit near their caregivers, Ms. Smith shared that the parents were “delighted as a matter of fact” that the youth could sit together at church. In sum, with the establishment of trust, this family benefited from services and supports at NSFRC and gained knowledge of parenting through a gentle one-on-one approach.

“...the parents were ‘delighted as a matter of fact’ that the youth could sit together at church. They had built up trust in community members found through NSFRC and gained knowledge of parenting through a gentle one-on-one approach.”

Homework Help at NSFRC is open to children from 1st to 8th grade between 2:45 PM and 4:45 PM Monday through Thursday. The children are provided a snack and spend the time doing their homework, receiving assistance as needed. Often during the same hours, individual tutoring is provided to middle and high school students as well as those studying to pass various educational exams. Many staff and volunteers have an abundance of experience working with children, youth, and families within the community. Though Homework Help falls under the Social and Emotional Competence of Children protective factor it allows frequent opportunities for NSFRC staff to touch base with parents. These connections strengthen relationships with staff and provide openings to discuss and model appropriate interactions with children.

The SFSA team agreed that the following actions and attributes were present for staff in their work with parents and children seeking services and supports at NSFRC:

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 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.

When staff talk with parents about discipline, they:

- Encourage parents to discuss behavior challenges they may have at home.
- Connect parents to other parents who can share or model positive parenting approaches.
- Recognize different parental and cultural approaches to discipline and discuss them with parents.
- Make arrangements to have appropriate language and cultural interpreters to support difficult conversations with families.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Model Developmentally Appropriate Interactions with Children

It is important to note the lack of consensus agreement for 7 of the 14 questions perceived by SFSA team members to be a by-product of a few factors. These include, but are not limited to, limited formal activities and supports related to these topics that would allow for modeling of developmentally appropriate interactions with children and limited knowledge by individual team members on staff practices. The lack of consensus agreement for some questions could signal a need for providing additional training and professional development opportunities for staff related to parenting and child development topics. Regardless, there was general consensus (from direct observations, as well as knowledge and experiences working with staff) that key staff and volunteers model developmentally appropriate interactions with children.

How Does NSFRC Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development?

There was a consensus of agreement for only 3 of the 30 questions focused on how NSFRC provides information and resources on parenting and child development, with 27 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range.

The lack of consensus agreement with 90% of the assessment questions addressing these topics, it was asserted, related to the fact that many members did not think these questions had applicability for NSFRC, especially the abundance of questions related to parenting education classes. Parenting education classes, including efforts focused at disseminating information on child development issues, is not a primary focus at NSFRC for reasons documented earlier in this report. When specific parenting and child development needs are identified by staff, efforts are made to provide a warm hand-off, connecting caregivers with community service providers.

Regardless, as was identified by other FRC SFSA teams (see, for example, David-John et al., 2021) the NSFRC SFSA team perceived the concept of parenting classes as stigmatizing for those seeking support from FRCs. There was general agreement, should resources exist, to enhance supports related to this protective factor in a manner that is non-stigmatizing, informal, supportive, and informative. FRC staff, volunteers, and community ambassadors agreed that many parents need supports to better address the developmental needs of their children. Although individual one-on-one support and advice is provided to select parents on these issues, staff highlighted that there are many parents who are seeking other

services, such as concrete supports or homework help, who may need parental assistance. These parents could potentially benefit from developing foundational knowledge on child safety, child development, cleanliness/hygiene, parenting, parent-child relationship roles, setting boundaries, and discipline related issues. In terms of parenting and relationship roles, staff and collaborative partners highlighted a series of observations and examples of parents' difficulties managing their child(ren)'s behavior, reinforcing undesired behaviors, being unaware of potential safety hazards their children may be exposed to, and inappropriate developmental interactions with their children (e.g., parents that are "...trying to be the kids' friends instead of being the parent"). Many parents may have had poor parental role models and/or are young themselves with inadequate or non-existent familial and community supports. Alternatively, it was noted that there are numerous grandparents and great grandparents that are raising their children's or grandchildren's children within the community that need support in managing the developmental needs of children given unique generational issues and demands.

Team members collectively asserted that there is a need for enhancing knowledge of parenting and child development for many parents (and grandparents) in the community served by NSFRC. However, there was consensus that such should not be done via the use of formal parenting classes. Following a description of select alternative means, the team suggested that a more informal or supportive situation/activities, like Parenting Cafés, would be best to consider. Parent Cafés provide a safe, non-judgmental opportunity for parents and caregivers to build their protective factors while engaging in conversations about what it means to keep their children safe and families strong, while also building parent leadership.³

What NSFRC Does Well to Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development?

There was agreement on three questions that covered the topic of NSFRC providing information and resources on parenting and child development. These are:

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

- Staff exhibit warmth, genuineness, flexibility, empathy, and good communication skills with families.
- Transportation, food or other supports are provided as appropriate to enable parents to participate.

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

- Regular postings on bulletin boards in public spaces.

³ Learn more about Parent Cafés by reviewing *Using Café Conversations to Build Protective Factors and Parent Leadership* at <https://cssp.org/resource/cafe-overview-2015/>

Although some of these questions are related to questions associated with parenting classes, team members reflected that their ratings of these items were associated with a general assessment of staff in their interactions with patrons, including parents and children.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Provide Information and Resources on Parenting and Child Development?

Again, the lack of consensus agreement is primarily a byproduct of the fact that many of the listed resources and supports are not yet offered at NSFRC. However, SFSA team members see the value (and need) for relaying parenting and child development information to parents through alternative means/methods that are less stigmatizing and more empowering when compared to formal parenting classes. Toward this end, the team suggested some exploration of potential efforts of engagement of parents in a manner that is:

- Less focused on lecturing formats for disseminating information.
- More focused on promoting open discussions.
- Perceived as non-threatening, supportive and strength based.
- Possibly utilizes or integrates peer mentoring opportunities.
- Uses small informal groups where parents can “...sit and talk with each other starting out just by sharing how they handle different situations...”
- Perceived as a social activity (e.g., have food, etc.) with an initial goal of promoting a level of comfort and support among and between parents, building relationships and increasing parenting skills.
- Focused on topics of primary interest to parents (i.e., “...parent-based discussions”), with practical significance (e.g., how to advocate for their kids in schools and for themselves); perhaps utilizing speakers from the community for select topics.

There was some discussion and support for exploring how Parent Cafés and other parent support group models can be utilized to respond to the above noted suggestions. Toward this end, there were statements of support for exploring resources that might already exist in the community that can be integrated into NSFRC activities and/or additional staff resources (including training of current and future staff, as well as collaborative partners that may facilitate these groups) needed to implement any such initiatives leading to the following action item:

Action Item #1: NorthStar FRC will explore the possibility of developing and integrating the use of informal parenting cafes as a support for parents and for enhancement of their child development and parenting knowledge and skill set.

How Does NSFRC Encourage Parents to Observe, Ask Questions, Explore Parenting Issues and Try Out New Strategies?

Similar to the other questions discussed with this protective factor there is little agreement with only 2 of the 14 questions agreeing that NSFRC encourages parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues, and try out new strategies. The remaining 12 questions fall within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range.

What NSFRC Does Well to encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies.

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

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies.

Again, there was limited consensus agreement for the majority of assessment questions discussed on this topic as many of the highlighted supports and activities are not yet offered at NSFRC.

Reflection by team members on these assessment questions reiterated thoughts and recommendations denoted earlier, especially on the need to engage parents in an informal and supportive manner. Staff suggested that there were enough parents wanting to improve their parenting and child development knowledge and become more effective parents that would warrant the development of services that would allow parents to develop a support network and explore parenting issues and try new parenting strategies. This discussion led to the recommended action item:

Action Item #2: NorthStar FRC will explore opportunities and assess the feasibility for securing additional staff and/or other resources (including the training of staff and volunteers) to expand programming that enhances supports for parents related to increasing/promoting knowledge of parenting and child development topics.

It can be said that NSFRC staff strive to observe and ask questions to understand younger generations so they can both assist these youth and help build their connections with their families and communities.

One high school youth receiving tutoring services would arrive once a week wearing pajamas. Although staff were perplexed by this dress, the non-judgmental question “help me understand” was asked to further build upon understanding. The SFSA team spoke of the importance of such a question with new generations and fads that come and go.

There was an expanded discussion on the ways several of the SFSA team members have connected with youth and their parents by establishing trust, identifying commonalities and showing/modeling care in every interaction.

How Does NSFRC Center Address Parenting Issues from a Strength-Based Perspective?

There was also limited agreement on the questions focused on how NSFRC addresses parenting issues from a strength-based perspective. The SFSA team agreed with 5 of the 12 questions, leaving 7 within the Neither Agree nor Disagree range.

What NSFRC Does Well to address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective.

The SFSA team discussed that one way these open-ended discussions take place at NSFRC is in speaking to caregivers about their child’s behavioral issues during Homework Help. Negative behaviors such as rudeness or aggression were seen as opportunities for staff to discuss age-appropriate expectations regarding their children. Dr. Mobley stated, when speaking of conversations he’s had with caregivers about children’s behavioral issues or concerns and the need for consequences, “we try our best to be as fair as we can possibly be with the children.” In this way, staff model appropriate knowledge of parenting and child development for parents involved in the Homework Help program.

The team agreed that staff reinforce positive parent-child interactions by:

- Sharing something positive with parents about their children’s behavior and development.

There was consensus agreement for all items that 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.

“Staff model appropriate knowledge of parenting and child development for parents involved in the Homework Help program”

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective.

There were no identified areas of potential focus/improvement warranting an action item related to items associated with this assessment question.

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

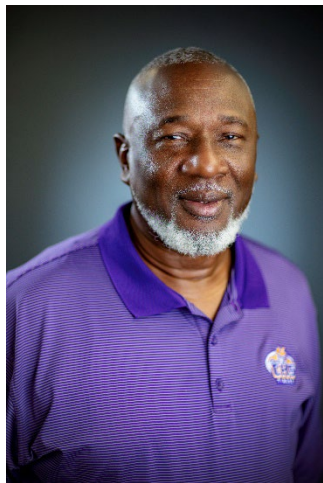
As denoted earlier, the SFSA Team identified the weighted average Team score as the consensus measure for each item associated with the Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development assessment questions. Following the development of a consensus rating, individual item scores were converted—in keeping 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 17 (of a possible score of 70) or 24%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development were implemented with low fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.** As suggested earlier in the report, there are several select itemized services and supports highlighted in the SFSA Tool that the NSFRC does not directly provide. However, NSFRC may use or refer parents/patrons to collaborative partners for more individualized support for parenting and child development needs. Although staff are attentive and responsive to these protective factor needs for individual parents and families, select demands by patrons/parents and resources needs of the NSFRC limit the feasibility and applicability of integrating several of the listed services and supports (especially those that are group-based). These contextual factors adversely impact the fidelity score using the a priori scoring criteria.

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 NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

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



Allen Pope Sr. has visited NorthStar 183 times since first coming in September 2021; much of this time includes regular attendance for the community walk. Allen has also helped with several community events hosted by NorthStar. He has lived in Columbia County since 1973 and graduated from Columbia High before joining the Army. Allen was in the service for three years as a Cannon Crewman then worked at Carlon PVC Pipe Co. He has experience with General Electric as a military policeman in Ocala, FL and as a correctional officer. Allen has been a volunteer coach in Columbia County for 18 years and volunteers at his church, New Bethel AME, in several capacities. Allen is a husband of 22 years to Beverly Pope and father of four biological children and three adopted children. The Popes have fostered over 15 children and provided respite care to other foster families. Mr. Pope shares that he loves the caring and inviting atmosphere at NorthStar. He is glad that the SFSA team has identified many issues that are lacking in the community and the need for them to be addressed.



Bonnie O'Neal has been coming to NorthStar Family Resource Center since August 2021 as a patron to access services for herself and her family. She was raised in Kissimmee, FL and eventually moved to Lake City, FL in 2019 from Ocala, FL. Bonnie received her Associate of Science degree at Florida Metropolitan University and started schooling to become a medical assistant. Unfortunately, she had to leave the program early to be a caretaker for sick family members. Bonnie is a wife of 28 years to her husband Byron, is a mom to a son and daughter, and loves spending time with her family. She loves everything about NorthStar and was happy to join the SFSA team to be involved and share her experiences.



Keaven Jones is originally from White Springs, FL but has been a part of the Lake City community for 39 years and first started to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in May of 2021 as a patron. Keaven works for Career Source Florida Crown as a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supervisor. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market. WIOA also matches employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. While he and his two boys are not helping with his mother's yard beautification projects, he is spending time with them and his nieces and nephews at local parks and playgrounds. Keaven loves opportunities that Northstar provides and the support they provide to all cultures. He shares that he "was inspired by the staff and volunteers that I have encountered while attending the community center" and that "kids that I have met while visiting help to remind me why the future looks so bright."



Dr. Philip Mobley is the NorthStar Family Resource Center Manager and the Senior Minister of the Northside Church of Christ, located in Lake City, FL. He was raised in Lake City but lived for many years in Jacksonville, FL developing his personal and professional skills. Phil received his Doctoral Degree in Education Leadership from the University of North Florida in 2019, his MBA from Jacksonville University in 2002, and a Bachelor's degree from the University of North Florida in 1975. Dr. Mobley served as a Board Member of the Suwanee Valley United Way and the Community Advisory Board for the Columbia/Hamilton County Health Department. He is currently a member of the Richardson Community Center Advisory Board. Phil is a husband of over 48 years to Lotonia (Toni). They have two children, seven grandsons, and two granddaughters. Phil loves that NorthStar provides services and resources to families to help prevent or resolve crises and develop strategies to strengthen families. Dr. Mobley shared that he enjoyed hearing everyone's perspective through the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment meetings.



Narragansett "Narrie" Smith, sister of Phil Mobley, has been a longtime patron, supporter, and volunteer of the NorthStar Family Resource Center. She has lived all her life in Lake City, FL. Narrie has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of North Florida and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Nova University. After 23 years as a teacher, Narrie became the Principal of Niblack Elementary school, raising their school score from an F to an A. Narrie has served as the Assistant Superintendent of the Columbia County School District and currently sits on the Columbia County School Board. She is a minister and director of Christian Education at New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. She spends her time volunteering at NorthStar, with Columbia County Schools, and being with family. Narrie is a wife of 47 years to Johnny Smith, mother to two daughters, and proud grandmother of 6. She loves working with children and models her life around serving God and His people. Narrie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because it identified areas to grow and improve as a Family Resource Center.



Ms. Patricia A. Perry has been the Administrative Assistant at NorthStar Family Resource Center since before the doors opened to the public in March 2021. She was born and raised in Lake City, FL and has spent much of her life there. Patricia graduated from Columbia High School in 1974 and attended Florida A&M University in Tallahassee and Seattle Central College in Seattle, WA. Starting as a file clerk and working her way up through the Columbia County Clerk of Courts for 30 years, she retired as the Chief Deputy Clerk. Patricia is a wife of 35 years to Nathan Perry Jr. and mother to Joshua Perry. Her church family is a major part of her life, she has been a member of New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church since 1969. Patricia loves that NorthStar makes efforts to help the community in any way possible. She hopes her varied experience and familiarity with the people of Lake City will be a benefit to the community.



Katrina P. Evans, Director of the Columbia County Public Library, has supported the NorthStar Family Resource Center and been a member of the Lake City Resource Center Advisory Council since its inception. She grew up in Lake Placid, FL but has lived in Lake City for more than 25 years. Ms. Evans has a master's degree in Library and Information Studies from Florida State University and a bachelor's degree in literature and history from the University of North Florida. She began her career at the historic Walton-DeFuniak Library and was later hired at Columbia County Public library in 1997. After 19 years of service as Outreach and Youth Services Librarian and Assistant Director, Ms. Evans became the library director in 2016. She has served on the Board of the Northeast Florida Library Information Network and has volunteered in various capacities with the Florida Library Association and Edward Rutledge Chapter, NSDAR. Ms.

Evans has served on local school advisory committees and volunteers with her church. Her husband, Kevin, is a school media specialist at a local elementary school and they have two sons, Drew and Rhys. Katrina joined the SFSA team to learn about local resources that she can take back and share with library staff and patrons. She loves that NorthStar is providing a "one-stop-shop" to our community where people can get assistance with a variety of needs. She shares, "I love that this need is now being met so compassionately by NorthStar Family Resource Center and its amazing staff."



Stephanie Harden began to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in January of 2021. Stephanie is a native of Philadelphia, PA, but she has lived in Florida for the last thirteen years, she began working in Lake City last year through a promotion to Hope Navigator II with the Department of Children and Families. Stephanie is working on her master's degree in Strategic Business from Northcentral University and plans to get her doctorate in Theology. She has 30 years of teaching background and over 20 years of customer service experience, along with over 20 years of Ministerial Leadership and Counseling, that she applies to assisting families in need. Stephanie is the business owner/CEO of Loving Arms Services and serves on several boards including the Partnership for Strong Families Children's Partnership Counsel. Stephanie is a wife of 20 years to Pastor Troy Harden, mother of 10 children (blended family), and a grandmother of

17 beautiful grandchildren. In addition to spending time with her family, she reads, loves to thrift store shop, and is completing her first book. Stephanie loves that NorthStar is in a central part of Lake City that needs resources and is working to create a service provision agreement to open a Hope Florida Navigator satellite station at the Family Resource Center. Stephanie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because there were several wonderful action items to work on. With years of experience in various resource centers Stephanie appreciates the compassion and family atmosphere shown at NorthStar.

Although not formally members of the NSFRC SFSA Team, Dr. Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator) and Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator) attended each of the NSFRC SFSA Team meetings. They, and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended these meetings as well, 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 NSFRC. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the NSFRC, and a principal on-site contact for team members. Ms. Lancaster 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 NSFRC.

Suggested Citation: Lancaster, C., Perry, R., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2023). *Supporting Families by Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development at NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC)*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.



Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience at NorthStar Family Resource Center

Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator), Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Katrina Evans, Stephanie Harden, Keaven Jones, Philip Mobley, Bonnie O'Neal, Allen Pope, Narrie Smith, Patricia Perry, and Toni Spoliansky (NSFRC SFSA Team support)

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 findings from, and recommendations developed by the NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) 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 NSFRC 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 (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on NSFRC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting parental resilience to manage stress and function well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.

NorthStar Family 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 FRC 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. With the assistance of funding from the Children's Bureau Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families grant, Partnership for Strong Families opened their newest FRC serving the Greater Lake City area in March 2021. NSFRC is co-located on the campus of the Richardson Community Center in the Fergusson Building and is one of five FRCs operated by PSF in Alachua and Columbia counties 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

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the NorthStar Family Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Lancaster, C., Perry, R., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2022). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) 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.

enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's and Lake City's most in need populations.

The NSFRC 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 FRC 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 the 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, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities) referred to as Community Ambassadors. 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 NSFRC SFSA Team.

The NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Katrina Evans – Columbia County Public Library
Stephanie Harden – Florida Department of Child and Families
Keaven Jones – Community Ambassador/Collaborative Partner
Dr. Philip Mobley – NSFRC Manager
Bonnie O'Neal – Community Ambassador
Allen Pope – Community Ambassador
Patricia Perry – NSFRC Staff
Narrie Smith – NSFRC Volunteer

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 promoting parental resilience there are 22 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

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/>

members received an orientation to the CSSP Protective Factors Framework, its relationship to the NSFRC service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their scores, the data was 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 for each topic and question (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 orientation meeting of the NSFRC SFSA Team took place on October 6, 2022, and three meetings followed through December. The team meeting that involved the discussion of Parental Resilience questions took place on November 7th and 17th, 2022.

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 supports. There were no items/indicators for which there was a disagreement consensus. Currently, the NSFRC does not provide any onsite activities exclusively targeting the promotion of Parental Resilience, though information and referrals are given. Please note that the parental resilience protective factor (as classified by the CSSP process) is referred to as “family functioning/resilience” by the PSF Family Resource Centers. Minimal parental resilience specific services is a by-product of the fact that NSFRC is in its early stage of operation and has initially targeted most resources toward the more immediate needs of families associated with concrete supports and social connections, which represented 58.7% and 21.6% of all service requests in 2021, respectively. In 2021, 2.79% (n=46 of 1,646) of all service requests at NSFRC were identified to focus on the Parental Resilience protective factor. These services were predominantly focused on the provision of individual referrals and linking patrons with collaborative partners on issues associated with job/employment assistance (n=24), health/medical information (n=6), unemployment benefits-assistance (n=4), tutoring for adult (n=3), and GED Classes (n=3) (Perry R. et al., 2022).

What NSFRC Does Well to Demonstrate that Parents are Valued

Although not a primary focus/classification of most service initiatives, attention to promoting the resilience of parents and families and reducing the stress they experience is reportedly integrated into most of the work and engagement with families. Such led to the consensus agreement (reaching an average threshold score of 4.0 or higher) with 19 of the 32 (59%) questions of how NSFRC demonstrates that parents are valued. The team agreed strongly that staff at NorthStar FRC welcoming, affirming, and supportive of families and value their role in their children’s lives including:

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.

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.
- 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.

The team's agreement on these questions is thought to be the result of establishing trust with patrons, families, and the broader community, which it was asserted, is critical for having any impact on and effecting desired change. NSFRC employs key staff and has recruited noteworthy volunteers that have a history and an established presence in the community. Dr. Phil Mobley is a local pastor and community leader in the area and his sister, Narrie Smith—who volunteers regularly at NSFRC—is on the Columbia County School Board and is a Baptist Minister. She also was a past Principal of Niblack Elementary School and served as the Assistant Superintendent of the Columbia County School District. Dr. Mobley and Ms. Smith's father, Lovett "LU" Mobley, was known in the community as a principal at a one-room schoolhouse named Kings Welcome. He was also a Baptist Pastor, and a teacher at Richardson High School³. Ms. Patricia, the office assistant, is known as a trusted resource in the community, as she worked at the Clerk of Court office for 30 years.

“...establishing trust with patrons, families, and the broader community, it was asserted, is critical for having any impact on and effecting desired change.”

The team highlighted the mutually respectful relationships between program staff, volunteers, and patrons. Dr. Philip Mobley, the FRC Manager has worked with many support groups over the years and shared his perspective regarding the importance of creating a safe space where people felt they were listened to and could share what they were going through without stigma, express their emotions (and

³ Richardson High School (no longer operational) has a notable history/legacy within the community. A State of Florida historical marker honoring Richardson High School was dedicated at a formal ceremony on February 26, 2022, in addition to a community celebration entitled “Remembering Richardson High School,” organized by the Richardson High School Roundup Committee and NorthStar Family Resource Center. For more information regarding the historical marker ceremony and community celebration, see Chase, K. (2022). For additional historical information regarding Richardson High School (and other historically Black schools in Florida) see: Clemons, M.O. (2006).

“even cry”) with a trustworthy and supporting professional. He noted that he wants to create this type of “shared space” at NSFRC but acknowledged that there are cultural and practical challenges impacting the scope of services and supports that can be provided. Select team members highlighted that there are limitations or resistance to social change within a rural town (that the majority classified Lake City to be). Ms. Patricia Perry, NorthStar’s administrative assistant and longtime resident, noted that NSFRC “...hasn’t been around long enough...” to make the kind of differences needed in promoting parental resilience. She shared, and many team members agreed, that many desired outcomes associated with this protective factor will be seen only after “...a long period of time” including sustained efforts and accepted integration of the FRC within the community.

Trust is also being built with patrons through respectful and attentive communications with parents and families that receive some resource or support from program staff, volunteers, and collaborative partners. Patrons are greeted upon entry into the FRC and there was agreement that 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.

Reportedly, there is a great interest in building up parental resilience and lessening parental stressors which are often a by-product of dealing with children and environmental stresses. Services at NSFRC linked to the provision of concrete supports in times of need and promoting social connections also aid with parental resilience (Lancaster C. et al. & Perry R. et al., 2022). There was consensus that program staff and volunteers understand the stresses and barriers that parents and families face within the community and are committed in their work to support parents and enhance the well-being of families.

“There was consensus that program staff and volunteers understand the stresses and barriers that parents and families face within the community and are committed in their work to support parents and enhance the well-being of families.”

Program staff spoke at length about how some parents need “parenting support...[and] real help” given stresses associated with dealing with the social, emotional, and behavioral health needs of their children. When these issues are manifested or disclosed to staff, efforts are reportedly made by staff to engage parents in a supportive manner regarding their needs and the needs of their children. Some parents/caregivers seek friendly advice and support from staff to discuss child development and parenting matters and to be linked to the resources in the community. Alternatively, it was reported that challenges exist with efforts made to “...convince some people that they need parenting supports...” when their child is being disruptive, demonstrating poor social skills, and/or engaged in dangerous behavior. It was thought that noteworthy efforts have been made to build a sense of trust with patrons, parents/caregivers, and family members through the development of mutually respectful relationships, listening, and the timely response to identified needs. The timeliness of response and supports is not limited to NSFRC staff. Quality working relationships of program staff with collaborative

partners has been a benefit to patrons. For example, on several occasions patrons have come into NSFRC saying they need employment assistance which resulted in an immediate referral to Keaven Jones—a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supervisor with Career Source Florida Crown (and SFSA Team member)— who responded with “I’m on my way.” These connections between staff and partners with patrons, parents, and families are a good start to building rapport in the community, and a foundation for continuing efforts at building trust in the future.

“...noteworthy efforts have been made to build a sense of trust with patrons, parents/caregivers, and family members through the development of mutually respectful relationships, listening, and the timely response to identified needs.”

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Demonstrate that Parents are Valued

Though team members agreed that there are multiple avenues of regular communication with parents they scored in a range for neither agree nor disagree that staff regularly ask parents about observations of their child.

There was one question (of eight) focusing on mutually respectful relationships with family members that scored in a range of neither agree nor disagree:

- 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.

While many discussions on these sensitive topics reportedly happen on a one-on-one basis with the Family Resource Center manager, one community ambassador shared with the team some ongoing custody struggles with the other parent of their child. The community ambassador noted that “Phil gave advice on not just how to deal with that situation but also how to have certain conversations with [the other parent] and keep the goal of what’s best for our son” as the top priority. Though the community ambassador was frustrated and found it difficult to come to talk to someone about such a sensitive subject, it was commented that “seeing a friendly face on the way in helped [the parent] to keep taking the steps.” Phil not only provided advice but continued to be in conversation with the ambassador/parent and check in on updates to the situation. The community ambassador shared that “it meant the world to me because me being a 39-year-old... and my father has passed, it feels like Phil is one of [my] fathers” who “not only gives me the opportunity to grow but also gives me the direction to make sure the path I’m growing in is one the family can benefit from as well as myself.”

“Seeing a friendly face on the way in helped [the parent] keep taking the steps.”

Many of the questions on how NSFRC demonstrates that parents are valued that had an average team score/rating of neither agree nor disagree focused on fathers and immigrant and limited English speaking households. There are seven (of nine) items related to supports for fathers for which the consensus rating was in a range for neither agree nor disagree. These include:

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/males 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.
- Sharing responsibility for inviting fathers to attend programs and working to engage them in activities.
- Being aware of barriers that limit father involvement, such as a difficult relationship with a child’s mother, lack of information or a non-custodial relationship with the child.

The team spent considerable time discussing these items and the perceived lack of supports within the broader community (and at the FRC) targeting men, or more specifically, fathers. It was suggested that fathers have unique needs and that there are unique challenges connecting with them. Women and mothers are more likely to come to the center. The 2021 service report for NSFRC shows that 29% more women come into the FRC than men to obtain services (Perry R. et al., 2022). While the reason for lower male and father presence at NSFRC varies, there were some barriers to participation that came up in discussion. Some of the reasons suggested by team members included fathers’ perspective that they do not have enough time given their busy work schedules to seek supports or participate in center events. Some suggestions were made attributing the lack of commitment of fathers in their children’s lives to the lack of role models in the fathers’ own lives. Finally, push back, conflict, and potential barriers between parents can make it difficult for fathers to be involved in their child’s lives.

The unique needs of and challenges experienced by single fathers in the community was highlighted. One team member’s son is a single father trying to do everything on his own for his infant. He was referred by the team member to the FRC for supports, and connected with Dr. Mobley, who has since been working with the single father one-on-one, developing a plan for obtaining needed supports. The team member acknowledged the value of Dr. Mobley’s efforts given his knowledge and experiences, but also given his role as a father and adult male. The member noted that he “needs a support group of other guys who are dealing with this and who can give him insight, I can tell him from my perspective but being a man raising a little girl, that’s a whole different story”. Here, there was perceived value in

engaging fathers in structured activities and with providing opportunities for peer activities, as well as with man-to-man and father-to-father interactions and supports. Select members praised the efforts and the skills of staff, specifically of Dr. Mobley, when discussing the needs of fathers. Dr. Mobley was described as a “strong” father and grandfather figure, and a successful community advocate that helps make men feel comfortable in expressing their feelings. The team wholeheartedly agreed that Dr. Mobley creates a “...no judgement zone” where “you can be yourself and he won’t look down on you.” Dr. Mobley shares that it’s important for conversations with men to be “...organic because men tend to be less open about their feelings and are resistant to sharing what they are going through.”

These discussions were thought to identify unmet needs for fathers, and the need for additional parenting supports for mothers and fathers within the community served by NSFRC. The importance of developing program supports for caregivers and parents (mothers and fathers) led to the following action item:

Action Item #1: NorthStar will explore opportunities for structuring caregiver and parenting support groups with topics including parenting issues, education, and father and mother specific groups for engagement and support.

Although the above action item highlights the need for parenting supports for both mothers and fathers, the team reiterated (as suggested above) that additional efforts would be needed to engage fathers and that such efforts are valued as some children need and crave meaningful attention and relationships with fathers. One staff member, highlighting the importance of father involvement, recalled the excitement of one homework help student when her father picked her up from the activity instead of her mother (who typically does); she ran to meet her father and left her school folder behind (not typical) while focused on interacting with her father. Other team members shared personal and professional experiences and observations of children and youth that responded similarly (with excitement and delight) when their father showed an interest in them, and they were able to have some “daddy time.” However, it was noted that, unfortunately, many children do not have a caring father or father-figure in their lives. This places more care demands on single mothers and may, it was believed, have a potential negative impact upon a child’s development. Subsequently, emphasizing the importance of fathers in families and within the broader community was identified as a valued focus point for future NSFRC efforts.

“...the team reiterated...that additional efforts would be needed to engage fathers and that such efforts are valued as some children need and crave meaningful attention and relationships with fathers.”

Some parents and fathers, team members reported, are simply absent from their children's lives in many respects and/or "don't know how to be parents." Allen Pope, a longtime community ambassador and volunteer at NSFRC, shared his experience with teaching life lessons in the context of sporting events. As a father to natural and adopted children and a caregiver to foster children, he shared concerns on the minds of the younger generations. He highlights the fact that it "...takes time" to try to connect and support the children he comes in contact with and to reinforce values and a perspective that "...the sky's the limit for you;" that there is hope and opportunity if they receive support and make decisions in their own best interests. There was an expanded discussion regarding the worries and peer pressures that youth in the community are dealing with and their need for caring parents, nurturance, and love. Many team members expressed concerns for younger generations being negatively influenced by social media, a lack of positive in-person social connection, cyber bullying, gang activity, and stress experienced in their families and in the community. Team members suggested that a lack of positive adult male involvement in children's lives (along with poor parenting) is a harmful factor that is contributing to (especially for male youth) high school dropout rates, local gang involvement, poor social and conflict resolution skills, and limited prioritization of meaningful future goals. One team member spoke of how these concerns were manifested at a recent funeral of a 16-year-old (a victim of gang violence) where friends of the youth actively displayed "gang signs" and were "smoking dope."

In an effort to increase the value of men in their children's lives and address the harmful behavior of children in the community, especially among young men, NSFRC is planning a Boys to Men Summit. When discussing assessment results associated with the Social Connections protective factor, an action item was identified to "Develop an annual summit focused on reclaiming the community's youth and males that include workshops targeted towards parents and young men and feature successful athletes and professionals from this area with the goal of developing mentorship programs and support groups" (Lancaster C., et al., 2022). This action item has applicability to these discussions. This summit is hoped to be a kick-off event to having more supports and structured activities for adult men and fathers offered at NSFRC and/or in collaboration with other community groups/organizations. Some activities and supports mentioned of potential value included (but were not limited to) father advisory groups, peer/parenting mentoring and support groups, and recreational/team-based activities. It was hoped that any summit activities and eventual supports be non-judgmental, interactive, and "organic" (semi-structured, dynamic/participatory, non-hierarchical, etc.); focused on creating a "safe space" and "...right type of environment..." that makes it "...comfortable for sharing..." because (as one SFSA team member noted) "...men may be less open to talking about what they are going through."

Dr. Mobley creates a "...no judgement zone" were "you can be yourself and he won't look down on you".

Building parental resilience includes being in close connection with providers that can address parents' needs as they arise. Due to the wide diversity in families' connections, there is a need to strengthen parents and families through provider connections, and staff training. The team had a consensus score in the range of neither agree nor disagree that NSFRC was:

- Inviting partner organizations to provide workshops for staff on working with diverse families.
- Coordinating the site visits at organizations that serve different populations so that staff can learn how to best serve diverse families.

There was also a score of neither agree nor disagree for:

The program supports participating immigrant and refugee families by:

- 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.

Group discussion revealed a particular need to connect with non-English speaking parents, both citizens, and refugees. In a recent case, NSFRC staff were visited by a patron who only spoke Spanish and whom they didn't know how to assist. On that occasion there happened to be another patron in the building who spoke Spanish and was able to assist with translation. Ms. Perry highlighted that some parents who are seeking supports rely upon their children as translators and that there has been an increase of Hispanic families in the community. Program staff agreed that they are under-resourced in their ability to assist primarily Spanish-speaking families and could benefit from bi-lingual staff and resources. Ms. Katrina Evans, the director of the Columbia County Public library (and SFSA team member) shared that they have full-time staff member who speaks Spanish that can be called upon as a resource. Additionally, Mr. Jones of Career Sources said they sometimes have bilingual staff who could assist. Ms. Evans additionally shared that the library has tutoring for English as a Second Language, individual tutoring, small groups, conversational classes, and citizenship classes that can all be used by NSFRC patrons. She was also willing to work with NSFRC to have some of these classes/supports on-site at NSFRC if desired.

Though NSFRCs informational rack cards are available in Spanish, there is interest in making sure all event flyers are in English and Spanish. Team members agreed that for engagement of all community members and families, it's important to make sure resource materials are easy for people to read in their primary language. A community provider that was engaged at the last Health Fair has offered his services for any program material translations that need to be done. Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended these meetings suggested connections be made with nearby faith and/or Hispanic congregations in town with non-English speaking parents to help identify specific needs and provide supports. Though there are no current services targeted at immigrants and refugee families, there is an interest in continuing with the efforts already developed to connect with diverse families that resulted in the following action item:

Action Item #2: NorthStar will develop a strategy of engagement to connect with non-English speaking populations by exploring what resources exist for interpretation assistance through local agencies and congregations.

NSFRC is also interested in obtaining more in-house support from collaborative partners. Stephanie Harden, a Hope Navigator with the Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency⁴ (and SFSA team member), expressed an interest in having a remote office at NSFRC because “this is where the action happens.” She feels this will help her better connect with possible clients and help her assist patrons in need. This is an ideal co-location of services that will help NSFRC be even more of a “one-stop shop”. Dr. Mobley is working with her to develop this as a formal agreement. The goal of having a Hope Florida Navigator on site possibly once a week will allow DCF to come closer to where their clients reside. The services delivered by the Hope Navigator will not change. For the resource center, clients will be oriented to the services and resources provided by the center.

Action Item #3: NorthStar will work on establishing co-location services, as determined appropriate, with DCF/Hope Florida to be provided at the Family Resource Center.

This willingness to connect over time and build stronger networks of support for patrons explains the range of scores as agree/strongly agree for items referring to NSFRC seeking to reflect the community 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.
- 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.

How Does NSFRC honor each family’s race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting?

This section is a series of questions associated with NSFRCs efforts at disseminating information and providing connections to services and supports related to the provision of parental resilience in a

⁴ For more information regarding the Florida Department of Children and Families’ Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency (especially its assistance programs and community partner network), please see:

<https://myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access/overview.shtml>

Additional information can be found via the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) at:

<https://oppaga.fl.gov/ProgramSummary/ProgramDetail?programNumber=5047>

For more detailed information related to the Hope Florida - A Pathway to Prosperity program (that utilizes Hope Navigators), please see: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/APathwaytoProsperity/>

manner that honors each family's race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting. Among the eight questions, only two did not have a consensus agreement score.

What NSFRC Does Well that Honors Each Family's Race, Language, Culture, History, and Approach to Parenting

Consensus agreement scores were obtained for the following items:

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.
- Staff engage grandparents, elders and extended family members in discussions on parenting and the transmission of cultural beliefs.
- The program displays diverse families and family structures in books, posters and program materials.

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.
- Designed or selected to reflect the culture(s) of the community served.

Dr. Mobley, remarking on the staff's efforts at honoring each family's race, language, culture, history, and approach to parenting, noted that everyone at NSFRC "...works hard to be sensitive to diverse groups." This sensitivity translates not just to the patrons but to and among the staff and volunteers as well, asserting that NSFRC staff "are diverse in our thinking" and that they work well together. SFSA team members that have witnessed staff interactions with patrons confirm these efforts at inclusion, understanding, and respectfulness extended to patrons across all the diversity elements that are the focus of these assessment items.

NorthStar FRC staff "are diverse in our thinking" and...work well together.

NSFRC's rack cards explaining the services available to patrons are intentionally made in two different languages (Spanish and English) and with different photos to show representation for a variety of

groups. Phil shares that NSFRC staff work to be respectful and inclusive of all groups and “treat everyone the same.”

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Honor Each Family’s Race, Language, Culture, History, and Approach to Parenting

A current lack of dedicated services/programming around sharing cultural traditions may explain the score of neither agree nor disagree that parents have opportunities to share skills, talents, and cultural traditions with children and other parents. It is hoped that efforts associated with Action Item #2 will address these needs; the success of which was considered likely given that staff reportedly “...respect other cultures...[and] try to be inclusive.”

A point of interest for the NSFRC SFSA team was the consensus of neither agree nor disagree rating on:

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

- Reviewed by a Parent Advisory Committee to ensure that they are culturally relevant and linguistically accessible to all families in the program.

The NSFRC does not currently have a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) which may explain why this item received a team score of neither agree nor disagree. However, there was interest in creating such a committee that could support NSFRC’s programming and ensure outreach efforts are culturally relevant and linguistically accessible to all families. Some NSFRC staff have received extensive training on the development and implementation of parent advisory committees. Further, the creation of a PAC is considered a strategic objective of all PSF Family Resource Centers as outlined in PSFs Resource Center Operating Plan (2021). SFSA team members highlighted the potential benefits of having a representative and active PAC. Dr. Mobley shared the value of sharing leadership with members of a PAC that is focused on enhancing the strategic objectives of NSFRC. A PAC can help develop and support/empower parent leaders and get other parents involved to “make this center their center, not our center.” One team member, thinking about the process shared that “It is like a PTA for the Family Resource Center” that will promote “ownership” of processes and supports meant to help parents and families in the community. These discussions led to the development of the following action item:

Action Item #4: NorthStar FRC will create a Parent Advisory Council within the next 12 months.

How Does NSFRC Encourage Parents to Manage Stress Effectively?

Collectively, consensus agreement was demonstrated for 10 of the 13 questions on this topic (77%). The number of positive (consensus agreement) ratings was thought to demonstrate that NSFRC generally helps families deal with crises and stress and that NSFRC staff are doing what they can (with available resources) to support parents experiencing stress. Some SFSA team members shared anecdotes regarding personal experiences and observations of the attentive caring attitude of staff and volunteers when dealing with a parent experiencing stress, whether associated with social, economic, caregiver/parenting, etc. factors. One member highlighted a specific circumstance where her son (a single father) received emotional and parenting support from Dr. Mobley that helped her son better manage and alleviate stress.

What NSFRC Does Well that Helps Parents Manage Stress Effectively.

The helpful and caring attributes of staff documented in early sections of this report, it was held, create a safe environment for parents and patrons to disclose or share with staff what is bothering them at any given time. Sometimes this care requires several friendly connections, building rapport over time, to establish a sense of trust where parents feel comfortable to “...get down to the deeper issues” that are a source of stress. When referring to fatherhood stressors, Dr. Mobley noted that some “...men are dealing with all kinds of emotional scars they have...” including the abandonment of their fathers and perceived failures (personal, career, parenting, etc.) that need to be dealt with, along with a need to “...be affirmed as men.”

The environment at NSFRC, it is thought, is perceived as calming and helpful by patrons. One community ambassador shared that “before I leave my house, I’m very stressed, and when I get here (to NSFRC), it’s a comfort zone.” Though the community ambassador recounted several family dynamics that are very stressful, this person can come to NSFRC where staff are available to talk about circumstances they are experiencing. NSFRC gives them a respite to escape family stressors for a time and access supports that help build up personal resilience.

One community ambassador shared that “before I leave my house, I’m very stressed, and when I get here (to NSFRC), it’s a comfort zone.”

There was agreement that the program provides regular opportunities for parents to relieve stress through:

- Linking parents to organized support groups.
- Making staff or consultants available for parents to talk to individually about issues that are troubling to them.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Help Parents Manage Stress Effectively

Although focused on supporting parents, it was noted that a number of the services and supports highlighted within the SFSA tool are not provided due to available resources (e.g., staff, facility, etc.) and the NSFRC's capacities. Some noted activities are not feasible with only one full-time and one part-time staff and a limited number of professional volunteers who provide support to the paid staff and help to bolster services for patrons. Some listed services, such as a "night out", are more difficult to pilot, but others are possible (e.g., an exercise class) given the timeframe/operational hours of NSFRC, which is Monday through Thursday 9 am-5 pm and Friday 9 am-1 pm.

These questions include:

- Setting aside space and time for parents to gather, talk and participate in informal activities.
- Organizing spa days, exercise classes or other parent-only social activities.
- Providing occasional child-care so parents can take a "night out", go shopping or participate in other parent-only activities.

Given resource needs, the SFSA team suggested connecting with local colleges in an effort to recruit students in need of volunteer hours. On March 15th, 2021, NSFRC created a service provision agreement with Florida Gateway College that, in part, provides approved student volunteers/interns to assist with Family Resource Center activities, including homework help and summer youth camps (Pegram, H., et al., 2022). Florida Gateway College offers affordable, high-quality postsecondary educational opportunities to the community members of North Central Florida.

Dr. Mobley is working on creating an agreement with Saint Leo University as well. The use of interns from universities is limited by the tasks and training they would be assigned to and the specific qualifications of the field supervisor (i.e., NSFRC staff). For example, the use of master's level students that could help with more advanced supports like case management type services would require a supervisor with a master's degree and select experience within the field the intern is being trained in. Most intern programs require the supervisor of the intern to have a master's in social work (MSW). Currently, there is not a staff member at NSFRC with this credential. We are working with the higher learning institutions to determine the possible workarounds without compromising the fidelity of their program.

The process of becoming a volunteer was reported as a barrier to recruitment. Volunteers are required to complete an extensive application and participate with a Level II Background Screen and a drug screen, with the exception of those individuals who plan to volunteer less than 10 hours in a one-month period. For those volunteers falling within this second category, "Single-Day Volunteer" approval must be signed by the Chief of Clinical and Community Services in advance of volunteering. It is the policy of Partnership for Strong Families (PSF), as a state funded agency, to require criminal history background checks for all employees, volunteers, and interns (Partnership for Strong Families, 2019). Reportedly, many potential volunteers are discouraged by the level of information needed in the large application packet and choose not to apply. One team member shared their frustration with the required background check and subsequent denial of a potential volunteer if there is any documented offense, because "...it keeps a lot of good people from participating [as volunteers]." The team member shared, "I think it's a discredit to our men that we don't allow them to help because of their past... they have a

truth that would help these young people.” They and other team members agreed that youth need to hear from someone with experience that “...this is not right for you, I’m telling you it’s wrong because it messed me up.” These processes and protocols for volunteer approval were seen, in part, to be a potential barrier to volunteer engagement and participation from fathers.

One frequent need for volunteer support is during Homework Help, a social and emotional competence protective factor-based afterschool program designed to help students complete their homework before going home to spend time with their family. This event can have upwards of 15 children between first grade and middle school on any given day, and that can be a strain on staff. In addition to addressing specific needs of children, this activity is a “touch point”/opportunity to connect with parents, helping build their resilience. For example, a grandmother recently adopted two 9-year-old boys whom she brought to Homework Help for assistance. She and her husband were “stressed out” because they have these young boys in their home. They want them to succeed, but there were social and behavioral issues (not uncommon developmental and post-adoption issues) that they needed support working through. While the children received homework help, Dr. Mobley engaged with the grandmother, sat down with her, and discussed the challenges experienced, parenting expectations and appropriate expectations for the children. Because she had last raised children two generations ago, Dr. Mobley was able to provide context for the boys’ behavior and help her learn to better relate to them. There were repeated follow-up conversations with the grandmother to gauge needed supports while the children continued to participate in the Homework Help program.

In any regard, the demonstrated and potential demand for supports and services at NSFRC requires an enhancement in the recruitment of volunteers. These conversations led to the following action item:

Action Item #5: NorthStar will continue to pursue efforts and expand on collaborations with universities to solidify relationships that lead to interns and volunteers serving a functional role at the Family Resource Center.

There was consensus agreement that each of these questions were manifested by existing staff.

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

- Understanding the impact of family crisis 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.

There was no expanded discussion on these individual questions as team members highlighted earlier noted comments related to: 1) the level of personal and professional experience and commitment of staff, 2) their professionalism and genuine interest in helping patrons, 3) their connection to the community, 4) their knowledge base, and 5) their willingness and ability to establish trust with patrons and provide services and supports in a non-stigmatized manner, supported the assessment that staff know how to respond appropriately to family crises that come to their attention.

How Does NSFRC Support Parents as Decision-makers and Help Build Decision-making and Leadership Skills?

The team collectively agreed with 30 of 41 (73%) possible questions associated with this topic. The remaining 11 questions receiving a consensus score of neither agree nor disagree. It was thought these ratings were due to program limitations brought on by few staff/resources, programming yet to be developed (or in the process of development), and the fact that NSFRC is still new in the community.

What NSFRC Does Well that Support Parents as Decision-makers and Help Build Decision-making and Leadership Skills?

The following questions have a consensus of agreement with the SFSA team. Again, this shows a sense of professionalism and care for all people, both staff and patrons. Staff were reported to receive program support when working with families under stress and were seen as supportive/reinforcing of parental authority when working with families.

Staff receive program support when working with families under stress through:

- Acknowledgement and support for their efforts from supervisors and administrators.
- Opportunities to process their own emotional reactions with appropriate support.
- Access to a mental health consultant.
- Time off if needed.

Staff reinforce parental authority by:

- Respecting parents' directions and/or decisions about their children.
- Learning about parents' expectations and/or decisions about their children.
- Talking respectfully with parents about how to handle difference 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.
- The program consults with parents immediately when child health, behavior or developmental problems are suspected or identified.

- 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.

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.

As suggested earlier, NSFRC has formal collaborative agreements with local community colleges and universities, and Career Source Florida Crown, structured to assist patrons and parents with promoting/advancing their education and career goals.

Mr. Jones is one of the many resources at Florida Crown where NSFRC can do a “warm” hand-off for patrons to access resources. During the summers of 2021 and 2022, NSFRC participated in the Summer Youth Employment program, a joint effort between Lake City Police Department and Florida Crown. In this program a teenager is able to work 3.5 days a week/ 28 hours for 6 weeks. These young people are supervised and receive a stipend from Florida Crown.

The program provides opportunities and support for families 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.
- Providing families with roles in evaluating the program (e.g., parent questionnaires, group evaluation meetings).

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.

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 training and mentoring activities.

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

- Hosting or linking parents to community events that help raise awareness of emerging community needs and assets.
- 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.

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

Though NSFRC staff are constantly keeping an eye on the children during Homework Help and provide/refer parents for supports when assistance is needed, there is no official/formal screening process used at the FRC. Without this formal screening, issues are brought up with parents in an organic/informal manner when they drop off or pick up their children. Several instances/examples of these exchanges and efforts of help have been mentioned in this and other SFSA reports thus far. Subsequently, select items affiliated with 1.16 (see Table 4) received a team consensus rating of neither agree nor disagree. These include the following:

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

- Parents participate in the screening and/or are informed of the results of all screenings as soon as possible.
- 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 with copies of the plan.

NSFRC likewise does not utilize formal family plans, leading to a score of neither agree nor disagree that Parents and staff develop family plans together that:

- Are updated regularly.

As mentioned above there are no formal plans created for families; although NSFRC staff reportedly do work with and follow-up/check in on parents' and children's efforts related to child, parent, and family needs associated with promoting resilience.

Two questions that received consensus neither agree nor disagree ratings associated with supporting a parent's education/career goals include:

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

- Inviting past program parents and community volunteers to share their educational and career experience with families.
- Providing formal and/or informal parenting 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.

Team members spoke of the value (see earlier comments) of facilitating community events and events that utilized speakers, including peers, that have been successful in their life and their careers. Although these types of formal gatherings are not scheduled regularly, there is interest in the exploration of such initiatives, resources permitting. Discussion regarding the provision of formal or informal parenting mentoring opportunities expanded into a broader discussion of parenting education and the best means of facilitating such (including through peer/parent mentoring opportunities). Team members highlighted that it's a "...careful dance" to try and provide education to parents and families without them feeling watched or criticized. Some examples from staff (Dr. Mobley and Ms. Perry) were provided that exemplified the knowledge and skill needs of select parents as such relates to dealing with their children's developmental (including cognitive, social, and emotional) needs, how to appropriately deal with behavior issues (e.g., discipline, reinforcements, providing a structure for learning, etc.), and a myriad of challenging issues.

The "struggle" for staff, it was suggested, remains how to help parents feel supported but not judged, for fear that a negative reaction to being judged could be stigmatizing, and a disincentive to developing a trusting relationship with others (staff and peers/other parents) from which learning can take place. Ms. Harden shared her experience when working with parents and the need to reassure them that any efforts at help and parenting support do not come with an assessment that they are bad parents. Rather any services provided (in her professional work setting) or referrals for parenting classes or groups are presented as an opportunity for getting support. Action Item 1 listed above was identified to possibly address these needs.

In the meantime, informal support to strengthen parental resilience is reportedly provided on a one-on-one basis. For example, in one instance a grandmother from a nearby neighborhood called NSFRC requesting help for her grandchild who arrives at Niblack Elementary School screaming uncontrollably each morning. Dr. Mobley would drive over to the school (one mile away) and talk with the boy in the in the guidance office and get him to calm down in order for him to be able to return to class. The connection with the grandmother and young child eventually led Dr. Mobley to connect with the child's mother who, it was learned, was desperately in need of specialized care for her child, but she was struggling to complete the paperwork. Realizing the issues, Dr. Mobley said to the mother, "I'm going to sit here with you, and we are going to fill out this paperwork." The level of care and commitment to provide immediate support to a family to stabilize a crisis/stressful situation with the child and help the mother access long-term support, followed by advocacy on her behalf was welcoming, helped establish a trusting relationship with the family, and aided the mother in becoming a more resilient parent.

The following questions on this topic also represent scores of neither agree nor disagree:

The program provides opportunities and support for families to serve as leaders and decision-makers by:

- Asking families for regular input on programmatic decisions.
- Asking families for input into staff hiring and training.

The program promotes participation in activities by:

- Providing childcare during trainings or workshops.

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

- 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 groups that inform and shape policy at the local, state or national level.

It was thought that all of these could be addressed through the implementation of Action Item 4 (see above) as such relates to the creation of a Parent Advisory Council within the next 12 months; and, Action Item 5, as such relates to continuing efforts to pursue and expand upon collaborations with colleges and universities to solidify relationships that lead to interns and volunteers serving a functional role at the NSFRC.

How Does NSFRC Help Parents Understand How to Buffer their Child During Stressful Times?

There was a consensus of agreement for all questions suggesting NSFRC staff are available to help parents buffer their child during stressful times. Again, a willingness and openness to help all patrons, including parents and children is shown through these scores. NSFRC staff work with parents on their own interpersonal issues and give advice in connecting with their children during stressful times.

NSFRC staff's "coaching is great. I'll be honest with you, it's outstanding. I love it."

NSFRC staff are often using one service as an opening to connect at a deeper level with parents in an effort to bolster their resilience. Many of the issues around resilience and stress reduction are very personal and require that patrons have some good-will and trust established with staff. One way these deeper connections are made is through staff paying attention to the signs of stress and distress at all times. As an example, Dr. Mobley shared with one team member —whose son comes to homework help— "I can tell when your son had a bad day because he's quiet." Relaying this observation to the parent helped the parent connect with and better understand his son. The parent shared, in response, "I've picked up on those things, and I remember, okay pay attention to the non-verbal communication as well as verbal communication." This father goes on to say NSFRC staff's "coaching is great. I'll be

honest with you, it's outstanding. I love it." This type of depth of connection shows both personal and parenting support through the provision of meaningful advice can be impactful.

What NSFRC Does Well that helps parents understand how to Buffer their child during stressful times?

Team members agreed that NSFRC helps parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times by:

- Staff receive training on talking with parents about helping children in times of family crisis.
- 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 mental health consultant who can help them proactively address the needs of children and other family members during stressful times.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to help parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times.

There were no identified areas of potential focus/improvement warranting an action item related to items associated with this assessment topic.

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)⁵ 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 68 (of a possible score of 97) or 70%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with the Parental Resilience**

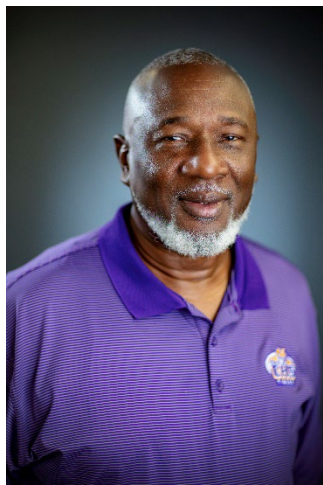
⁵ Harnar, M., & Tarr, J. (n.d.). Strengthening Families: A look at national data on program strategies, staff capacity and the protective factors. Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families & Mosaic. Available at: <https://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluation.com/national/>

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.

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 NSFRC SFSA Team are appropriately targeted to enhance the fidelity score of provided supports and services addressing parental resilience.

NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

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



Allen Pope Sr. has visited NorthStar 183 times since first coming in September 2021; much of this time includes regular attendance for the community walk. Allen has also helped with several community events hosted by NorthStar. He has lived in Columbia County since 1973 and graduated from Columbia High before joining the Army. Allen was in the service for three years as a Cannon Crewman then worked at Carlon PVC Pipe Co. He has experience with General Electric as a military policeman in Ocala, FL and as a correctional officer. Allen has been a volunteer coach in Columbia County for 18 years and volunteers at his church, New Bethel AME, in several capacities. Allen is a husband of 22 years to Beverly Pope and father of four biological children and three adopted children. The Popes have fostered over 15 children and provided respite care to other foster families. Mr. Pope shares that he loves the caring and inviting

atmosphere at NorthStar. He is glad that the SFSA team has identified many issues that are lacking in the community and the need for them to be addressed.



Bonnie O'Neal has been coming to NorthStar Family Resource Center since August 2021 as a patron to access services for herself and her family. She was raised in Kissimmee, FL and eventually moved to Lake City, FL in 2019 from Ocala, FL. Bonnie received her Associate of Science degree at Florida Metropolitan University and started schooling to become a medical assistant. Unfortunately, she had to leave the program early to be a caretaker for sick family members. Bonnie is a wife of 28 years to her husband Byron, is a mom to a son and daughter, and loves spending time with her family. She loves everything about NorthStar and was happy to join the SFSA team to be involved and share her experiences.



Keaven Jones is originally from White Springs, FL but has been a part of the Lake City community for 39 years and first started to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in May of 2021 as a patron. Keaven works for Career Source Florida Crown as a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supervisor. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market. WIOA also matches employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. While he and his two boys are not helping with his mother's yard beautification projects, he is spending time with them and his nieces and nephews at local parks and playgrounds. Keaven loves opportunities that Northstar provides and the support they provide to all cultures. He shares that he "was inspired by the staff and volunteers that I have encountered while attending the community center" and that "kids that I have met while visiting help to remind me why the future looks so bright."



Dr. Philip Mobley is the NorthStar Family Resource Center Manager and the Senior Minister of the Northside Church of Christ, located in Lake City, FL. He was raised in Lake City but lived for many years in Jacksonville, FL, developing his personal and professional skills. Phil received his Doctoral Degree in Education Leadership from the University of North Florida in 2019, his MBA from Jacksonville University in 2002, and a Bachelor's degree from the University of North Florida in 1975. Dr. Mobley served as a Board Member of the Suwanee Valley United Way and the Community Advisory Board for the Columbia/Hamilton County Health Department. He is currently a member of the Richardson Community Center Advisory Board. Phil is a husband of over 48 years to Lotonia (Toni). They have two children, seven grandsons, and two granddaughters. Phil loves that NorthStar provides services and resources to families to help prevent or resolve crises and develop strategies to strengthen families. Dr. Mobley shared that he enjoyed hearing everyone's perspective through the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment meetings.



Narragansett "Narrie" Smith, sister of Phil Mobley, has been a longtime patron, supporter, and volunteer of the NorthStar Family Resource Center. She has lived all her life in Lake City, FL. Narrie has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of North Florida and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Nova University. After 23 years as a teacher, Narrie became the Principal of Niblack Elementary school, raising their school score from an F to an A. Narrie has served as the Assistant Superintendent of the Columbia County School District and currently sits on the Columbia County School Board. She is a minister and director of Christian Education at New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. She spends her time volunteering at NorthStar, with Columbia County Schools, and being with family. Narrie is a wife of 47 years to Johnny Smith, mother to two daughters, and proud grandmother of 6. She loves working with children and models her life around serving God and His people. Narrie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because it identified areas to grow and improve as a Family Resource Center.



Ms. Patricia A. Perry has been the Administrative Assistant at NorthStar Family Resource Center since before the doors opened to the public in March 2021. She was born and raised in Lake City, FL and has spent much of her life there. Patricia graduated from Columbia High School in 1974 and attended Florida A&M University in Tallahassee and Seattle Central College in Seattle, WA. Starting as a file clerk and working her way up through the Columbia County Clerk of Courts for 30 years, she retired as the Chief Deputy Clerk. Patricia is a wife of 35 years to Nathan Perry Jr. and mother to Joshua Perry. Her church family is a major part of her life, she has been a member of New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church since 1969. Patricia loves that NorthStar makes efforts to help the community in any way possible. She hopes her varied experience and familiarity with the people of Lake City will be a benefit to the community.



Katrina P. Evans, Director of the Columbia County Public Library, has supported the NorthStar Family Resource Center and been a member of the Lake City Resource Center Advisory Council since its inception. She grew up in Lake Placid, FL but has lived in Lake City for more than 25 years. Ms. Evans has a master's degree in Library and Information Studies from Florida State University and a bachelor's degree in literature and history from the University of North Florida. She began her career at the historic Walton-DeFuniak Library and was later hired at Columbia County Public library in 1997. After 19 years of service as Outreach and Youth Services Librarian and Assistant Director, Ms. Evans became the library director in 2016. She has served on the Board of the Northeast Florida Library Information Network and has volunteered in various capacities with the Florida Library Association and Edward Rutledge Chapter, NSDAR. Ms.

Evans has served on local school advisory committees and volunteers with her church. Her husband, Kevin, is a school media specialist at a local elementary school and they have two sons, Drew and Rhys. Katrina joined the SFSA team to learn about local resources that she can take back and share with library staff and patrons. She loves that NorthStar is providing a "one-stop-shop" to our community where people can get assistance with a variety of needs. She shares, "I love that this need is now being met so compassionately by NorthStar Family Resource Center and its amazing staff."



Stephanie Harden began to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in January of 2021. Stephanie is a native of Philadelphia, PA, but she has lived in Florida for the last thirteen years, she began working in Lake City last year through a promotion to Hope Navigator II with the Department of Children and Families. Stephanie is working on her master's degree in Strategic Business from Northcentral University and plans to get her doctorate in Theology. She has 30 years of teaching background and over 20 years of customer service experience, along with over 20 years of Ministerial Leadership and Counseling, that she applies to assisting families in need. Stephanie is the business owner/CEO of Loving Arms Services and serves on several boards including the Partnership for Strong Families Children's Partnership Counsel. Stephanie is a wife of 20 years to Pastor Troy Harden, mother of 10 children (blended family), and a grandmother of

17 beautiful grandchildren. In addition to spending time with her family, she reads, loves to thrift store shop, and is completing her first book. Stephanie loves that NorthStar is in a central part of Lake City that needs resources and is working to create a service provision agreement to open a Hope Florida Navigator satellite station at the Family Resource Center. Stephanie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because there were several wonderful action items to work on. With years of experience in various resource centers Stephanie appreciates the compassion and family atmosphere shown at NorthStar.

Although not formally members of the NSFRC SFSA Team, Dr. Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator) and Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator) attended each of the NSFRC SFSA Team meetings. They, and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended these meetings as well, 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 NSFRC. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the NSFRC, and a principal on-site contact for team members. Ms. Lancaster 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 NSFRC. 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 NSFRC to community needs related to supporting families through providing parental resilience supports. There was no effort by those in supportive roles to censure conversation and discussion points, as feedback was regularly sought regarding facilitation processes and preferences of group members for these processes. Feedback and recommended edits to documented discussion items and decisions could be provided within scheduled meetings (over three days) or in dialog/e-mails to Robin Perry and/or Christen Lancaster in between meetings.

References

- Chase, K. (2022). *Alumni at old historic high school in Lake City reunited for a special dedication*. WCJB. <https://www.wcjb.com/2022/02/27/alumni-an-old-historic-high-school-lake-city-reunited-special-dedication/>
- Clemons, M.O. (2006). *Florida's Forgotten Legacy: Segregated Black Secondary Schools*. (self-pub).
- Partnership for Strong Families. (2021). *Resource Center Operating Plan – Calendar Year 2021*. Unpublished.
- Partnership for Strong Families. (2019). *Background Screening* (Policy No. 1104). https://pfsf.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BF5C3D441-0202-415E-AE319BCE1D1E185F%7D&file=PSF%20Policy%201104%20Background%20Screening%20E051719.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true
- Pegram, H., Bernardin, T., Lancaster, C., Merritt, S., Perry, R., Spoliansky, T. & Edelman, P. (2022). *Service Provider Agreement Review 2021*. Tallahassee, FL.: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.
- Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Mobley, P., Merritt, S., Spoliansky, T., & Edelman, P. (2022). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center: 2021 Profile of Services and Supports*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.
- Lancaster, C., Perry, R., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2022). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Promoting Social Connection*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.
- Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2022). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.
- Suggested Citation: Lancaster, C., Perry, R., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2023). *Supporting Families by Promoting Parental Resilience at NorthStar Family Resource Center*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.



Supporting Families by
Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children
at NorthStar Family Resource Center

Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator), Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Katrina Evans, Stephanie Harden, Keaven Jones, Philip Mobley, Bonnie O'Neal, Allen Pope, Narrie Smith, Patricia Perry, and Toni Spoliansky (NSFRC SFSA Team support)

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 findings from, and recommendations developed by the NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) 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 NSFRC 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 (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on NSFRC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting social and emotional competence of children.

NorthStar Family 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 FRC 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. With the assistance of funding from the Children's Bureau Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families grant, Partnership for Strong Families opened their newest FRC serving the Greater Lake City area in March 2021. NSFRC is co-located on the campus of the Richardson Community Center in the Fergusson Building and is one of five FRCs operated by PSF in Alachua and Columbia counties 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

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the NorthStar Family Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2023). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) 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.

enhancement of the community's ability to leverage resources to benefit some of Gainesville's and Lake City's most in need populations.

The NSFRC 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 FRC 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 the 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, and Parents who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities) referred to as Community Ambassadors. 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 NSFRC SFSA Team.

The NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Katrina Evans – Columbia County Public Library
Stephanie Harden – Florida Department of Child and Families
Keaven Jones – Community Ambassador/Collaborative Partner
Dr. Philip Mobley – NSFRC Manager
Bonnie O'Neal – Community Ambassador
Allen Pope – Community Ambassador
Patricia Perry – NSFRC Staff
Narrie Smith – NSFRC Volunteer

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 promoting 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

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/>

relationship to the NSFRC service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their scores, the data was shared via a written summary report highlighting the distribution of responses by team members for each question. Efforts were made through critical discussion and dialog to arrive at a consensus for each topic and question (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 orientation meeting of the NSFRC SFSA Team took place on October 6, 2022, and three meetings followed through December. The team meeting that involved the discussion on promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children questions took place on December 5th, 2022.

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 related to promoting social and emotional competence of children. Comments related to the service and support model (and associated actions of Dr. Mobley, staff, and volunteers) denoted for Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, it was asserted, apply to items affiliated with this protective factor (Social and Emotional Competence of Children). NSFRC is in its early stage of operation and has targeted (initially) most resources toward the more immediate needs of families associated with concrete supports and social connections, which represented 58.7% and 21.6%, respectively, of all service requests in 2021. In 2021, approximately 10% (163 of 1,646) of all service requests were deemed to focus on the social and emotional development of children/youth. These services were predominantly focused on group-based teen activities (n=75) and homework help (n=45), followed by individual tutoring (n=17), and family counselling (n=13), including outside referrals) (Perry et al., 2022). Many of the questions focused on this protective factor, it was believed, are addressed on an individual level that are never shared with the group.

How Does NSFRC Help Parents Foster Their Child's Social Emotional Development?

The SFSA team agreed with 5 of the 7 questions on how NSFRC helps parents foster their child's social and emotional development. Although not a primary focus of most service initiatives, attention to the social and emotional development and wellbeing of children and youth is reportedly integrated into most of the work and engagement with families.

What NSFRC Does Well to Help Parents Foster Their Child's Social Emotional Development.

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.

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.

NSFRC is in its early stage of operation and has targeted (initially) most resources toward the more immediate needs of families associated with concrete supports and social connections...

One of the ways NSFRC staff help parents foster their child's social and emotional development is through interactions in and around the Homework Help program. This program is open to children from 1st to 8th grade between 2:45 PM and 4:45 PM Monday through Thursday. The children are provided a snack and spend the time doing their homework and receiving assistance as needed. Often during the same hours, individual tutoring is provided to middle and high school students as well as those studying to pass various educational exams. Many staff and volunteers have an abundance of experience working with children, youth, and families within the community. An involved discussion highlighted these experiences and how opportunities present themselves to address children and youth's social and emotional needs. Most NSFRC services/events provide opportunities for staff to support parents to build upon strengths to best address their children's needs. For example, although homework help activities are centered on children and youth's educational needs, engagement with parents/caregivers is frequently made during pick up or drop off. These moments give staff an opening to discuss family circumstances and child/youth developmental issues of import. Here, connections are made to enhance a child's life, school success, and social and emotional development while providing parents/caregivers with needed support to meet their child's needs. Examples were provided of how children are benefitting academically (i.e., grades improved, etc.) from homework assistance—which is exciting and a source of pride for select parents—especially when informal supports and a caring disposition of staff to the family exists.

Most NSFRC services/events provide opportunities for staff to support parents to build upon strengths to best address their children's needs. For example, although homework help activities are centered on children and youth's educational needs, engagement with parents/caregivers is frequently made during pick up or drop off.

An example of staff involvement on these issues involved an 80+ year old woman that adopted her 9-year-old twin great-grandchildren. The children required academic assistance, but staff knew she was struggling to care for the children and manage their behavior. The family is known to the program manager outside of NSFRC within the broader neighborhood and within a faith-based community/church. It was noted that this level of familiarity of families and the community with the staff "...makes [patrons] feel more comfortable...that they are accepted..." should they come into the NSFRC for assistance. The adoptive parent felt comfortable coming to NSFRC and was receptive to engagement efforts by the manager (and other staff and volunteers) to talk about her children. While the children receive help with their academics, staff "...have been working with her..." providing guidance and support on child development issues. The parent wanted the children to be exposed to positive male role models and have opportunities to interact with peers in a safe and age-appropriate manner; although academics mattered, she was primarily interested in the children's social and emotional development. The manager noted "...she wants them to come to homework help, not necessarily for homework but to have the interaction with me." Coming to the NSFRC and allowing her children to receive the support and guidance was a type of "refuge" for the parent.

Another program targeted to promote social and emotional competence in children was NSFRC's Youth Leadership Council. Through the "Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families Grant," a time-limited grant funded position (Nov 2021-September 2022) known as the "Community Leadership/Equity Coordinator" was created at NSFRC. NorthStar's Youth Leadership Council held group based teen activities over several months. This coordinator was responsible for the development and coordination of leadership and equity programming for youth and young adults by collaborating and consulting with NSFRC staff and other professionals to develop and implement a leadership curriculum. The "Let's Talk" events, hosted by The Proximity People, LLC. (2022), a non-profit organization from Jacksonville, FL, gave all youth participants opportunities to speak on issues that were bothering them. Group gardening and the development of professional biographies were also among some of the activities of this group.

The manager and staff are aware of the function they serve as role models for children and parent/caregivers. They attempt to model appropriate behavioral expectations through interactions with children and in dialog with parents/caregivers for children (and with respect to parenting) that are developmentally appropriate. Supports provided within the context of NSFRC services and activities expands to other contexts within the community, which seems like a natural (and appreciated) occurrence given the multiple and integrated roles that the manager and select staff have (or have had) within the community. An example of this, with respect to the adoptive parent denoted above, is Ms. Smith, who volunteers with Homework Help and also holds leadership roles in the church that this patron began to attend. Opportunities were presented to the parent for her children to interact and play with other children (including Ms. Smith's grandchildren) and for other parent-child interactions as well. Discussions also ensued regarding the value of mentoring (including mirror-image and near-peer models) for the parent and child. The manager could empathize with the adoptive mother, highlighting for her his own experiences when he assumed a caregiver/parenting role for his grandson. He sought a role model/mentor for his grandson that was closer to his grandson's age that turned out to be a beneficial experience. This advice was taken by the mother, and the church's young deacon began to sit with them during church services. Though not a formal mentoring relationship, it is a strengthening of the community bond initiated at the NSFRC.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Help Parents Foster Their Child's Social Emotional Development.

There were no identified areas of potential focus/improvement warranting an action item related to items associated with this assessment question.

How Does NSFRC Model Nurturing Care to Children?

There was agreement that the NSFRC models nurturing care to children for 12 of 16 questions on this topic. It is important to note that the discussion related to scored questions on how NSFRC models nurturing care to children was frequently denoted as relevant for questions highlighted on how NSFRC includes children's social and emotional development activities in programming. As suggested above, there was consensus agreement that all items detailing the means and methods by which staff can nurture children and model nurturing for parents are manifested at NSFRC by staff and volunteers. Staff, community ambassadors, and collaborative partners on the SFSA team have witnessed firsthand the caring and empathetic attitude and actions of staff and volunteers. Again, the familiarity of staff and volunteers to patrons and community families appears to provide a foundation for trust and meaningful engagement with children, youth, and parents/caregivers. A series of case examples reinforcing these thoughts were presented by several members. Ms. Smith is a former Principal of a local elementary school (Niblack) and Assistant Superintendent of the Columbia County School District. She currently sits on the Columbia County School Board and volunteers at NSFRC. The commitment of staff and volunteers well-connected with and genuinely concerned about families in a community where they have a personal history is deemed an asset for NSFRC. Children attending literacy week events feel comfortable and confident in approaching Ms. Smith at the NSFRC and in other community events (e.g., school and church-based). She initiates engagement with them as well. She states that she volunteers to be visible in the community and have an impact with children and in the community; to serve as a role model to children and youth at NSFRC that they can be successful in life, be financially stable (and "have nice things") without doing anything illegal. She wants to reinforce through nurturance and example that they "...can do this."

Staff, community ambassadors, and collaborative partners on the SFSA team have witnessed firsthand the caring and empathetic attitude and actions of staff and volunteers. Again, the familiarity of staff and volunteers to patrons and community families appears to provide a foundation for trust and meaningful engagement with children, youth, and parents/caregivers.

What NSFRC Center Does Well to Model Nurturing Care to Children.

An expanded discussion on social and emotional developmental needs of children and youth identified a series of additional shared values among team members that staff reportedly integrate into their interactions (and modelling) with children and their family members. These values are seen as connected with nurturance and promotion of children's social and emotional well-being. These include (but are not limited to):

- reinforcing self-confidence in children and self-determination in youth; inspiring them to do their best and expressing praise and pride to a child/youth (by staff, parents, coaches, role models, etc.) when the child makes progress on tasks/goals they are focused on
- letting each child know they are valued and "that they belong"
- the need for children to have a someone (especially a caring adult, role model, etc.) that "shows an interest" in them, "is there for them," and is encouraging and supportive; such can have a lasting impact on the motivation and inspiration of children/youth to do better and help them achieve developmental and personal goals now and later in life
- the value in teaching and modelling mutual respect, appropriate social and civil interactions, and understanding of one another

Staff (and collaborative partners) model the importance of responsible adults being supportive to children and youth while empowering children and youth to make decisions that are in their best interests. Staff highlighted how informal conversations and supportive exchanges have taken place with parents and caregivers who are under stress and/or whose children may demonstrate they are struggling academically or behaviorally. Community Ambassadors agreed that staff make efforts to engage with parents in a supportive manner that has led to discussions about realistic expectations for children's behaviors. This includes appropriately redirecting misbehavior, the value of connectedness and patience (and allowing a child "...to be a child"), and the importance of seeking support to help address caregiver and household needs. Staff perceive their work with parents as a collaboration, highlighting "...they [parents] know we are here to help..." where support is provided in a timely manner and without stigma. As an example, when a young adult disclosed his struggles and stress to the program manager resulting from unemployment, the program manager (Dr. Mobley) contacted Keaven Jones (who works for Career Source Florida Crown, a collaborative partner, and is a SFSA team member) who responded, "I'll be right there" and then travelled to NSFRC that day to meet with the youth and begin the planning process for obtaining employment. The immediacy of staff and the collaborative

partner's response to a patron's need reinforced a commitment to help and address the young patron's need in a caring, timely, and effective manner.

Community Ambassadors agreed that staff make efforts to engage with parents in a supportive manner that has led to discussions about realistic expectations for children's behaviors. This includes appropriately redirecting misbehavior, the value of connectedness and patience (and allowing a child "...to be a child"), and the importance of seeking support to help address caregiver and household needs.

One of the community ambassadors (Mr. Allen) reiterated the importance of providing support, nurturance, and guidance to children and youth in the community and the value for modeling many of the attributes discussed in these topics. It was noted that positive intentional actions and engagement with children and youth can have a potentially lasting impact and influence on children and youth. Mr. Allen, a long-time athletic coach in the community, recounted with pleasure a recent encounter with a local Lake City Police Department (LCPD) officer— whom he used to coach—who recounted that Mr. Allen inspired him. In his work with youth, he emphasized the value of self-determination, supporting one another, and self-care (i.e., the value in "looking sharp and being fit"). Two common phrases used with youth over the years (that youth repeat to others, including parents, and back to him) include: "you've got to see the vision" (for their life goals and aspirations) and "you don't have to be a product of your environment." These values/perspectives are embraced and are a commonality with staff and other members (including community collaborators) that have a shared history within the neighborhoods and community served.

With children, any interaction is seen as an opportunity to model nurturing for parents and to attend/support a child's social and emotional development. Staff highlight that within the context of homework help (formal interactions) and other informal exchanges, staff can reinforce children asking questions, teach communication skills (e.g., when to ask questions, the value of not interrupting, active listening, etc.), explore problem solving skills, and reinforce respectful behavior. Staff spoke of the importance of "...taking a little bit of time" to connect with children that come to the NSFRC and in following up with children, youth, and parents after support has been received. Ms. Smith and Dr. Mobley highlighted a common phrase they use when following up with or meeting again in the future with youth or adults they helped is "where are you and what are you doing with your life now?" This question is asked with the intent to reinforce their interest in their well-being and with patrons being "successful" in their life goals and in having their needs met. Community ambassadors reiterated that the staff and volunteers were welcoming and supportive of children and their parents, showing patience and interacting in a helpful and caring manner.

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.
- Understanding how mental health and wellness affects family relationships and the developmental process of young children.

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

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Model Nurturing Care to Children.

The team scored in a range for neither agree nor disagree for 4 of 8 questions on staff receiving training, consultation, and ongoing coaching to support their skills in supporting children's social and emotional development. There was no expanded discussion on specific ongoing training that staff receive on select topics associated with supporting children's social emotional development. The only ongoing trainings PSF staff are required to obtain and renew yearly are their Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act "HIPPA" and Security Awareness trainings through the Department of Children and Families to maintain client confidentiality. Other trainings that staff receive are provided as needs become evident such as Mental Health First Aid, Active shooter awareness, and Equity and Inclusion Training. Primary staff and select volunteers have, however, reportedly received additional trainings as part of their professional education, development, and experiences in other education, community, and child service settings.

There were no identified areas of potential focus/improvement warranting an action item related to items associated with this assessment question.

How Does NSFRC Include Children's Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming?

The SFSA team agreed with 4 of the 7 questions on how NSFRC includes children's social and emotional development activities into programming. As noted earlier, specific services for this protective factor primarily focus on regular homework assistance and select teen-based activities. In addition, staff frequently engage with children who are accompanying parents that seek other services, including concrete supports.

What NSFRC Does Well to include Children's Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming.

Staff, during formal and informal interactions with children and their caregivers reportedly integrate several intentional practices meant to support the social and emotional development of children. These observations led to consensus ratings among team members for the following items:

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.
- Setting clear expectations and limits for behavior.
- Helping children separate emotions from actions (e.g., not reacting by hitting even when angry).

Some comments and examples highlighted earlier have applicability in understanding how intentional practices associated with these questions are manifested at NSFRC. Staff and volunteers highlighted the importance of working collaboratively with parents in supporting their children's social and emotional development. Discussions suggested this involves helping parents/caregivers and children understand the importance of distinguishing emotions from behaviors, the need to reinforce appropriate social skills, and the value of structure and personal vision. When there are behavior issues with children, these are seen by staff as opportunities for discussions with them and their caregivers about clear expectations for behavior and the consequences for disruptive behavior. It is important to note that these conversations are reportedly done in a supportive, strength-based manner. Staff highlighted the value of not dictating what is being done wrong but, instead, what opportunities exist to improve things; it was noted "...you need to turn things [behavior disruptions] into something positive." Here, it was asserted, it is important that these conversations become a source of connection with parents/caregivers where staff are seen as a trusted support. The importance of the parent-child relationship is reinforced. Team members report that many children across a variety of contexts want meaningful relationships with their parents, wanting their parents to show an interest in them, showing up to their sporting events, etc.

Staff and volunteers highlighted the importance of working collaboratively with parents in supporting their children's social and emotional development... [including]... helping parents/caregivers and children understand the importance of distinguishing emotions from behaviors, the need to reinforce appropriate social skills, and the value of structure and personal vision.

Some of the intentional practices listed above that the staff and volunteers engage in at NSFRC are enacted within a context of social stresses (experienced by children and caregivers) and generational

differences. Team members uniformly agreed that there have been adverse effects of social media upon children and youth's social and emotional development. Social media factors can compound typical stresses associated with peer influences. Further, there are generational differences in communication styles and patterns that can impact the nature and quality of relationships between adults and children/youth. It was noted that enabling appropriate expression of thoughts and feelings and enhancing children's social skills requires meaningful communication with children and youth. Staff, and other team members agreed that such is only possible when trust is established; one team member noted "trust is how we get them to open up." Staff and team members share that trust is built with children and youth when someone shows interest in them, listens, engages with them, and tries to understand their perspective. As an example, Dr. Mobley spoke of how he initially engages with a child or youth when they do something disruptive or use language or phrases he does not understand, by asking "...help me understand why you are doing this?... I want to understand, help me understand." This question serves as a non-judgmental foundation for a conversation/dialog where the child/youth express themselves, is listened to, and is presented with an opportunity for learning appropriate social skills. It was noted that children and youth sometimes don't fully understand themselves (examples were discussed) and the reasons for their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Providing children/youth an opportunity to connect with a caring adult role model genuinely interested in their development and well-being, it was held, is important for helping them to process their feelings, to separate their emotions from actions, to better understand their relationships, and to develop better problem-solving skills.

These supportive exchanges are responsive to the child's social and emotional developmental needs and requires an attentive and caring disposition by staff and any adult role model. As one team member noted "...sometimes bad behavior is a cry for help" where some one-on-one attention with a caring adult can have a positive impact on a child's development. Staff and team members agreed that most youth generally want to "...do better," have better relationships, take better care of themselves, and feel better about themselves. Adopting a non-judgmental attitude when first engaging with children and youth and building upon identified commonalities (e.g., of interests, and focus on child/youth need, etc.) can aid in building a trusting and meaningful relationship from which children/youth can learn appropriate expression, relationship, social, and problem-solving skills. Team members gave examples of how these processes led to meaningful role model relationships that children and youth sought out and valued. For example, youth still attended homework assistance sessions even when they didn't have homework so that they could interact with students and talk to staff about other matters. Other children and youth seek out the attention of staff and volunteers (at NSFRC and in other community settings) that showed a past and continued interest in them (their academics, family life, relationships with peers, etc.). Reportedly, some youth lacking male role models in their lives have claimed Dr. Mobley as a secondary grandfather.

In sum, team members assessed NSFRC staff as attentive, responsible, caring, trustworthy adults and role models that perceive all patrons (parents, children/youth, and adults) as valued persons deserving opportunities and hope for enhancing their well-being.

...team members assessed NSFRC staff as attentive, responsible, caring, trustworthy adults and role models that perceive all patrons (parents, children/youth, and adults) as valued persons deserving opportunities and hope for enhancing their well-being.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to include Children's Social and Emotional Development Activities in Programming.

There were no identified areas of potential focus/improvement warranting an action item related to items associated with this assessment question.

How Does NSFRC Help Children Develop a Positive Cultural Identity and Learn to Interact in a Diverse Society?

Of the 12 identified questions, with how NSFRC helps children develop a positive cultural identity and learn to interact in a diverse society the team scores signaled agreement with 3 (25%) with the remaining items approximating agreement (8 of 9 had weighted average scores exceeding 3.75, but less than 4.0).

What NSFRC Does Well to Help Children Develop a Positive Cultural Identity and Learn to Interact in a Diverse Society.

Team members reiterated comments spoken of earlier for this and other protective factors. There was no expanded discussion on these specific questions as there was established consensus and praise for efforts of staff and volunteers to be inclusive and respectful of the different cultures of patrons, although limited resources exist to provide supports in languages other than English.

These three items for which there was consensus agreement included:

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.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to help children develop a positive cultural identity and learn to interact in a diverse society.

There was an involved discussion on those questions mentioned above scoring in a range for neither agree nor disagree for this topic. These questions focused on staff and volunteer training and awareness of diversity as well as policies and practices at NSFRC in providing supports in a diverse society. Although select staff and volunteers are experienced professionals with past training on these efforts, continuous training and extra support was advocated on these topics, not just for staff but for other community professionals, stakeholders, and members (including those affiliated with faith-based organizations). Diversity was discussed in an expanded manner, integrating topics focused on patron culture, race/ethnicity, languages, and sexual orientation with broader mental health and socio-economic factors, and the community-context. The community context includes social, political, and religious influences and status-quo in Lake City and Columbia County impacting how these needs are (or are not) addressed. Some of these community context issues (and associated training needs) and their impact on efforts to address expanded diversity needs of patrons led, in part, to select team member ratings of the above assessment question.

... staff are knowledgeable and well-equipped to address many child development and parenting issues/needs. However, ...there are children in families that are dealing with major issues, including trauma resulting from exposure to violence and abuse, drug addiction (in the family) and struggling with sexual identity (and lack of support in their families and the community for LGBTQ+ populations). Staff, it was suggested, are not fully equipped/trained to address these issues and there is a "...continued need for knowledge..." on these topics.

Dr. Mobley, the NSFRC Manager, highlighted that staff are knowledgeable and well-equipped to address many child development and parenting needs. However, it was noted that there are children in families that are dealing with major issues, including trauma resulting from exposure to violence and abuse, drug addiction (in the family) and struggling with sexual identity (and lack of support in their families and the community for LGBTQ+ populations). Staff, it was suggested, are not fully equipped/trained to address these issues and there is a "...continued need for knowledge..." on these topics. With respect to the children and youth dealing with sexual identity issues, it was noted that there are limited to no formal supports within the community. Staff spoke of a program/advocacy center in Jacksonville (JASMYN)³ that provides a variety of supports and services (including health, mental health, family engagement, housing, and other programming) for LGBTQIA+ teens/youth and young adults. However, there are no specific services in Lake City and Columbia County that teens can be referred to (or NSFRC can partner

³ For more information regarding JASMYN and their services, support, and advocacy initiatives, please see: <https://www.jasmyn.org/>

with) and local teens/youth do not have the resources to make the 60+ mile trip to Jacksonville. Other mental health supports for those dealing with trauma associated with exposure to abuse and family violence are limited, along with those children and youth exposed to chronic substance use and abuse in their families. The primary mental health service agency (that are consultant partners with the Partnership for Strong Families and NSFRC) used for referrals is Meridian Behavioral Healthcare⁴; however, team members reportedly note that this resource is currently “...getting slammed...” as needs within the community reportedly outweigh resources to address local mental health and addiction needs. It was noted that NSFRC can now make referrals (for adult patrons) to Wekiva Springs; a behavioral health and addictions service agency based in Jacksonville FL, but these services aren’t local. Here, the team was unified in the perspective that many needs of children and families struggling with the above noted issues (mental health, addiction, sexual identity) are not adequately addressed and that there is a priority for NSFRC, in concert with community partners and other professionals to receive training about, and to explore avenues for, enhancing supports for children, youth, and families to address these needs. This discussion led to the following action item:

Action Item #1: Increase staff and community partner training to better address and explore means to better support the needs of children, youth, adults, and families impacted by the effects of child maltreatment and chronic substance abuse/addiction, and the needs of youth and young adults within the LGBTQ+ community.

Discussion continued regarding the steps moving forward for addressing the above proposed action item. Team members suggested that there would be a lot of challenges/barriers moving forward with this action item given select community context factors, including a historical response/perspective of community leaders (e.g., political, religious, etc.) to matters related to gender and sexual identity. Regardless, team members reiterated that there are many youth that are “struggling” and in need of support; there is a need, it was asserted, to respond to these youth and prevent self-harm or suicide resulting from these struggles.

For those experiencing stress and limited support given their gender and/or sexual identity, team members noted the importance of providing support in a non-stigmatizing manner using “best practices” for addressing their needs (including their social and emotional development needs). It was noted that there are limited supports for these youth in the community and that such has led to more youth that “.... are closeted and are struggling.” Although it was noted that referrals to the county/public health center can be made for children and youth dealing with stress (including because of gender/sexual identity issues), it was thought by some that the public health office was not adequately equipped to best address these needs. It was noted by several team members that the guidance counselors in schools are not equipped or supported to address the specific needs of these children/youth, there are no social or peer groups at Columbia High for these students, and parents lack support in aiding their children on these matters.

⁴ For more information regarding Meridian and their services, please see: <https://www.mbhci.org/>

Brainstorming efforts led to several suggested tasks for moving forward with the above action item, where NSFRC could have a role. These include (but are not limited to):

- Possible consultation with JASMYN representatives on steps moving forward
- Conducting a focus group(s) with concerned professionals and community partners regarding ideas for increasing services and supports for children and youth
- Consider the development of support groups for parents to discuss their children's needs and their needs as parents
- Engage with the faith community on these issues; have an open dialog (perhaps a summit) and conversation from a strength-based perspective where the focus is on the children and youths' needs

Emphasis was placed on the importance of having thoughtful conversations and training (for staff and community partners) on these issues, where there is "...real education on these topics," where emphasis is placed on people identifying personal biases and different perspectives influenced by tradition, generational norms, and religious beliefs. Although different community members (and faith organizations) may have different perspectives on these issues, team members highlighted the importance of identifying common values, especially as such relates to helping children and youth within the community. As one team member (Dr. Mobley) noted: "...we have to love everyone, as a community of faith. We have kids that are struggling or suffering. How do we help children that are going through challenges in life and be that bridge for them?" adding that the goal is to "...come up with a plan on how to help these families." It was asserted that discussions with community members (including the faith-based community) and stakeholders that focus on identified needs and a common goal (as opposed to defending a specific faith-based perspective on a topic) or "...basic discussions on what's happening" with children, youth, and families in the community are needed. Caution was expressed, highlighting a need to avoid discussions that "...cause more harm than help" and to focus more on issues from an education and knowledge standpoint. Here, it was asserted, there is no need to engage in discussions of religious differences within the community but rather on what can be learned about how best to help those children and families that are struggling, where (as one team member noted) it can be acknowledged that "...our faith...keeps us grounded [but] our ignorance will be a drawback." In sum, there was consensus among team members that collective efforts are needed among community stakeholders that share a common interest in enhancing the well-being of all children and families (across all diversity elements) to ensure that neglected needs are addressed in a non-stigmatized manner and from a strength-based and knowledge guided perspective. These efforts, given historical context, will need to be addressed in a manner that builds upon commonalities and introduces topics of concern and strategies that can effectively aid all children/youth and families of different races/ethnicities, cultures, religions, genders, sexual orientations, languages, and social classes.

... there was consensus among team members that collective efforts are needed among community stakeholders that share a common interest in enhancing the well-being of all children and families (across all diversity elements) to ensure that neglected needs are addressed in a non-stigmatized manner and from a strength-based and knowledge guided perspective.

How Does NSFRC Respond Proactively When Social or Emotional Development Needs Extra Support?

The team scored in a range for agreement with 3 of 6 questions focused on how NSFRC responds proactively when a child's social or emotional development needs extra support.

What NSFRC Does Well to Respond Proactively when Social or Emotional Development Needs Extra Support.

The team agreed that:

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

- 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.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Respond Proactively when Social or Emotional Development Needs Extra Support.

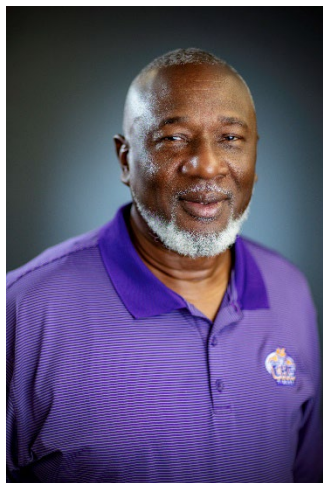
There was no expanded discussion on these individual question ratings as the team thought that conversations, observations, and recommendations related to other topics were relevant here. Specifically on questions covering modeling nurturing care to children, including social and emotional activities in programming, and helping children develop a positive cultural identity and live in a diverse society.

Fidelity of Parental Resilience 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)⁵ 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 27 (of a possible score of 48) or 56.3%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with 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.**

NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

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



Allen Pope Sr. has visited NorthStar 183 times since first coming in September 2021; much of this time includes regular attendance for the community walk. Allen has also helped with several community events hosted by NorthStar. He has lived in Columbia County since 1973 and graduated from Columbia High before joining the Army. Allen was in the service for three years as a Cannon Crewman then worked at Carlon PVC Pipe Co. He has experience with General Electric as a military policeman in Ocala, FL and as a correctional officer. Allen has been a volunteer coach in Columbia County for 18 years and volunteers at his church, New Bethel AME, in several capacities. Allen is a husband of 22 years to Beverly Pope and father of four biological children and three adopted children. The Popes have fostered over 15 children and provided respite care to other foster families. Mr. Pope shares that he loves the caring and inviting

⁵ 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.

atmosphere at NorthStar. He is glad that the SFSA team has identified many issues that are lacking in the community and the need for them to be addressed.



Bonnie O'Neal has been coming to NorthStar Family Resource Center since August 2021 as a patron to access services for herself and her family. She was raised in Kissimmee, FL and eventually moved to Lake City, FL in 2019 from Ocala, FL. Bonnie received her Associate of Science degree at Florida Metropolitan University and started schooling to become a medical assistant. Unfortunately, she had to leave the program early to be a caretaker for sick family members. Bonnie is a wife of 28 years to her husband Byron, is a mom to a son and daughter, and loves spending time with her family. She loves everything about NorthStar and was happy to join the SFSA team to be involved and share her experiences.



Keaven Jones is originally from White Springs, FL but has been a part of the Lake City community for 39 years and first started to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in May of 2021 as a patron. Keaven works for Career Source Florida Crown as a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supervisor. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market. WIOA also matches employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. While he and his two boys are not helping with his mother's yard beautification projects, he is spending time with them and his nieces and nephews at local parks and playgrounds. Keaven loves opportunities that Northstar provides and the support they provide to all cultures. He shares that he "was inspired by the staff and volunteers that I have encountered while attending the community center" and that "kids that I have met while visiting help to remind me why the future looks so bright."



Dr. Philip Mobley is the NorthStar Family Resource Center Manager and the Senior Minister of the Northside Church of Christ, located in Lake City, FL. He was raised in Lake City but lived for many years in Jacksonville, FL, developing his personal and professional skills. Phil received his Doctoral Degree in Education Leadership from the University of North Florida in 2019, his MBA from Jacksonville University in 2002, and a Bachelor's degree from the University of North Florida in 1975. Dr. Mobley served as a Board Member of the Suwanee Valley United Way and the Community Advisory Board for the Columbia/Hamilton County Health Department. He is currently a member of the Richardson Community Center Advisory Board. Phil is a husband of over 48 years to Lotonia (Toni). They have two children, seven grandsons, and two granddaughters. Phil loves that NorthStar provides services and resources to families to help prevent or resolve crises and develop strategies to strengthen families. Dr. Mobley shared that he enjoyed hearing everyone's perspective through the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment meetings.



Narragansett "Narrie" Smith, sister of Phil Mobley, has been a longtime patron, supporter, and volunteer of the NorthStar Family Resource Center. She has lived all her life in Lake City, FL. Narrie has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of North Florida and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Nova University. After 23 years as a teacher, Narrie became the Principal of Niblack Elementary school, raising their school score from an F to an A. Narrie has served as the Assistant Superintendent of the Columbia County School District and currently sits on the Columbia County School Board. She is a minister and director of Christian Education at New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. She spends her time volunteering at NorthStar, with Columbia County Schools, and being with family. Narrie is a wife of 47 years to Johnny Smith, mother to two daughters, and proud grandmother of 6. She loves working with children and models her life around serving God and His people. Narrie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because it identified areas to grow and improve as a Family Resource Center.



Ms. Patricia A. Perry has been the Administrative Assistant at NorthStar Family Resource Center since before the doors opened to the public in March 2021. She was born and raised in Lake City, FL and has spent much of her life there. Patricia graduated from Columbia High School in 1974 and attended Florida A&M University in Tallahassee and Seattle Central College in Seattle, WA. Starting as a file clerk and working her way up through the Columbia County Clerk of Courts for 30 years, she retired as the Chief Deputy Clerk. Patricia is a wife of 35 years to Nathan Perry Jr. and mother to Joshua Perry. Her church family is a major part of her life, she has been a member of New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church since 1969. Patricia loves that NorthStar makes efforts to help the community in any way possible. She hopes her varied experience and familiarity with the people of Lake City will be a benefit to the community.



Katrina P. Evans, Director of the Columbia County Public Library, has supported the NorthStar Family Resource Center and been a member of the Lake City Resource Center Advisory Council since its inception. She grew up in Lake Placid, FL but has lived in Lake City for more than 25 years. Ms. Evans has a master's degree in Library and Information Studies from Florida State University and a bachelor's degree in literature and history from the University of North Florida. She began her career at the historic Walton-DeFuniak Library and was later hired at Columbia County Public library in 1997. After 19 years of service as Outreach and Youth Services Librarian and Assistant Director, Ms. Evans became the library director in 2016. She has served on the Board of the Northeast Florida Library Information Network and has volunteered in various capacities with the Florida Library Association and Edward Rutledge Chapter, NSDAR. Ms.

Evans has served on local school advisory committees and volunteers with her church. Her husband, Kevin, is a school media specialist at a local elementary school and they have two sons, Drew and Rhys. Katrina joined the SFSA team to learn about local resources that she can take back and share with library staff and patrons. She loves that NorthStar is providing a "one-stop-shop" to our community where people can get assistance with a variety of needs. She shares, "I love that this need is now being met so compassionately by NorthStar Family Resource Center and its amazing staff."



Stephanie Harden began to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in January of 2021. Stephanie is a native of Philadelphia, PA, but she has lived in Florida for the last thirteen years, she began working in Lake City last year through a promotion to Hope Navigator II with the Department of Children and Families. Stephanie is working on her master's degree in Strategic Business from Northcentral University and plans to get her doctorate in Theology. She has 30 years of teaching background and over 20 years of customer service experience, along with over 20 years of Ministerial Leadership and Counseling, that she applies to assisting families in need. Stephanie is the business owner/CEO of Loving Arms Services and serves on several boards including the Partnership for Strong Families Children's Partnership Counsel. Stephanie is a wife of 20 years to Pastor Troy Harden, mother of 10 children (blended family), and a grandmother of

17 beautiful grandchildren. In addition to spending time with her family, she reads, loves to thrift store shop, and is completing her first book. Stephanie loves that NorthStar is in a central part of Lake City that needs resources and is working to create a service provision agreement to open a Hope Florida Navigator satellite station at the Family Resource Center. Stephanie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because there were several wonderful action items to work on. With years of experience in various resource centers Stephanie appreciates the compassion and family atmosphere shown at NorthStar.

Although not formally members of the NSFRC SFSA Team, Dr. Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator) and Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator) attended each of the NSFRC SFSA Team meetings. They, and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended these meetings as well, 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 NSFRC. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the NSFRC, and a principal on-site contact for team members. Ms. Lancaster 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 NSFRC. 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 NSFRC to community needs related to supporting families through promoting social and emotional competence of children. There was no effort by those in supportive roles to censure conversation and discussion points,

as feedback was regularly sought regarding facilitation processes and preferences of group members for these processes. Feedback and recommended edits to documented discussion items and decisions could be provided within scheduled meetings (over three days) or in dialog/e-mails to Robin Perry and/or Christen Lancaster in between meetings.

References

Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Mobley, P., Merritt, S., Spoliansky, T., & Edelman, P. (2022). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center: 2021 Profile of Services and Supports*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

The Proximity People, LLC. (2022) *Scope of Work Community Leadership/Equity Project* Unpublished manuscript.

Suggested Citation: Lancaster, C., Perry, R., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O’Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2023). *Supporting Families by Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Children at NorthStar Family Resource Center*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.



Supporting Families by Promoting Social Connections at the NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC)

Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator),
Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator), Katrina Evans, Stephanie Harden, Keaven Jones, Philip
Mobley, Bonnie O'Neal, Allen Pope, Narrie Smith, Patricia Perry, and Toni Spoliansky
(NSFRC SFSA Team support)

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 NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) 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 NSFRC are structured 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 (in accordance with the above noted framework), identify existing strengths of select supports and services, and identify areas for potential improvements. This report focuses specifically on NSFRC's efforts at strengthening families by promoting social connections.

NorthStar Family 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 FRC 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. With the assistance of funding from the Children's Bureau Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families grant, Partnership for Strong Families opened their newest FRC serving the Greater Lake City area in March 2021. NSFRC is co-located on the campus of the Richardson Community Center in the Fergusson Building and is one of five FRCs operated by PSF in Alachua and Columbia counties with a network of over 75 community partners (across all sites). NSFRC provides services that are free and are intended to be responsive to the needs of the surrounding community as identified by community partners and patrons using the services 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 and Lake City's most in need populations.

¹ For a more comprehensive review of findings, including additional details related to the history of the NorthStar Family Resource Center, enhanced review of methods used, and associated appendices, please see: Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2022). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

The NSFRC 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 FRC 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, and adults who participated in the program/received services (or whose children participated in service activities) referred to as Community Ambassadors. 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 NSFRC SFSA Team.

The NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team includes:

Katrina Evans – Columbia County Public Library
Stephanie Harden – Florida Department of Child and Families
Keaven Jones – Community Ambassador/Collaborative Partner
Dr. Philip Mobley – NSFRC Manager
Bonnie O’Neal – Community Ambassador
Allen Pope – Community Ambassador
Patricia Perry – NSFRC Staff
Narrie Smith – NSFRC Volunteer

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 promoting 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 NSFRC service model, and the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Community-Based Programs* and its associated protocol. After individual team members completed their scores, this data was shared via

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/>

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 for each topic and question (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 orientation meeting of the NSFRC SFSA Team took place on October 6, 2021, and three meetings followed through December. The team meeting that involved the discussion of promoting Social Connections questions took place on November 17, 2022.

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.

The findings detailed below reinforce the value and utility of promoting social connections and services for community members and households. The findings also highlight the efficiency and effectiveness of staff in responding to identified needs in a supportive and non-stigmatizing manner. In 2021, service requests linked to the social connections protective factor accounted for 28.5% (n=469) of all requests at NSFRC; the second highest rate among all protective factors, with more requests made for concrete supports (Perry et al., 2022b).

How Does NorthStar Family Resource Center Help Families Value, Build, Sustain and Use Social Connections?

The following measures how the NSFRC helps families value, build, sustain, and use social connections. There were no SFSA questions that the majority of team members thought were not applicable. Findings highlight a team consensus of agreement with 12 of the 21 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 open discussion of NSFRC's strengths and potential areas of improvement.

What NSFRC Does Well to Help Families Value, Build, Sustain, and Use Social Connections.

NSFRC creates events throughout the year to promote social connections among and within families in the community. All these events are free and open to the public. Each event is created by considering patron and community needs and recommendations. On January 17th, 2022, NSFRC hosted a Martin Luther King Neighborhood Beautification Day, which included 11 participants, 5 of which were youth. Celebrating the holiday's motto, "a day on, not a day off," participants walked through nearby neighborhoods, picking up trash along the way. On February 26th, 2022, NSFRC hosted the Remembering Richardson High School event. The event was a great success, with 125 participants reminiscing about their shared history of family, friends, teachers, and principals (Chase, 2022).

On April 23rd, 2022, NSFRC partnered with the Kiwanis Club of Lake City to participate in its annual fundraising event Kiwanis Kids Day. This event was a day of fun, food, and sights for all children. A month later, NSFRC held its Family Fun Day on May 28, 2022, which included cornhole, volleyball, and kickball, along with a bounce house, shaved ice, and more. This was an

opportunity for families and children to get to know each other and build healthy relationships. NSFRC also held two social connection events focused on financial success. One event was held on May 16, 2022, providing patrons with information about building good credit, and the other event was held on July 8, 2022, providing general financial information and advice to patrons. On October 13th, 2022, NorthStar partnered with Healthy Start, which works with community providers such as NSFRC to reach local pregnant women and new mothers of infants up to one year of age, as well as caregivers and family members. This event, The World's Greatest Baby Shower, included door prizes, games, refreshments, a photo booth, and vendor tables representing many organizations and agencies in our community. NSFRC partnered with Another Way³ to plan and host the "Walk a Mile in their Shoes" event on October 17th, 2022. This is an international walk where individuals lead the way on the road to ending domestic violence and included a candlelight vigil, guest speakers, food, and music to bring awareness to domestic violence.

It should be noted that several of these events required planning sessions which also provided community connections to like-minded patrons working on a shared goal to put on their event. In some cases, these planning sessions are extensive due to the complexity of the event. The Remembering Richardson event, for example, was preceded by 13 planning/prepping sessions. These types of social connections allow patrons to get to know each other well over time in a safe and non-threatening environment.

Community ambassadors and providers agreed that NSFRC's environment is caring, friendly, and accepting. One community ambassador shared "NorthStar provides good support and is a safe place to bring my son, and the staff are friendly." With positive social relationships, NorthStar can be a trusted channel to access resources in the community.

"The NorthStar FRC provides good support and is a safe place to bring my son, and the staff are friendly."

Given the above observations by the SFSA team, there was consensus among the team that the following activities, supports/activities, and actions are implemented with fidelity at NSFRC:

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).
- Informally, by introducing parents to one another.

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

- Celebrations, graduations, and holidays.

³ Another Way is an organization that provides a 24-hour phone hotline and domestic violence and sexual assault services in Columbia (with an office in Lake City, where NSFRC is located), Dixie, Levy, Gilchrist, Hamilton, and Lafayette Counties, and sexual assault services in Suwannee County. For more information regarding Another Way, please see: <https://www.anotherwayinc.net/index.html>

- 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.

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

- Connecting them with resources (including mental health consultation) that can help them explore difficulties with forming social connections.
- 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.

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Help Families Value, Build, Sustain, and Use Social Connections.

Though there are opportunities for social connections, there are also several reported barriers. One barrier as mentioned in all the SFSA Team meetings includes NorthStar being "...new on the scene." In other words, an organization in its early stages of development and acceptance within the community. Team members shared their experience that it takes time to build social trust in a community like Lake City, which is a community built on social and personal relationships. A new organization must invest the time and resources to build solid relationships. One community ambassador shared their knowledge of individuals and groups in the community that "...hold on to things that happened over 50 years ago," and how this adversely affects current relationships and the quality of social connections in the community. One community ambassador shared that he has seen the distrust of certain people lead to the rejection of good advice. Another SFSA team member stated that you may find "...the kind of connection you are looking for in a church, but not in general society." In sum, there are reportedly social elements and influences associated with Lake City's past that serve as a potential source of division and barriers to social connectedness within the community.

To mitigate these barriers NSFRC staff are active in the community working to build social connections. Dr. Phil Mobley is the Manager at NSFRC but also serves as a local pastor and community leader in the area and is committed to building social capital within the community. His sister, Narrie Smith (a volunteer at NSFRC) is a longtime educator and faith leader within the community and currently serves on the Columbia County School Board. Staff member Patricia Perry has been a committed community member, known to many in Lake City given her 30 years of employment at the Clerk of Court office. Dr. Mobley and Ms. Smith's father was also known in the community as a principal at a one-room schoolhouse Kings Welcome, a Baptist Pastor, and a teacher at Richardson High School. These staff, volunteers, and many community partners supporting NSFRC efforts have an established history within the community.

The second barrier to social connections exists as a stigma for parents and marginalized populations to access help. Although NSFRC does not currently have formal parenting groups, the SFSA team identified a need for such supports. Some discussion ensued regarding the possible use of the word “parenting” in any description of supports to be provided to families at NSFRC. There was consensus, that paralleled other SFSA Teams at other PSF FRCs, that cautioned against the use of wording “parenting classes” or “parenting groups.” These phrases, it was noted, represent practices within other contexts that are perceived as stigmatizing and likely to make parents feel undervalued and judged. In addition to parental supports including mentoring, advisory groups, and a focus on father engagement, the SFSA team identified a need for supports covering topics such as teen pregnancy, substance use and abuse, and issues related to youth involvement with drugs and gangs. These groups may enhance parental resilience, along with knowledge and skills related to parenting and child development while providing patrons with an opportunity to get to know each other and develop social relationships. The SFSA team asserted that these supports, and associated events, could be opportunities for patrons and parents/caregivers to gain friends and build a social support network. The need for engagement of and support for fathers permeated much discussion of findings related to this protective factor.

In addition, one specific marginalized group the team discussed is that of teen parents. Although NSFRC staff report there have not been any patrons that identify themselves as teen parents, the team believes this is a large issue in the surrounding neighborhoods and broader community served. This need was not identified in NorthStar’s Community Strengths and needs assessment in 2020⁴. Teen parents have not been specifically targeted by NSFRC for specific services and supports. Discussion ensued on possible resources that are available within the community and the ability of NSFRC to provide support to this fragile and often isolated population. Although teen parents could benefit from general parenting support, they have unique struggles that often create special needs. In a similar light, parents and grandparents also need help to support teen parents in their life, encouraging them to take responsibility/accountability for their child. Community provider Stephanie Harden (with the Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency at Florida DCF) shared that the Department of Children and Families does provide support to teen parents, working with them to develop better self-esteem and planning for the future. There is also a teen pregnancy program at the local high school, along with a daycare facility called “Tiger Tots Child Development Center.” Healthy Start has a local program office in Lake City at the Florida Department of Health offices in Columbia County. Healthy Start is a free program that provides an array of services and supports including, but not limited to, “...education and support in childbirth, breastfeeding, women’s health, parenting and more...” to help any expectant mother and families with infants and children up to age 3 “...who are at risk for poor birth outcomes and need help with healthy child development.”⁵ Since opening, NSFRC has annually provided help with the facilitation of the *World’s Greatest Baby Shower* for Hamilton and Columbia County parents. As part of the experience, expecting parents, or those with children under the age of one, receive resources and baby supplies, and have an opportunity to win prizes.

⁴ NorthStar’s Strength and Needs Assessment can be found within the presentation of community indicators as shared at the NorthStar visioning session at: <https://www.pfsf.org/wp-content/uploads/NFRC-Vision-Session-Presentation.pdf>

⁵ Source and more information regarding Healthy Start services and supports in Columbia County (a member of the North Central Florida Coalition) can be found at: <https://columbia.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/wellness-programs/healthy-start/index.html> Additional information regarding the Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions, can be found at: <https://www.healthystartflorida.com/>

Within the context of discussing needed supports for teen parents, their families, and their children, the SFSA team highlighted the need within the community for more effective pregnancy prevention programs. Unfortunately, it was reported that there are no pregnancy prevention programs targeting teens in Lake City or Columbia County that are not solely focused on abstinence as a form of prevention. NSFRC can assist with specific concrete supports, as available, for expectant and new parents (including, but not limited to, diapers, infant clothes, etc.). They can also provide referrals to other local resources/supports (some denoted above) but do not specifically target support for teen parents or pregnancy prevention efforts. Although no action items were identified given the above discussion, interest was expressed in exploring possible communication with Columbia High School to learn more about the needs of the pregnant teen population.

The third barrier to social connections exists as identified disconnections within families, especially between younger and older generations. Here, it was noted how important it is that youth are engaged with caring adults on these topics, highlighting “...much of the life-changing work to be done in young people’s lives starts with social connections and building a rapport [with them].” Toward this end, this member spoke of the value of organizations like Girls, Incorporated (for which this member has worked and/or been affiliated with)—which has seven sites in Florida but not in Lake City or Columbia County (the closest is in Jacksonville)—for engaging females through the use of “evidence-based programming...delivered by trained professionals who focus on the development of the whole girl, supporting, mentoring, and guiding girls in an affirming, pro-girl environment...girls learn to value their whole selves, discover and develop their inherent strengths, and receive the support they need to navigate the challenges they face.”⁶

“NorthStar FRC is ... an important step toward connecting with marginalized or isolated groups by being a conduit of support...”

NSFRC works to create space for connecting and establishing trust despite above noted barriers. Team members agreed that one of NSFRC’s values is that it represents an important step toward connecting with marginalized or isolated groups by being a conduit of support for children and families within these groups.

How Does NorthStar Family Resource Center Create an Inclusive Environment?

The team highlighted a group consensus for all items associated with NSFRC’s efforts to create an inclusive environment. The SFSA team strongly agreed that NSFRC staff were friendly and open to everyone, and the family resource center has a positive atmosphere. Staff were seen as modeling positive interactions during social events and making newcomers feel welcome. There are 13 questions associated with a measure of how the NSFRC creates an inclusive environment. Findings highlight a team assessment (consensus) of agreement with 13 of these 13 questions (100%).

⁶ Source and more information regarding Girls Incorporated can be found at: <https://girlsinc.org/what-we-do/>

What NSFRC Does Well to create an Inclusive Environment?

In an effort to continue bolstering an inclusive and connective FRC, NSFRC has a goal to increase relationships with faith-based community groups and members in the area. This will allow an expansion of services to communities of marginalized and vulnerable populations that are known to religious leaders and members in select neighborhoods and communities.

NSFRC staff are consistently striving to increase these social interactions on a personal and community level. On October 30th, 2022, the NSFRC manager (Phil Mobley) met with local religious leaders to discuss issues of crime, drugs, and other issues affecting the community. There was an expanded discussion regarding these efforts that were supported by the SFSA Team. These efforts were considered a good start, but it was thought that more could be done to connect with these faith-based organizations that provide supports and services to marginalized populations. These considerations led to the following action item:

Action Item #1: NorthStar will make a deliberate effort to connect with and ask for involvement from places of worship that serve marginalized populations.

The SFSA Team spoke extensively of NSFRC's welcoming stance to all people and the supportive environment exemplified by the actions and interactions of staff and volunteers with patrons and families. This assessment led to the team's consensus agreement that staff help create an inclusive environment by all of these items:

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.
- 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.
- 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 to resolve conflicts effectively.
- 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).
- Regularly reviewing policies, forms and documents to ensure that all content discourages beliefs and practices that stereotype, marginalize or discriminate against families.

- 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.

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

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to create an Inclusive Environment?

There were no identified areas of potential focus/improvement warranting an action item related to items associated with this assessment question.

How Does NorthStar Family Resource Center Facilitate Mutual Support?

There are 9 questions associated with a measure of how the NSFRC helps facilitate mutual support. Agreement existed for 6 of the 9 questions. There was no question with which any team member disagreed.

When discussing the parental resilience protective factor, the team identified a relevant action item to explore opportunities for structuring parenting support groups including parenting issues and education, and father and mother-specific groups for engagement and support. Value for parent support groups (including those that facilitate mutual support) was highlighted while keeping in mind the barriers and social stigma surrounding these topics. NSFRC has already begun planning activities and events meant to enhance the engagement of fathers that will, in part, explore issues impacting children and youth in the community, reinforce and explore the establishment of peer parenting mentoring initiatives, help establish mutual support mechanisms, value the roles of parents (including fathers) in their children's lives, and reinforce the importance of children having positive adult (including male) role models.

What NSFRC Does Well to Facilitate Mutual Support.

NSFRC is planning a "Boys to Men" summit in March of 2023 that is dedicated to addressing issues impacting males within the community. Successful male role models from Lake City who are now professional athletes and community mentors will be included to lead workshops to draw in kids and families. Planned workshops (planning was still in progress at the time of the writing of this report) will focus on a variety of topics, including support needed for young men, experiences of and resources needed for single parents (mother and fathers), the value and importance of fathers, and the growing drug epidemic in the area. Dr. Mobley plans to identify and utilize positive role models to facilitate the workshops who "walk the talk and live the life like Keaven...", highlighting the experiences and commitment of Keaven Jones; an SFSA team member and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supervisor with Career Source Florida Crown, a collaborative partner with NSFRC. Mr. Jones is described as a dedicated and caring father, who has been a member of the community for almost 40 years and has reportedly made a personal and professional commitment to helping individuals and families in the community. One community ambassador agreed that we need to bring in people who are successful in life and their careers who can tell the children, "You can do it, you can be someone, and you can do it without selling drugs."

There was an expanded discussion regarding these issues and the proposed event. Fathers and young boys, it was held, have unique challenges they face, so events like these are an opportunity to build capacity for further familial engagement while providing support to this population. One highlighted issue included men not being connected or engaged in their children's lives. Another issue included the barriers that adult males/fathers may encounter that adversely impact their success in family relationships and careers. Team members identified the importance of portraying to fathers, no matter what challenges they experience, that they, "...still have an obligation to be involved in these children's lives." Some fathers, it was noted, have no social context for how to be fathers. Some may experience "roadblocks" from their child's mother, causing them to feel disengaged and disempowered. One member noted that interpersonal stressors can cause fathers to disengage from their children's lives and say, "okay I'm done." Fathers may require guidance on how to deal with the roadblocks they encounter and need encouragement to stay involved with their child(ren). To do this, team members asserted fathers need a "safe space" to seek out these supports, in a non-stigmatized manner. The NSFRC manager (Dr. Mobley) reiterated that in terms of any planned, future engagement efforts of fathers "...success would look like parents having a place to come to say, 'hey, I have a problem.'" In addition, there are specific needs of young males lacking a present, positive male role model. Staff and select SFSA team members noted that there are "many young boys" in the community who do not know their fathers or have fathers who are in prison. It was noted that children suffer without a positive role model in their lives and will seek out sources of approval that are not good for them, like gangs. In Lake City, there is an increase in violence and drug activity among young men, for which Dr. Mobley noted (with uniform agreement of other team members), "there is a real issue with the young men in this community."

Following an expanded discussion of the planned "Boys to Men" summit, it was thought that some exploration of an annual event would be of value and can serve as a foundation for developing and sustaining different mentoring and support group opportunities and connecting parents to additional peer/mutual and professional resources and supports. The following action item was generated as a result of these discussions:

Action Item #2: NorthStar FRC will work on developing an annual summit focused on reclaiming the community's youth and males that include workshops targeted towards parents and young men and feature successful athletes and professionals from this area with the goal of developing mentorship programs and support groups.

The planned Boys to Men summit, other social connection events throughout the year, and a general willingness of NSFRC staff and volunteers to be responsive to the needs of the community reportedly resulted, in part, to the SFSA team consensus of agreement for the following items associated with facilitating mutual support among patrons:

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

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

*“Success would look like parents having a place to come to say
‘hey, I have a problem.’”*

Areas of Potential Focus/Improvement for NSFRC to Facilitate Mutual Support

In addition to the social barriers listed above, select team members discussed the impact of barriers within and between families (in the community) in establishing mutual trust and the subsequent impact such may have on facilitating mutual support systems between parents and families. There was an open and free-floating discussion on these issues. One community ambassador shared that there are fundamental differences in what people believe is “right and wrong.” Different family values on these issues may impact the extent to which select parents/families want to explore social relationships with others. It was asserted that there are concerns with connecting socially with other families, even in their neighborhoods, due to crime, fear of pedophiles, and drugs. One community ambassador recounted that when his daughter was growing up, his wife would background check the members of the family she was planning on visiting. There was general agreement among the group that “you can’t be too careful,” while agreeing that it is good to have social connections to help each other with shared needs and support. The group discussed what role the family resource center may be able to play in making these needed connections and facilitating mutual support systems among responsible and trustworthy parents. One community ambassador said that “getting the resources out into the community is a good start.” Providing needed resources (e.g., concrete resources and parenting supports) helps “build trust in the community” and with families that may eventually contribute to a foundation for enhancing mutual support among families.

Efforts at expanding meaningful mutual support systems, it was held, can be hindered by social media influences upon children of families in the community. While children may be connecting through social media, they may not be connecting to the local community and/or available supports within and between families. The team agreed that it would be good to try and help people learn to connect in their homes and communities. Toward this end, Dr. Mobley suggested initial efforts could focus on providing resources to help parents develop skills for engaging with their children and becoming a trusted agent with their children, in their neighborhood, and in the broader community. Offering programming from an overall/general perspective that covers the big picture/timely issues related to

parenting may be more successful in engaging parents initially, which can lead to developing more targeted programs over time related to parenting knowledge and skills.

Getting the resources out into the community is a good start. Providing needed resources (e.g., concrete resources and parenting supports) helps “build trust in the community” and with families that may eventually contribute to a foundation for enhancing mutual support among families.

Even general support groups, it was suggested, may help bridge the generational gaps that exist between caregivers/parents and children. Instead of formal support groups, staff reportedly are sensitive to and are focused on assisting families dealing with generational issues. As an example, NSFRC staff have worked to bridge identified generation gaps/issues in one family. A grandmother who is raising her grandchildren continues to bring them to Homework Help because she appreciates the influence staff is having on her children. Homework Help, a program targeted at providing the social and emotional protective factor, can be an opportunity to bridge these intergenerational gaps in a safe non-judgmental space. This program has already begun to help NSFRC be a trusted agent that leads to positive word of mouth within the community. Slowly NSFRC is developing a track record in the community so people know they can trust the Family Resource Center.

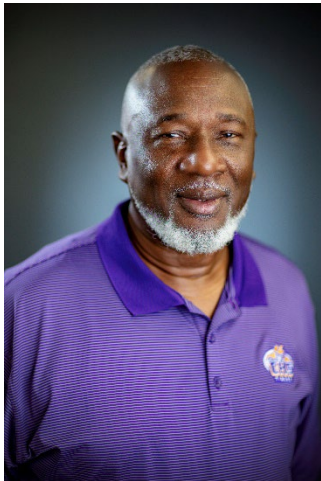
Fidelity of promoting Social Connections Services and Supports to CSSP Protective Factor

The SFSA Team identified the weighted average Team score as the consensus measure for each question associated with the promoting social connections assessment topics. 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) 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 promoting 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 31 (of a possible score of 43) or 72%, suggesting that the services and supports associated with promoting the Social Connections Protective Factor were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.**

...the services and supports associated with promoting the Social Connections Protective Factor were implemented with moderate fidelity to the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families’ Protective Factor Framework.

The NSFRC Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Team

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



Allen Pope Sr. has visited NorthStar 183 times since first coming in September 2021; much of this time includes regular attendance for the community walk. Allen has also helped with several community events hosted by NorthStar. He has lived in Columbia County since 1973 and graduated from Columbia High before joining the Army. Allen was in the service for three years as a Cannon Crewman then worked at Carlon PVC Pipe Co. He has experience with General Electric as a military policeman in Ocala, FL and as a correctional officer. Allen has been a volunteer coach in Columbia County for 18 years and volunteers at his church, New Bethel AME, in several capacities. Allen is a husband of 22 years to Beverly Pope and father of four biological children and three adopted children. The Popes have fostered over 15 children and provided respite care to other foster families. Mr. Pope shares that he loves the caring and inviting

atmosphere at NorthStar. He is glad that the SFSA team has identified many issues that are lacking in the community and the need for them to be addressed.



Bonnie O'Neal has been coming to NorthStar Family Resource Center since August 2021 as a patron to access services for herself and her family. She was raised in Kissimmee, FL and eventually moved to Lake City, FL in 2019 from Ocala, FL. Bonnie received her Associate of Science degree at Florida Metropolitan University and started schooling to become a medical assistant. Unfortunately, she had to leave the program early to be a caretaker for sick family members. Bonnie is a wife of 28 years to her husband Byron, is a mom to a son and daughter, and loves spending time with her family. She loves everything about NorthStar and was happy to join the SFSA team to be involved and share her experiences.



Keaven Jones is originally from White Springs, FL but has been a part of the Lake City community for 39 years and first started to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in May of 2021 as a patron. Keaven works for Career Source Florida Crown as a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supervisor. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market. WIOA also matches employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. While he and his two boys are not helping with his mother's yard beautification projects, he is spending time with them and his nieces and nephews at local parks and playgrounds. Keaven loves opportunities that Northstar provides and the support they provide to all cultures. He shares that he "was inspired by the staff and volunteers that I have encountered while attending the community center" and that "kids that I have met while visiting help to remind me why the future looks so bright."



Dr. Philip Mobley is the NorthStar Family Resource Center Manager and the Senior Minister of the Northside Church of Christ, located in Lake City, FL. He was raised in Lake City but lived for many years in Jacksonville, FL developing his personal and professional skills. Phil received his Doctoral Degree in Education Leadership from the University of North Florida in 2019, his MBA from Jacksonville University in 2002, and a Bachelor's degree from the University of North Florida in 1975. Dr. Mobley served as a Board Member of the Suwanee Valley United Way and the Community Advisory Board for the Columbia/Hamilton County Health Department. He is currently a member of the Richardson Community Center Advisory Board. Phil is a husband of over 48 years to Lotonia (Toni). They have two children, seven grandsons, and two granddaughters. Phil loves that NorthStar provides services and resources to families to help prevent or resolve crises and develop strategies to strengthen families. Dr. Mobley shared that he enjoyed hearing everyone's perspective through the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment meetings.



Narragansett "Narrie" Smith, sister of Phil Mobley, has been a longtime patron, supporter, and volunteer of the NorthStar Family Resource Center. She has lived all her life in Lake City, FL. Narrie has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of North Florida and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Nova University. After 23 years as a teacher, Narrie became the Principal of Niblack Elementary school, raising their school score from an F to an A. Narrie has served as the Assistant Superintendent of the Columbia County School District and currently sits on the Columbia County School Board. She is a minister and director of Christian Education at New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. She spends her time volunteering at NorthStar, with Columbia County Schools, and being with family. Narrie is a wife of 47 years to Johnny Smith, mother to two daughters, and proud grandmother of 6. She loves working with children and models her life around serving God and His people. Narrie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because it identified areas to grow and improve as a Family Resource Center.



Ms. Patricia A. Perry has been the Administrative Assistant at NorthStar Family Resource Center since before the doors opened to the public in March 2021. She was born and raised in Lake City, FL and has spent much of her life there. Patricia graduated from Columbia High School in 1974 and attended Florida A&M University in Tallahassee and Seattle Central College in Seattle, WA. Starting as a file clerk and working her way up through the Columbia County Clerk of Courts for 30 years, she retired as the Chief Deputy Clerk. Patricia is a wife of 35 years to Nathan Perry Jr. and mother to Joshua Perry. Her church family is a major part of her life, she has been a member of New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church since 1969. Patricia loves that NorthStar makes efforts to help the community in any way possible. She hopes her varied experience and familiarity with the people of Lake City will be a benefit to the community.



Katrina P. Evans, Director of the Columbia County Public Library, has supported the NorthStar Family Resource Center and been a member of the Lake City Resource Center Advisory Council since its inception. She grew up in Lake Placid, FL but has lived in Lake City for more than 25 years. Ms. Evans has a master's degree in Library and Information Studies from Florida State University and a bachelor's degree in literature and history from the University of North Florida. She began her career at the historic Walton-DeFuniak Library and was later hired at Columbia County Public library in 1997. After 19 years of service as Outreach and Youth Services Librarian and Assistant Director, Ms. Evans became the library director in 2016. She has served on the Board of the Northeast Florida Library Information Network and has volunteered in various capacities with the Florida Library Association and Edward Rutledge Chapter, NSDAR. Ms.

Evans has served on local school advisory committees and volunteers with her church. Her husband, Kevin, is a school media specialist at a local elementary school and they have two sons, Drew and Rhys. Katrina joined the SFSA team to learn about local resources that she can take back and share with library staff and patrons. She loves that NorthStar is providing a "one-stop-shop" to our community where people can get assistance with a variety of needs. She shares, "I love that this need is now being met so compassionately by NorthStar Family Resource Center and its amazing staff."



Stephanie Harden began to connect with NorthStar Family Resource Center in January of 2021. Stephanie is a native of Philadelphia, PA, but she has lived in Florida for the last thirteen years, she began working in Lake City last year through a promotion to Hope Navigator II with the Department of Children and Families. Stephanie is working on her master's degree in Strategic Business from Northcentral University and plans to get her doctorate in Theology. She has 30 years of teaching background and over 20 years of customer service experience, along with over 20 years of Ministerial Leadership and Counseling, that she applies to assisting families in need. Stephanie is the business owner/CEO of Loving Arms Services and serves on several boards including the Partnership for Strong Families Children's Partnership Counsel. Stephanie is a wife of 20 years to Pastor Troy Harden, mother of 10 children (blended family), and a grandmother of

17 beautiful grandchildren. In addition to spending time with her family, she reads, loves to thrift store shop, and is completing her first book. Stephanie loves that NorthStar is in a central part of Lake City that needs resources and is working to create a service provision agreement to open a Hope Florida Navigator satellite station at the Family Resource Center. Stephanie was glad to be a part of the SFSA team because there were several wonderful action items to work on. With years of experience in various resource centers Stephanie appreciates the compassion and family atmosphere shown at NorthStar.

Although not formally members of the NSFRC SFSA Team, Dr. Robin Perry (Lead Evaluator) and Christen Lancaster (NorthStar Family Resource Center Community Research Coordinator) attended each of the NSFRC SFSA Team meetings. They, and Toni Spoliansky (Project Director for the *Resource Center Model: Evaluation, Refinement, and Expansion* grant) who attended these meetings as well, 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 NSFRC. Christen Lancaster is the Community Research Coordinator for the NSFRC, and a principal on-site contact for team members. Ms. Lancaster 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 NSFRC.

Suggested Citation:

Lancaster, C., Perry, R., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2023). *Supporting Families by promoting Social Connections at the NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC)*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.

References

- Browne, C.H. (2014). *The Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework: Branching Out and Reaching Deeper*. Washington, D.C.: The Center for the Study of Social Policy.
- Chase, K. (2022) *Alumni at an old historic high school in Lake City reunited for a special dedication*. WCJB.com. <https://www.wcjb.com/2022/02/27/alumni-an-old-historic-high-school-lake-city-reunited-special-dedication/>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/>
- Lake City Chamber of Commerce (2022). *Remembering Richardson High School: A Historic Dedication*. <https://web.lakecitychamber.com/events/Remembering-Richardson-High-School-A-Historic-Dedication-5706/details>
- Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Evans, K., Harden, S., Jones, K., Mobley, P., O'Neal, B., Pope, A., Smith, N., Perry, P. & Spoliansky, T. (2022a). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center (NSFRC) Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (SFSA) Team's Findings and Recommendations/Action Items Associated with Supporting Families by Providing Concrete Support in Times of Need*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.
- Perry, R., Lancaster, C., Mobley, P., Merritt, S., Spoliansky, T., & Edelman, P. (2022b). *The NorthStar Family Resource Center: 2021 Profile of Services and Supports*. Tallahassee: Institute for Child and Family Services Research.
- 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.