

## **Summarized Key Findings: Community Based Participatory Research**

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### **Partnership for Strong Families**

#### **Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families Grant Project Period: October 1, 2019 - September 29, 2024**

##### **Introduction**

This summary presents an overview of Partnership for Strong Families' (PSF) application of the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework to guide the implementation, evaluation, and refinement of its Family Resource Center (FRC) model and community engagement strategies. CBPR principles informed how PSF collaborated with local stakeholders, ensuring that services and supports were co-designed with those directly impacted.

This collaborative research approach ensures that service delivery and systems transformation are informed and shaped by the communities PSF serves — as well as the researchers, staff and other stakeholders involved in our resource center network.

##### **CBPR in Practice: Key Components and Strategies:**

###### **Grounded in Community Voice**

PSF's use of CBPR began with the foundational principle that community members are the experts of their own experience. Throughout the project period, PSF engaged families and residents through:

- Community Strengths and Needs Assessments
- Community Listening Sessions
- Resource Center Advisory Councils
- Focus groups and informal interviews
- Strengthening Families Self-Assessment
- Open forums co-hosted with local partners

These platforms allowed PSF to learn directly from the community about what programs, services, and resources were most needed and how they should be delivered.

### **Giving Voice to Community Members**

Community members were not just consulted but involved as co-researchers and co-creators in the planning and implementation process. PSF staff regularly incorporated community feedback into:

- Programming priorities
- Resource allocation
- Operational improvements at Family Resource Centers

Community leaders and FRC patrons were invited to sit on advisory councils and participate in ongoing planning meetings, ensuring an ongoing feedback loop.

### **Cultural Responsiveness and Local Context**

CBPR principles helped ensure that all outreach and programming were culturally and contextually relevant. This included:

- Tailoring services to reflect the linguistic, racial, and socioeconomic makeup of the community
- Using trusted messengers, such as local partners and community leaders to assist with outreach
- Ensuring physical spaces felt accessible and welcoming to diverse community members

### **Continuous Feedback and Cyclical Learning**

CBPR at PSF is dynamic and rooted in a *cyclical and continuous feedback process*. Community feedback was not a one-time event, but an ongoing process through:

- Uniting community leaders and representatives from local agencies to form a Resource Center Advisory Council (RCAC)
- Meeting with community organizations throughout the area to understand the needs of the community
- Surveying the community through door-to-door outreach and easily accessible QR codes to establish the greatest needs
- Interviews and storytelling
- Grant staff integrated into day-to-day Resource Center activities, with an open ear to community needs
- Acknowledging and celebrating research participants with incentives, a photo shoot and food during evaluation activities

## Data and Evaluation Through a CBPR Lens

### Participatory Data Collection

In line with CBPR principles, PSF blended quantitative data (e.g., service usage, demographic profiles) with rich qualitative input (stories, surveys, direct feedback collected via interviews, focus groups, and the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment process). Importantly, data indicators were selected not only based on funder requirements but on community-defined priorities, including:

- Social connectedness
- Stability and safety
- Access to education, food, and housing

### Community Validation of Results

When outcomes were analyzed, PSF invited community members to review and validate findings. This participatory analysis phase helped ensure:

- Findings were interpreted with appropriate cultural and contextual nuance
- Results could be shared back with the community in a way that fostered trust and transparency

## Impacts and Outcomes of CBPR at PSF

- **Enhanced Trust:** Community members expressed increased trust in PSF services due to transparency and inclusion in decision-making.
- **Increased Engagement:** FRC participation rose in areas where CBPR processes were most deeply embedded.
- **Improved Responsiveness:** PSF staff were able to adjust services in real-time based on local input – especially valuable in rural and rapidly changing communities.
- **Sustainable Partnerships:** The CBPR approach laid the groundwork for long-term, cross-sector collaborations based on mutual respect and shared power.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

While CBPR generated positive results, PSF also encountered challenges such as:

- Balancing time-intensive engagement processes with operational deadlines
- Navigating power dynamics between institutional stakeholders and community members
- Ensuring participation was inclusive of all voices – especially those historically silenced

PSF responded to these challenges by utilizing grant funded staff, the Community Research Coordinators, to bridge communication gaps amongst stakeholders, engage with FRC patrons, and provide support to day-to-day FRC operations, ensuring all patrons who wanted to be were included in evaluation activities, thus contributing to the refinement of PSF's FRC network.

## Conclusion

PSF's experience illustrates that Community-Based Participatory Research is not a one-time strategy but a philosophy – one that transforms service delivery, builds trust, and strengthens community infrastructure. By investing in CBPR, PSF has developed a model for how human service organizations can shift from delivering services to communities, to building solutions with them.